

# **Restructuring and the Re-Making of Nigeria: A Do or Die Affair**

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## **Abstract**

*Restructuring is a positive-balanced adjustment or change in the socio-economic and political structure of a particular country for equity, equality, justice and growth of that society. Restructuring literally means an entity's structure is faulty, thereby, required to be re-structured. Since inception of Nigeria as a country, there has been a loud cry for restructuring of the system; reasons been that, Nigeria is a multi-ethnic society which demand every section of the country to be adequately represented in the scheme of things to avoid domination of one group against the other. This call demands a total restructuring in every sector of the countries decision making, implementation and management because a lopsided policy has threatened the Nigerian unity, peace and existence. Consequently, this lopsided policy becomes the root causes of marginalization, corruption, agitation, and the delay of political cum economic growth of Nigeria. In this regard, the paper therefore admonishes Nigerian policy makers, politicians, and other stakeholders to see restructuring and re-making of the Nigerian state as a 'do or die affair' in order to avoid total collapse of the Nigerian society. Using the analytical method, the paper succinctly highlighted marginalization, domination, imbalance in the Nigerian system as the root causes of the calls for restructuring. Hence, the paper recommends that Nigerian system should be just and fair in their dealings, considering the multiplicity of the Nigerian society so as to ensure the growth and survival of the Nigerian nation. Therefore, concludes that, restructuring and re-making of Nigeria is a 'do or die affair' if meaningful development and sustained unity and stability of Nigerian nation is to be guaranteed.*

**Keywords:** Restructuring, Nigeria, Re-making, Development.

## **Introduction**

Since the creation of Nigeria via involuntary amalgamation by the British in 1914, the political atmosphere of Nigeria is presently overtaken with calls for restructuring the country. The call for restructuring and re-making of Nigeria has been influenced by socio-economic, political and ethno-religious realities and over-centralization of political power to the central government. Nigeria according the Former President Olusegun Obasanjo(2015:4) was beset by strings of stormy political problems which stemmed mainly from the lopsided nature of the political division of the country and the type of the existing federal constitution, and the spirit in which it operated. However, many years after independence, the structure of the Nigerian Federation has remained problematic and contentious in spite of the creation of additional

region, states and much centralized of power (Dickson and Asua, 2016). For instance, post-independent Nigeria had three, later four regions, which without the benefit of oil created wealth, were self-sufficient in food and production of various cash crops and other exportable commodities. The regions equally contributed effectively to bankrolling the central government through 50% derivation formula (Ikoku, 2017). Today, the reverse is the case. In fact, the federal government is now more powerful than the 36 federating units put together, taking the biggest allocation of national revenues thereby pauperized the Nigerian states to a feeding bottle level. These issues in Nigeria must be squarely addressed via restructuring of the system.

Unfortunately, Nigeria is yet to achieve the desired expectations due to the high level of corruption, lack of credible leadership, unemployment, imbalance in the political, economic and administrative positions despite her abundance in human, natural and material resources. In consequence, the Nigerian system continues to experience crisis and agitations from various regions of the country. With those critical issues and problems, Bello (2018:93) notes that the Nigerian state is on a keg of gunpowder and needs to do some things to arrest the situation and prevent the country from collapse. The big question then becomes ‘What can be done to leverage these challenges? And what is the way forward? The findings of the study prove that ensuring equity, fairness and justice among the federating units will ensure healthy competition and rapid development of different regions of the country. Nigeria is at risk until it summons the courage to restructure. No wonder Obonyano Dickson (2022:1) stated in his paper that in bringing stability insist on the equality of rights of all the peoples that make up the nation; majority or minority. The leadership, which is essential to the success of every state and society as noted by Woomi, Salleh and Ismail, (2017), therefore, needs to do something to address the situation. The paper therefore will admonish the Nigerian leadership to take restructuring and re-making of Nigerian as do-or-die affair especially at this critical point when Nigeria is nose-diving into a failed state as well as facing an existential threat.

### **Restructuring: A Little Worries about Definition**

Generally, the word “restructuring” implies different things to different people and many Nigerians of different backgrounds tend to apportion different meanings to it. For instance, the first thing that comes to the mind of people when they hear restructuring is political restructuring such as creating more states or merging of states/LGA, resource control, regional autonomy, power devolution etc. The most sensitive of which is resource control especially oil wealth. However, there are many dimensions to restructuring, some of which include political restructuring, economic restructuring, educational restructuring, social restructuring, accounting restructuring, administrative restructuring, restructuring of the security apparatus etc.

What then is the meaning of “restructuring”? On this note, Okonkwo, O. (2018) in his view defined restructuring as a change to existing status quo in order to make it more functional. From his assertion, restructuring is a purpose-driven activity that hinges on replacement of an existing nature of a system with a new one that will be suitable to achieve the purpose of the system. Bello (2017) asserts that restructuring is the process of increasing or decreasing the

number of component parts that make up a system and re-defining the interrelationship between them in such a way that the entire system performs more efficiently.

Additionally, Oyim (2013) sees restructuring as changing the way in which something such as government, business, or system is organized. In other word, restructuring can lead to increased efficiency and cost effectiveness. Similarly, Osuntokun (2017) explained that restructuring is simply a call for the restoration of federalism – the foundational constitution structure to which all Nigerians subscribed as encapsulated in the 1999 constitution. Restructuring according to Similarly, Yaqub (2016) sees restructuring as a process that requires Nigerian citizens to take a closer look at the national edifice or, better still, the state of the nation with regard to how to address structural deformities, if any. For Unya (2011), it means to effect a fundamental change in an organization or system.

Furthermore, Nwosu ABC (2016) starts by defining restructuring as “changing the structure. What is the structure? There is too much power at the centre. The federal government has too much power, too much responsibility, too much money, too much to waste...” When asked why people are asking for restructuring, he answers by asserting that, “the structure that we have is anti-development. The structure we have is unjust and unfair. I belong to the school of thought that regards restructuring more of devolution of power than regionalization of Nigeria”. In support of the above view, General Ibrahim Babangida (2017)side of restructuring advocated for “devolution of powers to the extent that more responsibilities be given to the states while the Federal Government is vested with the responsibility to oversee our foreign policy, defence, and economy.

To simply put it, restructuring 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. However, restructuring, if not well planned and handled can lead to greater inefficiency or even system collapse. In view of this, restructuring is operationally seen in this paper as a positive-balanced adjustment or change in the socio-economic, and political structure of a particular country for equity, equality, justice and growth of that society.

### **The Structure of Nigerian State and System**

The study establishes a general discontent with the structure of the Nigerian federation as presently constituted. The preponderant opinion is that powers and responsibilities are over concentrated at the centre at the expense of the states. Many therefore, strongly suggest that the powers and resources of the federal government should be reasonably reduced. Nigeria as a sovereign state is one that has numerous ethno-tribal groups as matched with its vast territory, large population and enormous land mass. Each of the locales within the Nigerian territory is endowed with either one mineral, vegetative or other natural resources and abundance human resources. In view of this, any knowledgeable administrative analyst would suggest the adoption of the federalist political structure, so as to ensure efficient administration of both the vast territories of Nigeria and its ethno-tribal heterogeneous population.

Indeed, Nigeria itself is not a stranger to political restructuring. Nigeria from colonial period through post-colonial period has settled for federal system of government which allows for

division of powers and jurisdictions among the levels of government that made up the federation. Until 1990, the land mass known today as Nigeria existed as a number of independent and sometimes hostile national states with linguistic and cultural differences (Obasanjo, O. 2015: 1). Nigeria as a collection of independent Native States separated from one another...by great distances, by difference of history and traditions and by ethnological, racial, tribal, political, social and religious barriers.

The first momentous act of the British in the political evolution of Nigeria as a modern state was the amalgamation of the administration of the two sections of Nigeria on 1 January 1914 by Lord Lugard. For ease of governing and in the economic interest of the British, indirect rule and separate development policy were maintained in the two sections of the country. The 1922 constitution made provision, for the first time, for elected members to sit on a Nigerian Legislative Council, but did not empower them to make laws for the North (Obasanjo, O. 2015: 2).

However, during the Second World War, about 1940, Nigeria was divided into four administrative units: The Colony of Lagos and the Northern, Eastern and Western Province. Sir Arthur Richards' Constitution of 1946 which inaugurated Nigeria's regionalism, although it achieved a half-hearted political breakthrough by integrating the North with the South at the legislative level for the first time (Obasanjo, O. 2015: 2). Macpherson's Constitution of 1951, a greater measure of non-interference was guaranteed within the regions by the increased regional autonomy and stronger regional legislatures. According to Olusegun Obasanjo with only residual powers left to the central government, Nigeria politically took a turn for the worse, and there was a possibility of three countries emerging out of Nigeria (2015:3).

For the first time the North talked openly of the possibility of secession rather than enduring what they saw as humiliation and ill-treatment. The West also threatened secession over the non-inclusion of Lagos in the West in the 1953 Constitution. The 1954 Constitution confirmed and formalized the wishes of Nigeria leaders to move and remain as far apart as they possibly could (Obasanjo, O. 2015:3). The leaders in Nigeria had settled for the federal option. In furtherance, the failure of the Willing Commission to recommend the creation of more states in 1958 for the Nigerian type of federalism planted the most potent seed of instability into the evolution of Nigeria as a nation in the 1950s.

But all the political leaders who had strong and firm bases in the regions fought hard for maximum powers for the regions which weakened the centre. At the same time the ugly embers of tribalism and sectionalism had been fanned into a deadly flame by all political leaders. These leaders rode on the crest of this cancerous tribalism and the ignorance of the people to power, at the expense of national unity and the nation. Instead of regionalism ensuring and preserving national unity it became its bane. There was diffusion instead of fusion of three units. The only point on which Nigeria political leaders spoke with one voice was the granting, by the British, a political independence – and even then, they did not agree on the timing (Obasanjo, O. 2015:4).

As we know, the above restructurings were led by Nigeria's founding fathers and leaders of Nigeria's ethnic groups. The complex but inclusive negotiations culminated in great political

and constitutional settlements under which various interests were reconciled to ensure peaceful coexistence, and relationships between the regions and the federal entity were properly defined and balanced in the true spirit of federalism. Sadly, political intolerance and military adventurism led to the coup of 1966 that torpedoed the 1963 Constitution and, with it, the system of strong, autonomous regions within a Federation. In other words, the death of regional autonomy and federalism.

From 1966 to 1999, “political restructurings” in Nigeria were orchestrated by the military. First, General Johnson Aguiyi-Ironsi imposed a unitary system following the January 1966 coup. In 1967, General Yakubu Gowon introduced the 12-state structure. In his speech in May 1967, Gowon said he split Nigeria into 12 states, from four regions, “as a basis for stability ... to remove the fear of domination”. But if splintering Nigeria into several states was the solution to instability, fear of domination and structural imbalance, why is Nigeria not united and stable today despite having 36 states? Truth is, the fear of domination hasn’t disappeared, deep concerns about structural imbalance remain, and Nigeria is more disunited and unstable than before 1966.

Thus, Nigeria’s first Prime Minister, Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa had maintained that ever since the involuntary colonial amalgamation of the Northern and Southern protectorates of the Niger River on January 1, 1914, the country has remained far from being real and united country, but only on paper, because the supposed unity was not originally evolved by the peoples themselves, but mere British desire and interests imposed on the people. Currently, instead of the national unity, loyalty and cohesion, the various ethnic, religious and geo-regional groups are more concerned with the promotion and consolidation of their various particularistic interests, with the dominance of the three majority ethnic groups – Hausa/Fulani, Igbo and Yoruba, and the two dominant religions – Islam and Christianity (Asogwa, 2018:49). There also come the issues of domination, marginalisation, dissent and resentment of one another. In particular, the perceived dominance of the Northern Region of Nigeria over national affairs has remained to date, a major concern of the Southern part.

The current Nigerian political structure which has its roots in the 1946 Sir Arthur Richards’ constitution of Nigeria, right from its inception till now has shown symptoms of administratively sick system of government resulting from such issues as resource control, outcry of marginalisation, ethno-tribal and regional discrimination, and issue of ensuring that every citizen, irrespective of age, sex, religion, ethnic, linguistic, regional or tribal affiliation is given a sense of belonging.

### **Restructuring and the Re-Making of Nigeria: A Do or Die Affair**

A pressing issue that is destroying Nigeria so fast is the issue of imbalances, domination and marginalisation. Marginalization especially in terms of political power is imbalance. The practice of rotating power among geopolitical zones in Nigeria should be addressed. The idea of concentrating power from one region (The North especially) in Nigeria while side-lining others (East) is worrisome. For the Igbo South-East Nigeria, restructuring is an opportunity to actualise their dream of the opportunity of accessing national political power which they have not since the Ironsi regime was overthrown in 1966. The continued feared and resented

Northern hegemony in Nigerian politics are all unavoidable variables that resulted in the imbalances of the Nigerian state and culminating to the issues of domination and marginalisation with mutual fears and suspicion among the component parts of the Nigerian federation. These have occupied the political thought and atmosphere of all the regions and discourse of Nigeria (Farayibi 2017).

Additionally, is the worrying situation of imbalance in the numbers of state in most regions in Nigeria. One of the zones (Northwest) has the highest number of states (seven states) while the southeast has the least (five states). All other zones have six states each. However, parity in states creation will address the marginalization of some minority groups especially from the South-East Zone who strongly feel that an additional state should be created in the zone to ensure equality in the number of states with other regions. These have further resulted in not only rivalry and competition, but also attempts to subvert justice, power and resources for self-favour. These factors contribute to what Morgenthau (1973), submit that “Any segment of the population which feels itself permanently deprived of its right and full participation in the life of the nation will tend to have lower morale, to be less patriotic than those who do not suffer from such disabilities”. No wonder the Northern region, which have over the years defied and resisted the calls for the restructuring because the uncertain consequences of the restructuring if held.

It is obvious that there are imbalances, marginalisation and domination also in political appointments, distribution of resources and dominance of one tribe, section, region or state in the public service and other spheres of the Nigerian state. For example, since the inception of the President Muhammadu Buhari-led administration, there have been calls for restructuring. This current system being practiced in Nigeria has failed the whole country; 80% of the present Buhari’s Administration favour the North more than other regions. For this reason, the percentage of good governance among all members of the society is threatened because of its lopsided democratic practices (Obonyano, 2022:10). Observations reveal that all the major appointments are skewed in favour of the North while leaving other ethnic nationalities with little or no appointments (Matthew, 2017). This why Asaju and Egberi, (2015:131) provides that Hausa/Fulani constitute 70% of Nigerian soldiers, Hausa/Fulani and Yorubas – 80% of federal Permanent Secretaries, 80% of oil wells owned by Hausa Fulani and Yoruba, 60% of Nigerian military generals are Hausa/Fulani, 60% of all the heads of federal parastatals are Hausa/Fulani, 60% of higher ranks in the Nigeria Police, Immigration, Nigeria Ports Authority and Prisons services are each Hausa/Fulani, 70% of the SSS men, among others while the South-East and South-South are left out. This is a manifestation of marginalisation, domination, and exploiting other regions in control of political power and resources. This is contrary to the 1999 Constitution of the Federal of Nigeria which is binds on Federal where: “There should equal appointments from all members from the six geopolitical zones of Nigeria.” It is important to note that there is need for strict enforcement of the federal character principle in appointment of people into key positions in public institutions.

At the earlier stages of Nigeria’s federalism and nationhood, the various regional governments of the First Republic had respectively embarked on programmes and policies to ensure full representation of their regions in the federation and avoid internal domination of their

respective intra-regional affairs (Ojo, 2016). In the Northern region, for example, the Regional Premier, Sir Ahmadu Bello embarked on the Northernisation Policy, which not only ensured that Nigerians from the other regions, especially the East Igbos were checked in the prior domination of the Northern Public Service and commercial/industrial activities, and a quick, catch up and crash programmes to train the Northerners through both short and long term courses, trainings and up-grading in order to check the excessive domination of the northern public and economic affairs by the non-northerners and also ensure fair share and representation of the Northern Region at the central level of the federation (Mohammed, 2018).

On the angle of sharing formula, the resource revenue sharing formulas in Nigeria currently benefit the federal government. The root cause of this, Elaigwu (1998:6) noted is much concentration of power in the federal government. As a result, the current sharing formula for revenue in the federation which gives 52.68%, 26.72% and 20.60% for the federal, states and local governments respectively. Resource allocation is therefore, is a critical issue in every meaningful restructuring of Nigeria for it forms the bedrock of and determines the regional, inter-governmental, political and socio-societal settings and relations among the component parts, the citizenry and elites.

More so, restructuring is a song also on the lips of many Nigerians. It has trended for decades and seems to be an inter-generational topical issue in Nigeria. The persistent call for restructuring takes numerous dimensions, but particularly outstanding is in the dimension of politics. It is no surprise though, because the philosophy behind the existence of every state and the control of its resources bothers on politics. Therefore, when there is a damaged cog in the wheel of the politics of the state, it becomes imperative to politically restructure the state.

Nigeria is Africa's biggest economy and the most populous black nation on earth. Yet, regional economic inequality and the lop-sidedness of Nigeria's political system have led to a series of protracted conflicts. The country is currently embroiled in crises similar to the time after independence in 1960, when regional and ethnic tensions erupted in a vicious power struggle. Over sixty years later, desires for a breakaway still linger. The Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) aim to restore the state of Biafra and challenge Nigeria's current political structure. Thus, national debate and calls for restructuring are nothing new, but they continue to grow amid economic stress, political uncertainty and recurrent violent conflicts across the country.

During electioneering, politicians in Nigeria who directly or indirect create artificial poverty, hunger and starvation in the country applied thugs in hijacking ballot boxes; and also introduce "stomach infrastructure" in other to emerge as winners against the people's choice. The worst of it all is sharing about \$15,000 to \$20,000 to party delegate to vote them as party flag bearer. The result of this uncivilized system is continued breed of incompetent leaders in offices. Nigeria is now recognised as one the most corrupt country in the world. There is no gain saying that embezzlement of public funds and neglect of humanistic policies have brought corruption in high places. The educational institution is in sham due to ASUU (Academic Staff Union of University) is always on strike for lack of funding (Eze VE. Obonyano DB *et al.* 2022:35). Corruption does not ensure equity and justice but encourages injustice. Corruption has become part and parcel of Nigeria's political system and stumbling block to good governance.

In furtherance, citing Obonayano Dickson (2022:8) leadership an important factor in every civil society. All Nigerians and our leaders should stop playing the ostrich on the issue of restructuring Nigeria's political structure. In that regard, Baba and Aeysinghe (2017; 45-46) have observed the major threats to Nigerian unity which also relate directly to the restructuring as: poor national governance and leadership; marginalization; religious intolerance; internal conflicts affiliated with ethnic, religion and politics of identity; poor environmental management policy; over centralization of power and resources; corruption; poverty; unemployment; and lack of patriotism. There is great concern in Nigeria for security. The level of violence, whether religious, ethnic, political or communal, seems to be rising and in some areas almost out of control. A joint effort towards restructuring the Nigerian federalism will make Nigeria a better country where needless tensions and conflicts are minimal and where the sub-national governments are not reduced to mere appendages. So, urgent steps need to be taken so as to change the status quo to one that will work despite the multifarious ethno-regional nationalities in the country.

The cries for imbalance, marginalization, domination, restructuring and secessionist tendencies are a cry for justice, equity and fairness in our country. **Restructuring and re-making of Nigeria might look hard, but as it stands now is a do-or-die affair because if we do (restructure and re-make Nigeria) we will survive but if we don't, we die (death in the sense of ending up becoming a failed state). Hence,** Restructuring, if well done, will have a proactive effect of positioning Nigeria for real development. **The time is for restructuring and re-making of Nigeria is now!**

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Restructuring and the re-making of Nigeria has been in the spectrum of national discourse since colonial era. Historically, the colonial masters in their bid to restructure Nigeria institutionalized federalism for their political and economic interests. Unfortunately, the sustained efforts of Nationalists and successive administration address ethnic agitation strive to install a better condition for Nigerians, through robust federal practice that would address ethnic chauvinism bedevilling the country's realization of her political and socio-economic potentialities through federalism. Currently, Nigeria's centralization of political power distorts its political economy by encouraging redistribution instead of productivity. Yet, regional economic inequality and the lop-sidedness of Nigeria's political system have led to a series of protracted conflicts, political uncertainty and recurrent violent conflicts across the country. For instance, the rise of the Sunday Igboho from the south-west and the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) aim to restore Yoruba Nation and the state of Biafra respectively challenge Nigeria's current political structure. There is need to change many political, economic and administrative structures in Nigeria, but it must be done with the principle of democracy, justice and equity. As former-president, Ibrahim Gbadamosi Babangida stated in 2017, Nigeria's future is inextricably linked to restructuring its political system.

The paper recommends, therefore, for the unbundling of all bottlenecks in the constitution of the country that appear to have become an albatross on the advancement of Nigeria's federalism. On this noted, Noam Chomsky(2016: 73) stated that, "the responsibility of writer as a moral agent is to try to bring the truth about matters of human significance to an audience



that can do something about them”. Hence, the researcher acknowledges, that restructuring Nigeria is quite a herculean task under the prevailing circumstances, in other words, addressing the challenges of restructuring in Nigeria rests squarely on the federal government, National Assembly, the State Governors and their State Houses of Assembly in whose responsibilities it is to unblock all constitutional impediments to achieving a Nigeria where powers are fully devolved to the federating states with a view to ensuring the development of all states and ethnic nationalities according to their abilities.

On the basis of the foregoing, the paper commended as follows: that there should be devolution of more powers to the federating units in Nigeria; that fiscal federalism should be practiced to give room for resource control by the federating units and that the principles of federal character as enshrined in our national constitution should be observed in appointment and location of critical infrastructure across all sections of the country. Based on the recommendation, Restructuring and re-making of Nigeria is therefore, a do-or-die affair if Nigeria is to overcome its woes of becoming a failed state for her inability to control her territories, eradicate marginalization, domination and imbalance in the political, economic and administrative system of the country.

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