Chapter Twenty
Federalism, the Nigerian State and Political Restructuring: A Historical Review

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Introduction

Restructuring is a call that has continued to dominate the Nigerian political geography. The constant clamour for restructuring is predicated on Nigeria's skewed federalism which almost all have acknowledged as an aberration. The major issues that have continued to dominate the political and economic restructuring debate include but are not limited to the natural resources allocation formula which is in favour of the centre. This imbalance as argued, breeds corruption, insecurity, ineptitude, wastage, and underdevelopment. In connection with resource control, it has been argued that restructuring the political and economic system of Nigeria, which means unbundling the federation, will have the tendency of positioning the federating states, or component units or regions to tap into their local talents and natural endowments for development and political engineering. Along this line are the people of the Niger Delta, who have mobilized themselves under different forums, among which is the Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND) which had continued to agitate for absolute control of its oil and gas endowment.

Joining their Niger Delta brothers from the South-South region of Nigeria is Afenifere, a Pan-Yoruba Socio-Cultural Organization from the South-West, and their South-South counterpart, Ohanaeze Ndigbo. In July 2019, the apex Yoruba socio-political organization, Afenifere, called on President Muhammadu Buhari-led administration to make public the timeline for a return to federalism where regions will have the autonomy to run their internal affairs. This came as Aare Afe Babalola declared that the immediate solution to a myriad of problems confronting Nigeria is the restructuring of the constitution and a return to the 1960 and 1963 constitutions with some amendments. The call garnered momentum as a reaction to the group's position on the gruesome murder in cold blood of Mrs Olufunke Olakunri, daughter of Afenifere leader, Pa Reuben Fasoranti, by suspected Fulani herdsmen. Chief Ayo Adebanjo who made known to newsmen the position of the group stated that the Southwest region can no longer live under the present condition whereby the blood of innocent people is used to waste the free of a dysfunctional unitary order Adebanjo (2019).

Prelude to the 2019 general elections the clamour for restructuring garnered momentum among Ibos of the South-East region who agitated for additional state for political balance. The most recent call for restructuring came from a group of

eminent Nigerians under the aegis of the Patriots, at the State House, Abuja, who called on President Bola Tinubu to consider the drafting of a new constitution christened 'people's democratic constitution'. Speaking on behalf of the group, Emeka Anyaoku appealed to President Bola Tinubu to initiate an executive bill to the National Assembly. According to Anyaoku, the bill should propose two measures- convening a national constituent assembly with a mandate to produce a draft people's democratic constitution, and legislation for a national referendum to which the draft constitution emerging from the constituent assembly should be subjected (Punch,2024).

In the middle of all these and even with the far-reaching recommendations of the 2014 National Conference, the federal government had always turned deaf ears to the incessant calls for political restructuring. Most of the various clamour and discussions on political restructuring of Nigeria's federalism have been seriously divorced from holistic absorption of the character and nature of the Nigerian State. This paper therefore argues that the character, nature and politics of the Nigerian State as presently constituted cannot mediate the possibilities for democracy and true federalism. To put it straight, until we understand the nature and character of the Nigerian State then we have come a long way to understand the major challenges of political restructuring in Nigeria. It is therefore important to understand the dynamics of Nigeria's distinctive political economy and social balances as well as the lasting impact of the social formation's historical experience to fully appreciate the crisis of politics and power, and the challenges of political restructuring in Nigeria (Ihonvbere, 2003) (emphases added). It is expected that this paper contributes to extant literature on federalism and political restructuring in Nigeria. Therefore, this paper investigated the challenges of political restructuring in Nigeria.

The chapter, therefore, investigated how the current composition of the Nigerian State poses a challenge to political restructuring. It examined the extent to which the Nigerian military constituted a challenge to political restructuring in Nigeria. To fulfil these objectives, the following research questions are pertinent: How does the Nigerian State serve as a challenge to political restructuring in Nigeria? To what extent did the Nigerian military serve as a challenge to political restructuring inNigeria?

Concept of Federalism

K.C. Wheare who propounded a traditional concept of federalism defines it as a division of powers between one general and several regional governments, each of which in its own sphere is coordinate with others, each government must act directly on the people; each must be limited to its sphere of action; and each must within that sphere be independent of the other (Wheare, 1959). By way of characterization, the

features of federalism are a written constitution, which must be rigid; there must be an independent judiciary; both levels of government directly operates on the life of the citizens; and there must be allocation of adequate resources of revenue for the government and each level, general and regional (Paleker, 2006).It must be noted, however, that no federation anywhere conforms to the classical model as there are federal systems.

The modern definition by Prof. Livingstone (cited in Paleker, 2006) is that federalism is a system of government in which two levels of government share authority over the same territory and population, where both levels derive their powers from a constitution. Here, there is a division of powers between the central or national government and the regional or state governments, and each level of government is independent within its own sphere of jurisdiction. This system allows for the accommodation of diverse groups within a country while preserving national unity. This definition emphasizes the key aspects of federalism, such as the division of powers, constitutional basis, and the interaction between central and regional governments. The adoption of a federal system in Nigeria was premised on providing a systematic framework for national development and accommodating her multi-ethnic and multi-religious society for peaceful and harmonious coexistence.

Contextualising the State

There is no agreement among scholars on the meaning of the state. Miliband (1969) argued that what the state stands for is a number of particular institutions which, together, constitute its reality, and which interact as parts of what may be called the state system. The constituent elements of the state system include the bureaucracy, the coercive apparatus (police, army, and prisons), the judiciary, and lower levels of government that exist in the formation (Miliband 1969 in Ekekwe 1986). However, there are different conceptions of the state. The liberal conception of the state argues that the state is neutral and as such impartially mediates between competing groups. According to the liberal view of the state, there is no ruling class as such in society; therefore state power is not exercised in favour of any such class (Ekekwe, 1986). The Marxists argue that the state remains a potent instrument of class domination. The basic tenet of this view is that the role of the state is the maintenance and preservation of order so as to protect and advance the interest of the ruling class.

What distinguishes the state from other social institutions is that, apart from being the ultimate coercive power, it makes exclusive claim to the legitimate use of coercive force (Ake, 1981). Thus, Ekekwe (1986) buttressed the point that the state in the post-colonial periphery is a capitalist type of state even though to some extent it is different from the state in the advanced capitalist formations. The difference between the two capitalist states is that whereas the state in the advanced capitalist

formations functions to maintain the economic and social relations under which bourgeois accumulation takes place in the periphery of capitalism factors which have to do with the level of development of the productive forces makes the state, through its several institutions and apparatuses, a direct instrument for accumulation for the dominant class or its elements (Ekekwe, 1986).

Political Restructuring

Lukman and Hassan (2020) defined political restructuring as a transition from a lopsided federal political structure to a true federalism characterised by political inclusiveness, people-oriented constitutional amendments, resource control, electoral process, political representation, sharing of offices, citizens right, protection of lives and properties, and building of enduring political infrastructure. The practice of federalism the world over has various challenges attributed to the fact that it is synonymous with true democracy. Therefore, one cannot isolate the fact that there will always be the likelihood of expression by some groups or ethnic nationalities, of dissatisfaction and injustice melted on them by the extant arrangement. In the Nigerian political geography, the clamour for political restructuring has remained a recurring decimal even as one would hardly feel the impact occasioned by the demands for a change of status quo from the political system.

It is generally established that it was federalism that brought together all the over two hundred and fifty ethnic nationalities in Nigeria, we cannot say however that it has been able to bind them together. Over the years, these ethnic nationalities in Nigeria especially the dominant ones (Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba, and Ibo) have been living together like strange bedfellows due to perceived mutual social injustice. Therefore, in the attempts to liberate the country out of the woods, the clamour for political restructuring has always taken centre stage. Therefore, political restructuring, in the context of this study is used to represent the incessant clamour for classical federalism as practised in states like the United States of America, where the federating states are both coordinated and independent.

Evolution of Nigerian Federalism

The history of Nigeria's federalism has been largely traced by scholars to the Oliver Lyttleton constitution of 1954. But of course, a full appreciation of 1954 must begin with proper digestion and assimilation of Lord Lugard's 1924 epochal amalgamation of the Northern and Southern protectorates. Perhaps we could go down memory lane; 1861, the making into a state, of the “geographical entity” called Nigeria. The effective occupation of Nigeria by the British colonial government dates back to the year 1807. In 1807, the colonial government ordered all African and European merchants to legitimize trades in commodities such as

palm oil, ivory and others, as a substitute for the slave trade. In the quest to monitor and enforce the ban on slave trading, the government annexed Lagos as a colony in 1861. Following closely, the government placed all the territories of the coastal towns under her control as the oil rivers protectorate to enable her to extend to the hinterland. By 1900, the government had formally brought under her control both the colony and protectorate of Lagos and Niger territories. As succinctly posited by Dode:

> The geographical location currently known as Nigeria was thus by 1900 made up of three created distinct entities, viz: the colony and protectorate of Lagos, the protectorate of Northern Nigeria and the protectorate of Southern Nigeria. By 1906, Sir Walter Egerton, the officer in charge of the Southern territories (Lagos and the Southern protectorates) unified both territories which was to be called the protectorate of Southern Nigeria. By 1912, Lord Lugard had been appointed Governor-General for the two separate protectorates. In one fell swoop, Lugard in 1914 amalgamated both protectorates (North and South) which become known as a colony and protectorate of Nigeria (Dode, 2015,p.57).

Alapiki (2003) argued that the amalgamation exercise was basically for British administrative convenience and not to harmonize or integrate the discrete indigenous nationalities. Flint (1969 also cited in Alapiki, 2003), observed that there was scarcely any discussion in London concerning the fundamental significance at amalgamation. Even in 1912, imaginative men might have seen the union of North and South as a great advance in British's Nigerian mission, as the first step towards a new nation. But British officials never seriously discussed how conflicting policies in the two Nigeria's administration might be harmonized, how the rapidly growing individualism of the South with its cash crops, its rapidly expanding mission schools, growing wage-earning and clerical class, its African entrepreneurs and petty capitalists, could be blended with Northern feudal conservatism, Muslim law and self-sufficiency (Alapiki, 2003).

By 1946, the regionalization of Nigeria into three (North, East and the West) has already been completed by Sir Richard's constitution. Richard's constitution assigned specific and distinct jurisdiction functions and authorities to the regional government. Richard's constitution no doubt has been dubbed the “forerunner” of federalism in Nigeria. After the 1946 constitution, the country witnessed some crises, for example, the constitution laid the major foundation for ethnic rivalry and

tribalism in Nigeria as each of the major ethnic groups (North: Hausa/Fulani, East: Ibo, and West: Yoruba) feared ethnic domination, subordination and exploitation of the others in competition for state powers. Followed aftermath was the 1951 Macpherson's constitution with its attendant defects leading to the Eastern regional crises of 1953, the crises over the motion for self-government in 1956 and of course the Kano riot of 1953.

To address these crises, the British colonial government organized two constitutional conferences between August 15, 1953, in London and January 1957 in Lagos. These conferences birthed the Lyttleton Constitution of 1954. The Lyttleton constitution structured Nigeria into a federation consisting of three regions. As observed by Ubani, Ehiodo and Nworgu (2007, p. 40), the Lyttleton constitution shared powers between the central and regional units in a clearly defined manner. So Nigeria became a federation that comprises five parts namely the Northern, Eastern and Western regions, Southern Cameroon and the federal territory in Lagos came under the direct control of the central government. Through this development, certain legislative executive powers were translated to the region. Each regional government had its own Governor, Premier, civil service and judiciary, and control of the police, among others.

Phases of Agitations for Political Restructuring in Nigeria

Scholars, particularly Dan-Azumi, Jega and Egwu (2019) underscored five phases' or waves of agitations for political restructuring in Nigeria's political history. The **first phase** is the period from 1914 to 1947. In the aftermath of the amalgamation of Northern and Southern protectorates to form what became known as Nigeria, there was no avenue for national interaction. Western, Eastern and Northern regions were governed separately by the British colonialists. Most agitations were limited to the Lagos area with some crop of Nigerian elites demanding for opening up of the political space for competitive politics. The **second phase** is the period from 1947 to 1966. By 1947, under the Richards constitution, the British brought the three regions of the country together in a legislative council. Before this, several indigenous political leaders had begun to agitate for greater opportunity for Nigerians to govern their affairs and not just to be accorded due place in the public service. The agitations later focused on gaining independence, followed by negotiations on when the country should become independent of British colonial rule and the shape an independent Nigeria should take. The political leadership and the British eventually settled for the federal system, parliamentary government and inclusion of fundamental human rights provisions in the constitution, among others.

The **third phase** marks the period from 1966 to 1983. The introduction of military rule in Nigeria signalled the suspension of the federal system. This sparked off political agitations, which combined with the serious conflicts that resulted from

the first and second military coups (January and July 1966) which pushed the country into a civil war from 1967 to 1970. Consequently, there was a general tendency for a centralized federal system and a change of the fiscal arrangement from the pre-1966 fiscal arrangement. The changes were reflected in the 1979 constitution and remained in place with near unanimous agreement of the political leadership until the military takeover of December 1983. There were little or no significant agitations on the structure of the federal system between 1979 and 1983. Most agitations focused on the restoration of democratic rule and ensuring political inclusion.

The **fourth phase** is the period from 1983 to 1999 which saw several waves of agitations including restoration of democratic rule, reform of Nigeria's federal system to devolve more powers to the states and issues of creation of more states. The annulment of the June 12, 1993, presidential election sparked intense agitations for the military government to return power to civilians. This particular agitation rallied pro-democracy agitators to insist on a sovereign national conference to resolve issues of Nigeria's political future including issues of whether Nigeria should remain a single sovereign country; or the acceptable federal system to be adopted, among other issues. During this period, the idea of re-structuring the country into six (6) geo-political zones was mooted and power rotation among the zones. The **fifth phase** is the period from 1999 to date which has also seen intense agitations over many issues on federal structure such as devolution of powers, fiscal federal arrangement; and other specific issues of governance and as public accountability, electoral reform, strengthening of political institutions, federal character and state creation.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the post-colonial state theory espoused by Hamza Alavi (1972). Drawing from the historical specificity of the post-colonial social formation, Alavi contends that in the post-colonial society, the problem of the relationship between the state and underlying economic structure is more complex. Alavi further argues that the foreign bourgeoisie utilized the colonial state apparatus to dominate all indigenous social classes. As a result, it can be said that the superstructure in the colony is overdeveloped relative to its economic structure. This over development occurs because the colonial superstructure is rooted in the metropolitan structure, from which it is subsequently detached at the time of independence. The post-colonial state inherits that overdeveloped apparatus of state and institutionalized practices through which the operations of the indigenous social classes are regulated and controlled (Ekekwe, 1986). The basic thrust of the post-colonial state, therefore, is that apart from being overdeveloped, the state is firmly enmeshed in economic activities using state power.

The above assertion has been pooh-poohed by some critics. For example, Leys (1976, cited in Ekekwe 1986) argued that to say that the post-colonial state is overdeveloped is misleading if this means that its coercive apparatus is weightier and more ramified. Leys pointed out that there is no evidence in support of Alavi's characterization of the post-colonial state as overdeveloped on the premise that during colonialism as Alavi implies, these states began to expand rapidly. Again, on the notion that the post-colonial states have small sizes, Leys posits that if this is judged by the relatively low share of national income taken by government revenue in underdeveloped countries, the share taken by the advanced capitalist states is higher (Leys 1976). On their part, Ziemann and Lanzendofer (1977, cited in Ekekwe 1986) criticized Alavi's notion of the post-colonial state because for as long as a state is fitted for its main function, to secure societal reproduction, the extent of its influence on society is neither too great nor too small, but adequate. Despite the criticism, Alavi's theory is useful in political science and the study of social phenomena.

Firmly established here is the analytical nexus between the post-colonial state as the theoretical framework and the challenges of political restructuring in Nigeria; the subject matter of this paper. Behind the challenges facing restructuring is the character and nature of the Nigerian state. There is a strong link between the appropriation and parcelling out our collective resources or commonwealth (especially oil and gas) by those who historically captured the Nigerian state and had consequently clung tenaciously to it for covert and overt socio-economic and political survival on the one hand, and the difficulties of achieving an objective political restructuring and the dangers of upturning the status quo. This study intends to show that directly, the continuous struggle for the control of economic resources by the Nigerian State is the major challenge to political restructuring in Nigeria.

The Nigerian State and Challenges of Political Restructuring

To properly understand the root challenges facing political restructuring in Nigeria, we need to understand the character and attributes of state and politics in Nigeria. For instance, the post-colonial state maintained an order in which the interests of the ruling class were favoured in the long run. This is because it preserves the conditions under which the bourgeoisie are the dominant class over the proletariats (Kalagbor & Akani, 2022). The state has limited autonomy. As Ake (1985) has pointed out, the unique feature of the state in Nigeria is typical of periphery capitalist formations generally, is that the state has limited autonomy. That is, the state is institutionally constituted in such a way that it enjoys little independence from the social classes, particularly the hegemonic class. There may well be a case of talking of political administration or government simply instead of state. It does not matter what we call it as long as we are clear about its objective character and how it differs from the pure ideas of the state.

What this means is that the political differences and struggles, including the clamour for political restructuring in the society, are not easily mediated because even the state is also immersed in the class struggle as seen in Nigeria. Under this situation, therefore, the rules which govern political competition and other aspects of social life do not have adequate institutional guarantees of their impartiality. Political and economic competition becomes "Hobbesian" norm-less and lawless. Another discernable attribute of the state is that it turns on the calculus of strength rather than legitimacy. Ake (1985) averred that contending groups struggle grimly, polarizing their differences and convinced that their ability to protect their interests and obtain justice is co-extensive with their power. That creates the politics of anxiety. In this type of politics, there is deep alienation and distrust among political competitors.

Consequently, they are profoundly afraid of being in the power of their opponents. This fear in turn breeds a huge appetite for power, which is sought without restraint and used without restraint. This is the type of politics that has prevailed in Nigeria since independence. This can be interpreted to mean that the Nigerian state like the colonial state before it assumes the calculus of strength rather than legitimacy. The nature and character of the Nigerian state rule out a politics of moderation and mandate the politics of lawlessness, militarization and the deployment of brute force against any opposition. It is from this perspective that the clamour for political restructuring in Nigeria will continue to hit a brick wall. In other words, the incessant call for restructuring may never succeed.

Political restructuring will always be resisted by the Nigerian state because the president and state governors act with impunity and are believed to be above the law, thus holding the country to ransom. A state where governors run to Abuja every month to appropriate federal revenue, a state where senators and members of the House of Representatives do not represent any constituents but themselves. In a state such as this, the clamour and debate for restructuring will always be treated with kid gloves. Furthermore, the attribute of the state as an instrument of economic power cannot be overemphasized. Those who wield state power have always used it as an instrument of accumulation for themselves and their cronies. As aptly captured by Ekekwe:

> Government in Nigeria, as indeed in other developing countries, has tended to be preoccupied with power and its material perquisites. Given the country's conditions of underdevelopment, power offers the opportunity of a lifetime to rise above the general poverty and squalor that pervades the entire society. It provides a rare opportunity to acquire wealth and prestige and to be able to distribute

> benefits in the form of jobs, contracts, scholarships, gifts of money and so on to one's relatives, and political allies. Such is the preoccupation with power and its material benefits that political ideologies as to how society can be organised and ruled to the best advantage of all hardly enter into the calculation (Ekekwe, 1986 p.104-105).

According to Ihonvbere (2003) after independence in 1960, the Nigerian state has always survived through the appropriation of our common resources using the instrumentality of state power. Since independence in 1960, this has been the character and nature of the operators of the Nigerian state. Below is an x-ray of classified looting of public funds by the operators of the Nigerian state.

Table 20. 1: Classified looting of funds by the Nigerian State and its Operators

S/N	Names	Deposit in London (£) (in bn)	Deposit in Swiss ($) (in bn)	Deposit in USA ($) (in mn)	Deposit in Germany (DM) (in bn)	Total ₦ Equivalent (1999) Exchange Rate (in trn)
1.	Gen. Babangida	-	7.416	2.00	9.00	2.63.005
2.	Gen. Abubakar	1.131	2.33	800	16.00	0.493
3.	Mike Akhigbe	1.2	2.42	671	9.00	0.805
4.	Jerry Useni	3.04	2.01	1.03	900	0.805.009
5.	Ismaila Gowon	1.03	2.00	1.03	700	0.501.07
6.	Umaru Diko	4.4	1.46	700	345	0.894.065
7.	Paul Ogwuma	300	1.42	200	500	35,000,000
8.	Gen. Sani Abacha	5.01	4.09	800	3.01	1.210,007
9.	Mohammed Abacha	300	1.2	1501.59	535	0.210,007
10.	Abdu Abacha	700	1.21	900	417	0.338,004
11.	Wada Nas	300	1.32	--	300	0.237.004
12.	Tom Ikimi	400	1.39	153	371	0.252.553
13.	Dan Etete	1.12	1.03	400	1.72	0.372.043
14.	Don Etiebet	2.5	1.06	700	361	0.567.047
15.	Majial Mustapha	600	1.001	--	210	0.199,793
16.	Bashiru Dalhatu	2.9	1.09	360	1.66	0.688.095
17.	Worhishi Ibrahim	2.3	1.001	161	1.43	0.555.049
18.	Hassan Adamu	300	200	700	--	0.130,005
19.	T. Y. Danjuma	1.36	1.02	300	190	0.342.007
20.	Ishaya Bamaiyi	120	800	--	--	94,000
21.	**Total**	**6.87.910**	**34.468**	**5.374.296.65**	**59.291.06**	**139.999.804**

Source**:** Compiled by the author from Financial Times (1999); Nigerian Commentator (1999).

From the table above, it is revealed that former military president, Gen. Ibrahim Babangida alone looted a total of N2.63.005 trillion using the instrumentality of the state. This is closely followed by Gen. Sani Abacha with a sum of N1.210, 007 trillion, Mohammed Abacha with N0.210,007 trillion, T. Y. Danjuma with a sum of N0.342.007 trillion, former petroleum ministers, Dan Etete and Don Etiebet in the sum of N0.372.043 trillion and N0.567.047 trillion respectively, Ishaya Bamaiyi in the sum of N94, 000 billion, among others.

Leveraging under the Petroleum Act of 1969 and the Land Use Act of 1978, among others, the Nigerian state as shown above has continued to plunder and amass wealth from oil and gas and dispossess the rural peasants of their land and mineral resources in the Niger Delta. For instance, President Obasanjo, who was said to have only N20, 000.00 in his bank account at the time of his release from prison, allegedly shared in the PTDF loot and built an N2 billion Library in addition to his Bell University (from dubious compulsive donations). For these projects and Ota Farm, thousands of acres of peasants' land were enclosed. His Bell and Gas Company owns oil blocks, markets crude oil and imports refined oil for NNPC. He was Petroleum Minister for almost eight years but never gave an account of the ministry under him. President Obasanjo invested N27 billion in the controversial Transnational Cooperation of Nigeria Plc (Transcorp) on which Board are names such as Festus Odumegwu, Mrs Ndidi Okereke Onyuike, Aliko Dangote and Femi Otedola (Ogali,2016).

The massacre of Odi, a small community in Bayelsa State by the Nigerian State under Obasanjo is a clear message of intent that it is not going to tolerate or accommodate any challenge or clamour for resource control and restructuring and that it was going to crush any opposition without due regard for rule of law which is a fundamental principle of democracy. The continuous quest to use state power as an instrument of domination, appropriation and primitive accumulation has driven Nigeria's political elites and those who control state power to systematically and invidiously enthrone and entrench a culture of monocracy or over-concentration of power at the centre. The Nigerian state since independence in 1960 has remained in the whims and caprices of those who captured it from the colonial state.

As pointed out by Ihonvbere, (2003), the irrationality of the Nigerian power elite, often rationalized in the name of speaking for or representing particular ethnic and regional or religious communities, has worked directly to encourage the excessive concentration of power at the center and the near total erosion of federation. The state has become the quickest instrument of capital accumulation. For the Nigerian state therefore, the challenges is to penetrate it by any means necessary and preside over its resources. The reality is that the resources are not generated from tax collection by the so-called federal government; rather the

resources have come from the exploration and exploitation of oil and gas from the now ravaged Niger Delta. In the final analysis therefore, for those that have come to locate their visibility, accumulation, opportunities, and power at the centre and the ability of that centre to control oil resources, the devolution of power or re-federalization or political restructuring is hardly on the political agenda (Ihonvbere, 2003). The point is that since independence in 1960, the Nigerian State has always survived through the looting and appropriation of state resources using the instrumentality of state power.

Military as a Challenge to Political Restructuring in Nigeria

The founding fathers of Nigeria's federalism dreamt of a federal system where the distribution of governmental powers shall be shared among the tiers of government in a manner where the federating or component units or regions will not be at a disadvantaged position. This was experimented through successive constitutions that share powers between the central and regional units in a clearly defined manner. However, this was eroded by the long years of military rule from 1966–1979 and 1984–1999, particularly through state creation. According to Kehinde (2003), the current federal structure in Nigeria is a product of military rule. The single most important factor in the evolution of the Nigerian federalism is the unitarist military. Of the over sixty years of independence, the military controlled the reins of government for almost thirty years. Therefore, the nature of the federation is overly centralized, reflecting the military flavour. Apart from the restructuring of the federal system in 1963, every other restructuring exercise has been undertaken by the military. Furthermore, the dynamics of intergovernmental relations and resource control have been greatly conditioned by the centralized character of the military (Kehinde, 2003, p. 247). Hence, Ihonvbere (2003) argued that with the first intervention in politics in 1966, the military not only set the basis for eroding all structures and features of federalism but also began to build new authoritarian structures and attitudes derived from its grossly undemocratic, intolerant, and commandist nature and structure.

Even though the military had returned back to the barracks in May 1999, it had completed the de-federalization of Nigeria. De-federalization became a deliberate process of eroding or dismantling a federal system and replacing it with a unitary arrangement. Overall, character of the Nigerian state and politics is the major challenge to political restructuring in Nigeria. The specificity of the Nigerian state is that of appropriation of the wealth and resources of the people using the instrument of state power– the military or civilian. The state is heavily immersed in the struggle of the class. The implication of this is that first, the political differences and struggles in Nigerian polity and the struggles in the society, including the clamour for political restructuring are not easily mediated because the Nigerian state is

equally immersed in the class struggle. This finding is in line with that of Nwafor-Orizu, Okolo and Tochukwu (2018) who argued that one of the challenges of political restructuring in Nigeria is elite interest (the state).

Conclusion

The currency with which the clamour for political restructuring in Nigeria has continued to command is an indication and admission of the fact that the existing structure in Nigeria is not working. As noted earlier, concerns have continued to be mounted by individuals and groups to revisit this largely perceived pseudo-federalism or feeding-bottle federalism which has been at the mercy of a few elites, who are appropriating and plundering the commonwealth. Restructuring therefore has become eminent. Powers should be devolve from the centre to the federating states. The essence is to accord more autonomy and responsibility to the states, which will enable them to become more viable and pursue development for the people.

The National Assembly should proceed on immediate constitutional amendment to allow every state to have control of the resources in their areas. Moreover, there should be periodic review of the constitution at least every four years. This should aimed at capturing agitations of the ethno-regional entities and states in a bid to strengthen Nigeria federal system. States should have exclusive right to exploit and harness the natural resources within their territory and pay royalty to the federal government. Therefore, additional states and local government areas should be created to ensure that all the regions in the country have equal number of states and local governments.

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