

At-Issue

New Clamour for “Restructuring” in Nigeria: Elite Politics, Contradictions, and Good Governance

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Abstract: Nigeria’s return to democratic rule in 1999 has led to an emergent type of politics around its federal system, usually expressed in the rhetoric of “political restructuring.” Ostensibly, this is to articulate the need for a review of the existing federal arrangement to allow for more representation and equity in the system. This piece offers a radical perspective to the debate and politics of restructuring in Nigeria. The authors argue that the calls for restructuring have increasingly become a strategy in elite politics for power and its associated material opportunities. The authors analyze the ethno-regional politics surrounding the restructuring debate and identify the contradictions in the demands of regional elites and their groupings. Given that the issue of political restructuring, as advocated, is elite-driven and has the tendency to lead to endless agitations for change, the authors conclude that restructuring is not the solution to the problems of the country. Rather, the paramount concern should be with the practice of good governance to address the myriad of problems affecting the masses.

Keywords: federalism; restructuring; governance; Nigeria; elite politics

Introduction

Nigeria’s federalism has been a source of intense controversy since the pre-independence era. As aptly captured by Suberu and Agbaje, the country’s federalism is plagued by “paradoxes, pathologies and irregularities.”¹ This has made Nigeria a theatre of recurring ethno-regional tensions, inter-governmental conflicts, and ceaseless agitations for a reconfiguration of the federal structure in order to allow for a more equitable distribution of power and material opportunities. It is useful to recall that the 1967 civil war was partly an outcome of the severe ethnic rivalry over claims (and counter-claims) of domination and marginalization, which emerged from the first military coups of the post-independence era. Similarly, there was vehement agitation for a Sovereign National Conference (SNC) in the southern region following the annulment of the 1993 presidential election won by Moshood Abiola. To the southern political elite, this was a calculated attempt by the northern elite to prevent a transfer of power to the south. This produced a political crisis that quickly enveloped the country. Following the

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<http://www.africa.ufl.edu/asq/v18/v18i4a3.pdf>

transition to democratic rule in 1999, there was yet more tension in the Niger Delta over claims that the region, which produces oil wealth enjoyed by the nation, was experiencing marginalization in the distribution of resources.

With the emergence of the Muhammadu Buhari government, which ousted the People’s Democratic Party (PDP) from power in the 2015 general election, Nigeria has faced new calls for a review of the federal system, dubbed “restructuring.” This agitation comes on the heels of a rising perception of total neglect of the southern region—especially among the southeast Igbo—in the distribution of political appointments, and the sudden rise of the Independent People of Biafra (IPOB) which resurrected the Biafra secession agenda. Increasingly, calls for restructuring became widespread and accepted by the different ethno-regional groupings, with their own individual—and often confusing—interpretations of what the term actually means. This produced a multiplicity of definitions and ideas about how to achieve a long-desired “true” federalism, reflecting the historical geopolitics and conflicts around the practice in Nigeria.

This paper attempts to explain the ethno-regional politics surrounding the restructuring debate in contemporary Nigeria, and highlight the contradictions and impracticalities in some of the demands. We argue that the habitual calls for a restructuring of the Nigerian federation are but a strategy of inter-elite competition for power and material opportunities. The authors further contend that restructuring of Nigeria is not the solution to the problems bedeviling the country. Rather, the paramount focus should be on good governance that will address a myriad of problems affecting the masses.

Political Restructuring as Instrument of Elite Competition

We approach the idea of political restructuring beginning with Kohli who advanced the argument that it is an attempt towards establishing “effective institutions that can both accommodate diverse interests and provide effective government.”² Amuwo et al. argue that federal restructuring targets three main objectives: (i) the creation of a system that effectively promotes collective identity and distributive politics; (ii) the establishment of a system that promotes equity and justice amongst the multinational groups characterizing a federal system; and (iii) the understanding of mutual tolerance and respect for the rights of aggrieved ethnic groups.³ Indeed, the idea of political restructuring represents a valuable attempt for addressing structural imbalances in a country such as Nigeria. However, restructuring has been an overused rhetoric and political strategy by the elite in their internal struggles for power. Thus, the idea of political restructuring in the Nigerian context is arguably a euphemism for redistribution, especially the reallocation of power and economic opportunities among the elite. This brings to relevance elite perspectives on ethnicity and ethnic politics. As the perspective conceives the elite—a minority group who play the dominant role in determining the affairs of a state—as the most important variable in analysing political phenomena, it can be argued that the direction of political discourses, struggles, and agitations at any given time cannot be disconnected meaningfully from the activities of the elite.⁴ The contemporary discourse on political restructuring in Nigeria should be located within this context as ongoing political restructuring arguments and agitations have a conspicuous ethnic coloration founded on grievances over perceived domination/marginalization.

The ethno-regional groupings in Nigeria champion different and competing demands for a restructured federal system. In this regard, one of the useful definitions of ethnicity includes “the employment or mobilisation of ethnic identity and difference to gain advantage in situations of competition, conflict or cooperation.”⁵ Nigerian elites manipulate ethnic identity for their political and economic advancement. Therefore, it is useful to view ethnicity as a reflection of elite interests.⁶ For example, Osaghae pointed out that “(w)hat are called ethnic interests and agendas are actually interests and agendas defined and propagated by those at the vanguard of ethnic movements,” which are usually self-appointed elites.⁷ He further argued that “ethnicity does not assume political salience except when it is articulated and manipulated by privileged members of society, the main aspirants to and competitors for power to further their interests.”⁸ Quite often, existing socio-economic conditions facilitate elite objectives by allowing them to easily recruit masses who buy into elite agendas, systematically framed in ethnic jingoism and accepted as a common interest of the ethnic group. For Osaghae then, structural inequalities “makes their [elite] task easier because, in the name of bettering the lot of the group and/or catching up with others, the elites succeed in recruiting the masses by promoting the elite interest as the common interest.”⁹ For this reason, scholars conclude that political stability in plural states largely depends on elite consensus. In his seminal work on consociational democracy, Lijphart argues that the willingness of the elite to agree on a power-sharing formula is a major recipe for a limited inter-ethnic rivalry and political stability.¹⁰ In a similar vein, democracy theorists have posited that values of the political elite drive consolidation in newly democratising countries.¹¹

The Nigerian case is one of the clear examples that show the significance of the elite to ethnicity and politics. The elite in Nigeria are aggressive and boundless in their quest for power and control of state resources. Agbaje and Adejumo conclude that the struggle for power among the Nigerian elite is “fierce, lawless, and extremely consuming” because of the enormous opportunities attached to power. Ethnicity is one of the major instruments used in their contestation for power, which has often escalated into ethno-religious conflicts.¹² Not surprisingly, the history of political parties and elections in Nigeria deeply intertwines with ethnicity. As such, the perennial clamour for political restructuring cannot be substantially divorced from elite politics and has gradually become a common feature of Nigeria’s politics. The use of the rhetoric of restructuring has seemingly proven successful to ethnic leaders in their competitions.¹³ To be sure, it has led to power rotations, reallocation of resources, state creation and increased federal appointments for the leaders of ethnic groups who appear more vocal in the claims of marginalization and agitations for restructuring.

Federalism as Arena of Elite Politics

Nigeria’s federalism is certainly imperfect and problematic. According to K.C Wheare, “a country may have a federal constitution, but in practice it may work that constitution in such a way that its government is not federal.”¹⁴ Nigeria exhibits a system of federalism wherein the federating units have no clear independence from the center; rather, they are dependent and subordinate. This negates the federal principle that enjoins independence among the governments that make up the federation. Citing Jan Erk, Babalola therefore concludes that Nigeria, indeed, exemplifies the idea of a “federation without federalism.”¹⁵ As presently

constituted, Nigeria’s federal system exhibits a high degree of centralization as national resources are substantially concentrated at the center. This over-centralization, which began during the era of military rule, is the fundamental incongruity characterizing the system. Thus, the recurrent agitations within the incomplete federal arrangement, under different slogans such as “true federalism”, “resource control”, “self-determination”, or “restructuring” are clear testimonies that the system in its existing structure is prone to many controversies. The Nigerian elite have continuously exploited the imperfections in the federal system to negotiate power and ethno-regional relations with the ultimate agenda of increasing their access to state resources and opportunities to acquire power.

Elite struggles in Nigeria’s federation have come into play in terms of power rotation, territorial demarcation, and resource distribution. Changes in revenue structures, especially with the exponential increase in wealth following the abundant discovery of oil resources in the Niger Delta, has greatly shaped elite competition. This is exacerbated by the central government’s positioning as the main distributor of state resources (courtesy of long years of military rule). Revenue distribution has consistently been a source of intense politics and this is not mainly for development—as claimed by the regional leaders—but to facilitate increased access to oil wealth. Deep disagreements exist over appropriate distribution formulas, control of oil revenue, and which region or level of government should have the larger allocation.

Obi correctly notes that Nigeria’s fiscal federalism has produced a wide range of conflicts which manifest in the following ways: federal government versus other tiers of government; federal government versus the states; federal government versus the oil-producing states; oil-producing states versus the non-oil producing states; federal government versus the oil minorities; and oil minorities versus the oil multinationals.¹⁶ Favourable changes in the revenue allocation system to the constituent units have not generated appreciable developments in the various states. Rather, increased resource allocation has proven to be an increase in riches for the regional elites who divert the state allocations. In fact, there is no evidence to suggest that the increase in the revenue of the oil-producing states, occasioned by a thirteen percent derivation, had positive impacts on the socio-economic well-being of ordinary people in the area.

State and local government creation was a major feature of Nigeria’s federalism during the military era. Initially, state creation was an agitation by minority groups in order to guarantee their autonomy against historical structures of domination by other groups.¹⁷ The issue later became a means for negotiating increased access to national resources and a strategy to weaken opposition or reward patronage in the circle of the political elite. For example, Suberu points to the creation of the Mid-West region in 1963 as an apparent attempt by the ruling federal coalition of the Northern People’s Congress (NPC) and the National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC) to destroy the political base of its opposition—the Action Group (AG)—in the Western region. Furthermore, the military adeptly used the process of state and local government creation to reward allies and create legitimacy for their unpopular regimes.¹⁸ This was particularly the case under the military regimes of Ibrahim Babangida and Sani Abacha.¹⁹

Indeed, the area where politics becomes more heated concerns the rotation of power and access to appointments because of the massive position the federal government occupies in the current structure. Control of the center has been a major source of conflict among all political

elites. On the one hand, there was an intense struggle between ethnic-majority elites over control of federal power. On the other hand, there were cries by ethnic minority elites over the reality that the majority groups have been exclusively enjoying federal opportunities. One attempt at elite-consensus to douse the tension was the establishment of the federal character principle introduced in the 1979 Constitution that aimed at ensuring federal institutions accommodated the country's diversity in order to promote national unity. The policy targeted adequate representation in politics, bureaucracy, educational institutions and the security institutions.²⁰ Notwithstanding its noble objectives, the federal character policy ended up becoming a source of intense elite competition that "proved to be extremely divisive in regional, ethnic, and religious terms."²¹ The policy became merely a system for "sharing the national cake" for which no substantial consensus was reached by elites on the modalities for sharing federal resources. Clearly, federalism in Nigeria has promoted contests among different layers of elites using ethnicity to pursue their interests. The historical analysis presented provides a background to the emergent issues in post-military democratic politics.

Political Geography of Restructuring

A major feature of democratic rule since 1999 is a new form of politics around Nigeria's federalism usually encapsulated by political restructuring rhetoric. After democratic transition, the political space rapidly filled with riotous cries of marginalization. This is a continuation of ethno-regional elite competition using the potential of democracy to advance their interests. Each of the regional groupings has pushed a supposedly ethno-regional position on the modalities for a functional federal system, which speaks to their interests around power and wealth redistribution. The Niger Delta elite took center stage in advocating a restructuring that will facilitate a new distribution formula anchored on a derivation-based system in the existing fiscal federalism, otherwise known as "resource control". Their narrative built on environmental destruction and socio-economic impoverishment caused by massive exploitations in the oil-producing region. However, with the emergence of Goodluck Jonathan (of the minority Ijaw ethnic group) as president in 2010, there was not only a sharp decline in violence in the region, but also a significant reduction in the agitations for resource control.

Yet when Goodluck Jonathan lost the presidential election to Muhammadu Buhari in 2015, the country yet again witnessed an upsurge in violence in the Niger Delta following daily bombing of oil installations by a newly formed Niger Delta Avengers (NDA) and other emergent militant organizations, which coincided with a radical fall in oil prices at the international market. This contributed significantly to the economic recession experienced in the middle of 2016 and 2017. Eventually new peace initiatives negotiated between the federal government and the Niger Delta leaders reduced tension in the region. The Niger Delta leaders used this opportunity to present fresh demands with primary focus on the relocation of the headquarters of major International Oil Companies (IOCs) to the Niger Delta region and more involvement of the regional elite in the oil industry and ownership of oil blocs.²²

In the case of the south-east, the Igbo elite have been very vocal in their claims of marginalization and domination by other ethnic groups. These claims have fuelled youth restlessness and movements aimed at resuscitating the failed Biafra state. For the Igbo elite, the federal system is characterized by lop-sidedness against the interest of the region, particularly

in the allocation of power and national resources. Since the end of the civil war, they see the south-east region totally excluded from power although their claim does not acknowledge the fact that an Igbo held the position of Senate Presidency under the Obasanjo government (1999-2007) and had they adequate representation in the Jonathan-led government (2011-2015). Against this backdrop, self-determination groups such as the Movement for the Actualisation of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) and Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) sprang up at different times threatening to secede from Nigeria and establish a Biafran state. While these ethnic groups appear driven by the masses (based on composition), they are prone to capture or manipulation by ethnic elites. As argued by Osaghae, in situations where elite associations fail to meet their demands, the elite easily switch to mass-based unions to advance their interests.²³

Yoruba elites who had pressured for a Sovereign National Conference (SNC), especially after the military government failed to hand over power to MKO Abiola following the 1993 presidential election, reduced their agitations after a supposed elite pact led to the emergence of Olusegun Obasanjo as the president in 1999. They then changed their calls from “power-shift” to “true federalism” — a synonym for a federal system composed of a weak center and independent constituent units. This placed more emphasis on the devolution of power and the establishment of independent security agencies—especially the police force—by the state governments. Some Yoruba leaders have gone further, advocating a return to the older system that characterized the early post-independence era with the regions more independent and powerful against the center. In their analysis, this would be a true federal system and reduce excessive attraction towards the center.

Many believe that the northern elite favour the status-quo because it seemingly promotes their continued political dominance and economic interests. Yet the northern elite have had reasons to express their frustrations with the federal system, especially when other ethno-regional groupings are in power. For example, the adoption of the sharia legal system by major northern states during Obasanjo’s tenure, as noted by Mohammed, was a “reaction to the calls for a sovereign national conference, resource control...” by the other competing groups.²⁴ Although observers outside the region often perceived sharia as an attempt to Islamize the northern states against the spirit of the Nigerian constitution, it became a useful tool for championing a stronger region and resistance against any attempts to undermine the interests of the north. It is unsurprising that the sharia system apparently collapsed with the end of the Obasanjo administration and the emergence of Umar Musa Yar’Adua as president in 2007.

The government has to date staged two elite-dominated conferences ostensibly to find a way to re-negotiate the terms of relationship for a new Nigeria. The Obasanjo government organized the first in 2005, labelled the National Political Reforms Conference. By the stated agenda and selection of participants, it was clear that the conference did not really aim to address genuine concerns in the Nigerian federalism. Still, some useful discussions around electoral, civil society, police/prison, and judicial reforms did come under deliberation. However, the heavy involvement of government in the selection of delegates, timing of deliberations, setting agendas and attempting to manipulate outcome precluded substantive change.²⁵ Indeed, the purpose of the conference, as later observed, was largely promoting a ‘third-term agenda’ for President Obasanjo through constitutional amendments.²⁶ The conference ultimately failed following a conflict between Niger Delta delegates and their

northern counterparts over resource control and demands for a twenty-five percent derivation on oil revenue, for which the former staged a walkout.²⁷

In 2014, the Jonathan administration organized a similar conference. Considering its timing and the selection of delegates to the conference, this was probably a strategy to mobilize support for President Jonathan's re-election bid in 2015. The conference convened as President Jonathan was fast losing support due to a weak performance record and mounting corruption scandals within his government. The huge amount of money allocated for the conference reinforced the perception of a political agenda: seven billion naira in total, and allowances of ten million naira paid to each delegate.²⁸ The selection of delegates was also controversial given that most of the appointees seemed to be loyalists of the Jonathan government. Thus, the opposition All Progressives Congress (APC) boycotted the conference, refusing to allow their members to participate.

However, unlike Obasanjo's earlier conference, Jonathan's actually produced substantive recommendations. These included: (i) creation of eighteen additional states (three per geopolitical zone); (ii) an increase to seventeen percent in revenue allocation to the oil-producing region based on the principle of derivation; (iii) a restructuring of the revenue distribution formula among the tiers of government (federal government – 42.5 percent, state governments – 35 percent and local governments 22.5 percent); (iv) the rotation of presidential power among the six geo-political zones; and other matters not of immediate interest here.²⁹ Yet the eventual fate of these recommendations proves the conference's political nature. President Jonathan promised implementation but failed to do so prior to his failure to secure a second term. Given their initial opposition to the conference, the new APC-led government subsequently declared its unwillingness to implement the recommendations of the conference.

Contradictions in Restructuring

We now identify some unrealistic points in these varied demands given the nature of the Nigerian nation-state and its federal system. First, there is an obvious problem in the new calls for creation of more states. History has shown that the creation of states is a complex issue in Nigeria. The existing thirty-six state structure already faces criticism as too large and expensive in consideration of the country's weakened economy. Each state has its own associated bureaucracies that primarily operate with the monthly allocations received from their share of national revenue. Creation of more states only suggests a further pressure on these limited allocations by increasing the cost of administration.

The creation of states is also a precursor to the emergence of new unproductive and predatory state elites whose major interest is the appropriation of funds. Many existing states came into being for political reasons and not developmental purposes. Thus, they lack economic viability that could guarantee financial independence from the center. This is another negation of the federal principle. A consensus among scholars of federalism is that both the federal center and the constituent units must possess sufficient economic resources to maintain their territories.³⁰ Moreover, it should be expected that the creation of additional states will thereby prompt a new cycle of agitation for yet more states.

As noted above, some have called for a return to the old system characterized by the three main regions in the immediate post-independence era. However, any return to that regional

system will certainly rekindle minority fears and open a floodgate of new agitation. Minority concerns with regionalism underscore the earliest worries about inequality in Nigeria’s federalism. Since the 1950s, minority leaders have registered their displeasure over the regional system based upon the three dominant ethnic groups. Indeed, their agitations informed many state creation exercises that would later take place in the country’s history. The Willink Commission of 1958 refused to yield to the pressure from the Niger Delta minorities to recommend the creation of new states, noting that that the solution to the minority problem does not lie in the creation of new constituent units.³¹ Instead, the Commission recommended the creation of a special agency to address the developmental problems of the Niger Delta area.

Therefore, reverting to a system that promotes ethnic domination and the marginalization of any minority will not only increase ethno-regional tensions but also create a sustained instability in the system. Federalism advocates “self-rule and shared-rule” through the distribution of powers between the center and the constituent units.³² However, absolute independence of the governments within the federation as advocated by certain elites poses problems of practical application. Even steadfast proponent of federalism K.C. Wheare admits “while I have maintained that it is necessary to define the federal principle dogmatically, I do not maintain that it is necessary to apply it religiously.”³³ Given its complex nature and history, Nigeria needs a federal system that ensures the supremacy of the central government over the states. The size of the federation requires a strong central government that can effectively regulate competition for national resources and power. This is in line with Maddox’s contention that “there is no true federation ... unless the central authority possesses a power of decision and action independent of the wills of the separate governments.”³⁴

The present activities of the governors regarding their treatment of opposition and outright domination of political space, shows that devolution of power and weakening of the center portends more danger for Nigeria’s democracy. While the president seems powerful due to the scale of the federation, in reality, they do not have the degree of dominance in government as many governors. The president, as the head of the federal executive, is answerable to a multi-party, multi-ethnic and multi-religious legislature, while many of the governors have more largesse given the party dominant legislatures in their states.³⁵ This gives the governors the greater ability to dominate the political space. They control virtually all the institutions including the judiciary, electoral bodies, and local governments. A more powerful regional state system—especially with the emergence of a state police—will more likely produce a collection of authoritarian regimes in the states.

The arguments advanced by elites in their persistent calls for restructuring show an apparent misconception of federalism. Very often, their idea of a restructured federal system tends more towards confederation where “the general government is dependent upon the regional governments.”³⁶ Whereas a federation is distinguished from other such states by the fact that its central government incorporates regional units into its decision-making procedure on a constitutionally entrenched basis.³⁷ In a confederation, substantial governmental powers remain with the confederal states. As stated elsewhere, a “confederal government does not exercise authority over the citizens who relate directly to their own separate component governments and indirectly to the confederal government.”³⁸ In a federation there is a direct relationship between citizens and their states, as well as with the federal government. The

consistent demands for stronger constituent units implicitly advocates a confederal system even without the knowledge of its primary supporters.

A Good Governance Alternative

We have established that the perennial agitations for restructuring are more political than developmental; they are largely elitist and not mass-based. While occasionally seemingly people-centred agendas surface in these demands to obtain popular support, in reality, these are a smokescreen for certain elite objectives. There is no sign that the agitations will end even with substantial efforts to address the demands of each group. In fact, every step made in responding to issues raised by these groups has only opened up new agitation and resistance by other groups. Rather than dousing tensions, policies such as state creation, federal character principle and power rotation contributed to inter-ethnic rivalries orchestrated by intense elite politics. Therefore, there is sufficient reason to argue that the main issue for Nigeria is not political restructuring but rather creating structures that promote real mass-oriented development. What matters to Nigerians is having a government capable of delivering on their socio-economic and political demands. In this regard, issues around social justice, equity and fairness are crucial.

What will bring about equity and fairness for Nigerians will not be political restructuring, as defined by the elite, but the actual practice of the principles of good governance. Popularized by the World Bank in 1989, good governance emphasizes equal participation, rule of law, inclusive government, transparency, accountability and effectiveness.³⁹ The United Nations, definition includes “ensuring respect for human rights and the rule of law; strengthening democracy; promoting transparency and capacity in public administration.”⁴⁰ In the UN framework, the following eight principles underpin the idea of good governance: participation, rule of law, consensus orientation, equity and inclusiveness, effectiveness and efficiency, accountability, transparency, and responsiveness.⁴¹ The Ibrahim Index for African Governance (IIAG) promotes the “provision of the political, social and economic goods that a citizen has the right to expect from his or her state, and that a state has the responsibility to deliver to its citizens.”⁴²

Successive Nigerian governments have not provided such governance to their citizens. Indeed, there is a wide gap between the government and the people. Government at all levels has not been responsive to the needs of the people. Despite its abundant oil wealth, Nigeria ranked 152 among 188 states on the Human Development Index.⁴³ The Corruption Perceptions Index ranked Nigeria 136th out of 175 countries.⁴⁴ These worrying developments have contributed largely to conflict and violence. Social and political exclusion fuels minority agitations without corresponding governance mechanisms to respond adequately.

The eight UN principles could aid in creating a state that ensured adequate representation of all groups and a government that showed substantial responsibility to its citizens. State institutions need rebuilding to regulate behaviours and contain elite manipulation. There is need for a legislative review of the immense powers political have on state institutions at both the federal and state levels. A useful step in this direction is the 2018 law that grants financial autonomy to the state level judiciaries that reduces control by the governors. While such steps are useful, other important state institutions require more independence, especially at the

national level. Executive powers of appointment at strategic agencies such as the Electoral Management Body (EMB), the anti-corruption agency and others need review. Furthermore, there is need for more transparency in governance, which would encourage accountability and citizen engagement.⁴⁵ Indeed, transparency in government would discourage the personalization of state institutions. Although the government accepted the Freedom of Information Act in 2011 and joined the Open Government Partnership (OGP) in 2016, access to government information is not yet free. Only in 2019 did the National Assembly make details of its budget public following twenty years of intense pressure.⁴⁶ However, the exact salary of legislators remains unknown to the public.

Fighting corruption is central to promoting integrity and accountability in governance. Many agencies and experts contend that curbing public sector corruption creates a suitable environment for development.⁴⁷ According to the World Bank, “corruption erodes trust in government and undermines the social contract.”⁴⁸ The Open Working Group (OWG) on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) includes practical measures to curb corruption in its targets on building effective and accountable institutions.⁴⁹ While corruption has distorted Nigeria’s path of development, political restructuring does not proffer a solution. Despite the existence of anti-corruption agencies such as the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences (ICPC), and the Code of Conduct Bureau (CCB), there is still insufficient political will to tackle the problem fully. To rebuild citizens’ trust there is need for a visible and convincing anti-corruption drive by the government.

Most importantly, credible elections are vital to the wide political participation required in a democratic process. Since the return to democracy in 1999, Nigerian elections have produced a high incidence of manipulation, fraud, violence, logistical problems, and vote buying. The EMB and other related agencies must be clearly independent to guarantee a more acceptable electoral process. An effective sanctioning mechanism, such as an Electoral Offence Commission, must punish electoral offenders to curb the perpetration of electoral malpractices.

Good governance will not emerge on its own, or a result of elite agendas. There is need for more activism by civil society organisations (CSOs).⁵⁰ Research has proven that the CSOs play an important role in promoting the principles of democracy and good governance.⁵¹ CSOs help ensure that government functions and responds to the demands of its citizens. CSOs can achieve this through a process of advocacy, agitation, public education, and citizen mobilization.⁵² Nigerian CSOs played a significant role in democratic transition struggles during the military era, and remain active in the present democratic era. To their credit, CSOs have facilitated improvement in the quality of elections. Through monitoring and advocacy, they played some role in reforms, especially introduction of the Smart Card Reader (SCR) and Permanent Voter Card (PVC) by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). Their push for youth inclusion led to the “not-too-young-to-run” law. However, in the area of anti-corruption and service delivery advocacy, they have not seen much success. This failure of CSOs points to issues of corruption and compromise within these organizations themselves.

Conclusion

Nigeria's contemporary democracy faces elite attempts to hijack the state for individual interests. This has led to many conflicts, some causing large-scale violence and destruction of property. The resuscitated restructuring debate occurs within the context of elite politics, which primarily aims at accessing opportunities associated with state power. Regional elites have advanced the rhetoric of restructuring as a strategy to achieve their political objectives. Unfortunately, the masses have usually not benefitted. We have argued that the problems of Nigeria should not be traced solely to the issue of federalism. Rather, the problem of Nigeria is about deficiency in development and the need for good governance. Contrary to good governance, which can bring about effective and durable solutions, political restructuring will only generate new cycles of agitation and ceaseless calls for yet more restructuring.

Notes

- 1 Suberu and Agbaje 1998, p. 335.
- 2 Kohli 1996, p. 325 (cited in Amuwo et al. 1998, p. 6).
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Inglehart 1983; Mosca 1939; Pareto 1935.
- 5 Osaghae 1995, p.11.
- 6 Rothchild 1986; Osaghae 2003.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 Osaghae 1991, p. 49.
- 10 Lijphart 1977.
- 11 Diamond 1999.
- 12 Agbaje and Adejumobi 2006, p. 30.
- 13 Osaghae 1995.
- 14 Wheare 1963, p. 20.
- 15 Babalola 2017.
- 16 Obi 1998, p. 266.
- 17 Suberu 1998.
- 18 Ibid. Also Suberu 2001.
- 19 Suberu 2001.
- 20 Ayoade 1998; Suberu 2001.
- 21 Suberu 2001, p. 138.
- 22 Usman 2016.
- 23 Osaghae 1991a.
- 24 Mohammed 2005, p. 162.
- 25 Ajayi 2006.
- 26 Isike and Idoniboye-obu 2011.
- 27 Ajayi 2006; Owete 2014.
- 28 Owete 2014.
- 29 Ibid.

- 30 Maddox, 1941, p. 1125; Wheare, 1963, p. 36.
 31 Willink Commission Report 1958.
 32 Elazar 1987, p. 12.
 33 Wheare 1963, p. 34.
 34 Maddox 1941, p. 1124.
 35 Onapajo (in press).
 36 Wheare 1963, p. 32.
 37 King 1982, p. 77.
 38 Babalola 2015, p. 79.
 39 Maldonado 2010.
 40 United Nations 1998.
 41 UNESCAP 2009.
 42 <http://mo.ibrahim.foundation/iiag/>
 43 UNDP 2016.
 44 www.tradingeconomics.com
 45 OECD n.d.
 46 *This Day* 2019.
 47 OECD, n.d.
 48 The World Bank 2018.
 49 OECD, n.d.; The World Bank 2018.
 50 Ihonvbere 2008.
 51 Mafunisa 2004; Malena 2010.
 52 Doraiswamy 2007.

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