NATURAL RESOURCE GOVERNANCE AND NIGERIA'S RESTRUCTURING: IMPLICATIONS FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract
This paper examines the on-going debate on natural resource governance and restructuring for Nigeria. Since the 1990s, a political economy perspective has been consistently deployed to underline the key elements of good governance against the resource curse syndrome to characterize the paradox of rich natural resource endowments and abject poverty that is emblematic of Nigeria's natural resource governance. In contrast, this paper attempts a broad categorization to interrogate the clamour and elements of restructuring by citizens as means of national development. What is intriguing about Nigeria is that a political discourse very often ends up as an economic discourse and vice versa. The implication is that Nigeria's political future is highly interrelated to its economic fortunes. Hence, this initiative deploys a qualitative research methodology and an actor-narrative perspective to discussing wide range of issues embedded in notions of restructuring. This pitches the so-called conservative's reform agenda that seems tokenistic against the more radical Constitutional Reformists routing for a transformative political and economic restructuring in devolution of power. Another distinct category relates to a new model in post-extractivism and proposals for a post-petroleum economy. This paper is relevant to sustain the embers of the debate on the front burner of national discourse. It contributes to natural resource governance by providing greater insights to the dimensions of restructuring and implications for national development.

Keywords: *Restructuring, Development, Resource control, Election, Power, Regionalism.*

Introduction

The challenges of development, environmental management and poverty are rife especially in third world countries. Sen (2008) argues that development is hindered by repressive states reinforcing sources of unfreedom such as poverty, tyranny, and systemic social deprivation that limits political freedom and free agency of people to chose. Contending with the enormous challenge of development to reducing poverty there is the need to "enhance the economic, social and political opportunities" of citizens (Igbuzor, 2009: 4). Some other scholars argue that underdevelopment and ecological devastation of the rural livelihoods is a failure of governance which implies inadequate policy, weak political structures that is a product of the relations of power amongst the federating states in Nigeria (Allen, 2012; Peel, 2010). Both perspectives are necessary to attempt a broader understanding in the context of national restructuring.

In contrast, this paper attempts a broader categorization of the re-invigorating calls for restructuring in what we have termed National Restructuring Dialogue (NRD). It examines the clamour and its elements for national development. What is intriguing about Nigeria is that

a political discourse very often ends up as an economic discourse and vice versa. The implication is that Nigeria's political future is highly interrelated to its economic fortunes. This is even more significant since the six geopolitical regions in Nigeria are endowed with diverse natural resources. In a sense, the clamour for restructuring dialogue is a rejection of the prevailing governance structure of "*unitary federalism"* and a vote for alternatives. As a nation, many hold the view that national diversities in cultural and socio-economic endowments should translate to major comparative advantage to other nations, although harnessing these differences so far remain a burden rather than an opportunity.

From the quantum literature, a political economy perspective shows that Nigeria is paradoxically rich in natural resource endowment, yet the majority of its citizens remain in poverty (Achimugu, 2013; Karl, 1999). The mismanagement of natural resources, the resource curse syndrome and violence associated with rentier-states that are solely dependent on monocrop economy has been implicated (Karl, 1999). As in most third world countries, Nigeria's, dependence on petrol-dollars from oil and gas makes it highly vulnerable to any rise and fall in oil prices. The country witnessed economic recession since 2016 due to tumbling oil price and even plummeting during the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown which signaled a short spell of another economic recession (Adegboyega, 2021; see also Desjardins, 2020). Although it slowly came out of recession before Covid-19 pandemic, the World Bank reportedly attributed this to "expansionary budget" due to stable oil prices rather than any tangible policy intervention or generation of employment (Amaefule, 2016). Although there is some level of consensus on the need to improve quality of governance and natural resource management, yet it is not clear what this means whether to dismantle the present state structures and build a new one or to reform them.

As an emerging economy, Nigeria is the most populous black nation on earth with over 200 million population. It is also the economic giant of Africa by virtue of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Yet, the nation finds itself in the backwaters of nearly every development indicator. Instead of being the leading light in Africa for human capacity development, industrial and technological innovations, it is still being plagued by basic developmental problems making its future appear bleak as the poverty capital of the world.

The ethnic minorities concern of periphery status arising from the imbalance in the relations of power in a pseudo federalism remains unresolved. The over 300 ethnic nationalities that make up Nigeria claim to have been short-changed and marginalized within the Nigerian framework that is dominated by Hausa/Fulani, Yoruba, and Igbo who make up two-third of the population (Ukiwo, 2005). Prior to independence in 1960, the grumblings about marginalization majorly emanated from minority ethnic groups from what is today referred to mainly as the Niger Delta region, southern Nigeria. The Willink Commission Report (1958) was the outcome of the investigation into the fears of minorities that they will be marginalized, and how to allay those fears. Till date, the nation continues to grapple with the "chequered fortunes" of ethnic minorities under changing political regimes (Suberu, 2003:16), hence the clamour for restructuring is reverberating more in the south than in the north with Fulani/ Hausa hegemony.

Furthermore, the recent iteration of the call for National Restructuring Conference (NRC) is also coming at a time when inter-ethnic intolerance has reached its peak occasioned by inter-ethnic conflicts and killings by the Boko Haram insurgency operations in the North-east (Hassan and Tyvoll, 2018), the Fulani herdsmen and the Hausa subsistence farmers fighting for ownership

and control over grazing lands and farmlands. The Lake Chad had receded by 90 percent from a surface of 25,000 km2 in 1963 to less than 2,500 km2 displacing millions of people depending on it due to climate change, demographic pressure and human activity (Chatora, 2015). The ecological war turf is shifting to the South-south for pastures and land for farming. That ethnic groups are mutually distrustful of each other is also evident in the militant uprisings in the Niger Delta region, the renewing of separatist movements within the South-east of Nigeria by pro Biafra agitations, and similar sentiments being expressed in the South-west and the Northern part of the country.

We examine the term restructuring that has gained institutional currency in debate on the future survival of Nigeria. Restructuring has moved from an occasional recurring decimal in political and economic discourse, to a more structural and engaging debate that is gaining wider scrutiny and interest. Although there is some level of consensus on the need for restructuring, yet there are differing opinions on what constitutes restructuring and how to realize this. For example, Hassan and Tyvoll (2018: 6) argue for "transitional justice" involving material restoration to victims that is complemented by institutional reform that seeks to address the underlying causes of conflict.

The issues are complex and there is no quick fix by technocrats. Hence the need for broad based participation so that no region or group of people is left behind. As eloquently stated by General Olusegun Obasanjo, in *My Mission* statement, "Every Nigerian has a stake in the survival and prosperity of Nigeria that should be recognized in ways that no section or group should be made to feel disenfranchised or alienated (Obasanjo, 1998). He argues that this can be achieved through open dialogue among the constituents of the Federation**.** The 2019 presidential debate and elections were presented as opportunities to place restructuring at the heart of electioneering campaigns, yet such opportunity was fluffed away as only minimal reference was made to it to the disappointment of the populace. This paper is relevant to sustain the embers of the debate on the front burner of national discourse with implications for national development.

Methodology

This paper examines the on-going debate on natural resource governance and restructuring for Nigeria. The contestations on how to improve on the parlous state of natural resource governance in Nigeria has been an engaging discourse. This initiative deploys a qualitative research methodology and an actor-narrative perspective to discuss the varying dimensions of restructuring and the wide range of issues embedded within the restructuring discourse.

It uses primary and secondary sources of data gathering complemented by a national workshop on natural resource governance and national restructuring which held in November 2017 in Benin City. Some of the ideas were interrogated by active participation from a wide range of 160 delegates through interviews, focus group discussions, panel and plenary sessions which provided empirical evidence to support findings and conclusions. Discussants were from the academia, lawyers, journalists, environmentalists, civil society groups and communities' representatives from across Nigeria. An actor-oriented perspective is deployed to provide a broad-based comparative mapping of key social actors and the differing types and dimensions of restructuring with implications for national development and citizens' welfare.

The paper is relevant and contributes innovatively to the debate for restructuring and attempting a categorization and examining the underlying concerns and interests from the

various actors who are actively engaging on the subject. It provides greater insights to the dimensions of restructuring and implications for national development. Further research is required on a larger scale using the six geopolitical regions as a basis for comparative study to provide greater rigour and generalizations.

Conceptualizing Restructuring in the Nigerian Context

Restructuring generally means "to change the makeup" or pattern of an organization or system. It is thus to effect a fundamental change in the way a system or an organization is run. In the context of a nation, restructuring could mean redefining the relationship among the ethnic nationalities, between peoples and the government, and systems of governance (Bakare, 2017). The major concern is that the federal system is not working hence the need to reinventing federalism by decentralizing power relations among the federating units, constitutionalism, and legislative authority (Babwale et al.; 1998).

The call for restructuring is a product of the relations of power amongst the federating states. Similarly, the construction of knowledge, challenges and remedies are a product of power relations. Hence the debate tended to have shifted emphasis from economic restructuring to the Geo-political spheres. From the literature, a political ecology perspective highlights the conflict and contestations over natural resources ownership and control of land, minerals, water and food sources that are not apolitical (Robbins, 2004). Rather, natural resource governance are informed by diverse interests that are fundamentally opposed such that marginalised groups and elites are subjected to different outcomes. Even the oil politics in the Niger Delta is dominated by the three ethnic groups, Hausa, Yoruba, and Igbo that make up two-third of the total population and mainstream governmental agencies. While the infusion of rights-based approach into development mainstream are important a far more critical reflection is required due to their limitations in ensuring transparency and accountability especially in an unequal society (Langford, 2015).

The call for the restructuring of Nigeria has been long and tedious and a product of power relations (Suberu, 2003). It had regressed from being practically the major concern of minority ethnic groups, to a period when it was only whispered in hush tones during the military interregnum of 1983-1999. But the call has assumed a national discourse under civilian rule with a new momentum and a bandwagon effect except in government circles.

Proposals for National Restructuring Dialogue

We propose a National Restructuring Dialogue (NRD) to understand the notions for restructuring. This section builds on the solid foundational effort laid by a mapping of 10 categories of notions of restructuring by Bakare (2017). He documents some recent history of restructuring from the era of Pro-democracy groups, activists, politician's past and serving officials of government from both north and south of Nigeria and argues that the debate has become a "jigsaw puzzle" that has reached a tipping point. Some critics argue that the effort was clumsy, too long, and tedious. We have not only added another category to the list but also for convenience and critical analysis narrowed them to three broad groupings due to their comparative characteristics. They are the so-called mainstream Conservatives, The Constitution Reformists, and the System Change agents in a post-extractivist model of development. We acknowledge that the list of sub-groupings may not be exhaustive. There could, of course, be more tendencies yet to be captured given the size of Nigeria and the dire challenges confronting her.

The Conservatives

According to Bakare (2017), the Conservatives are generally satisfied with the present system and structures of governance, current challenges notwithstanding. They generally hold the view that attitudinal adjustments, not necessarily systemic or structural changes, are required. Such attitudinal change and national image rebranding without substance can hardly deliver on national development (Ojo and Aghedo, 2017). This group has as its leading light in the ex-President Olusegun Obasanjo. In 1998, he declared total support for a holistic restructuring of Nigeria (Obasanjo, 1998). However, when he had the opportunity to make good his support for the restructuring of Nigeria after he became President from 1999 to 2007, Olusegun Obasanjo made a volte face and stated that Nigeria is blessed and does not need restructuring. He argues that what is required is for Nigerians "to restructure our mentality", restructure our minds, our understanding of Nigeria and how to be more inclusive with a sense of having a stake in the country (Adegun, 2017). In recent times, perhaps for political expediency, he turned full cycle to categorically support aspects of restructuring to assuage "ill-feelings" and "insecurity" (Fasua, 2020). Although the re-orientation of citizens necessarily cuts across the other ideals and fundamental to change, however, it does not directly address the issues of restructuring.

A variant of the Conservative approach to restructuring is the **Non-Structural Constitutional Reformists.** These are those demanding amendments in certain aspects of the Constitution that have no direct bearing on the structure of governance, but the issues are nonetheless important for national development. They include Movements such as "Not Too Young to Run" initiative that successfully campaigned for age limit for political eligibility to be lowered to 30 years of age; 40% affirmative action for women in governance; the abrogation of the Land Use Act of 1978 that places land rights firmly in the control of presidents and governors by the Federal Constitution, as well as those advocating the separation of the office of the Attorney General of the Federation from that of the Minister of Justice, and so on.

Within the Conservatives are also the **Economic Structure Reformists** that is firmly located in the neoliberal economy. They insist that the problem with Nigeria's underdevelopment has less to do with its structure and the politics, important as these may be. They argue rather eloquently that the major problem with Nigeria can be located within its failure to faithfully restructure the systems and structures that underpin our economy. They frown at the undue focus on politics and continuing the wrong policies of having government in charge of the commanding heights of the economy. They emphasize the need to restructure our economy through the wholesale privatization of all economic activities and services while government should simply play a facilitator and mediatory roles to ensure that social actors within the economic system play fair and that the level of inequality in the society that may result from this classic neo-liberal approach is adequately moderated. Proponents of this tendency are hard core Breton Wood economists and eggheads including Dr.Obiageli Ezekwesili, former minister, World Bank Executive Director and lately, leader of the internationally recognized "Bring Back our Girls movement", who has stated piquantly that, "Good economics is good politics." While this approach may be tantalizing, yet, the implications of privatization of natural food systems, energy, water and other public goods and services will likely be too devastating to contemplate in ways that promotes inequalities, and inevitably make the rich richer at the expense of the poor.

The Constitutional Reformists

The second grouping is referred to as Constitutional Reformists or Political System Reformists because they seek to use constitutional arrangements using the current prevailing system for restructuring. It is based on lessons from Nigeria's historic economic system from the 20th century as that of exploitation, slave trade, Colonialism by the British and then by the prevailing political leaders in the independent era (Njoku, 2013). Such internal colonialism designed to benefit the exploiters of oil and gas and to the exclusion of the host communities breeds violence, environmental degradation and resource conflicts (Ikein, 1990). Thus, cosmetic window dressing in political and policy formations remain the norm in such reforms that resonates with economic benefits that is likely to maintain the status quo (Allen, 2012).

The Constitutional reformist is not monolithic but further classified into two types namely the **Regional Federalists and the Regional Confederacy** (Bakare, 2017).**The Regional Federalists** argue that the current 36 state structure is not sustainable and that many of the existing states are not viable. They also claim that the current system not only falls short of the intent and meaning of true federalism, but also, it is why the country's growth and development has remained stunted and in fact, regressed since 1967. This school of thought makes the case for the country to be restructured based on the so-called six geopolitical zones, but with a strong central government. They claim this structure would ensure healthy and competitive economic development across the regions, as was the case in the First Republic.

The Regional Federalists make the case for such constitutional changes that include a move from bicameral legislature to a unicameral legislature due to the high-level politicking and the cost of governance which constitute about 30 percent of the national receipts. Others prescribe part-time legislature while some make a strong case for the parliamentary system of government or, as the 2014 National Conference resolved, a modified parliamentary system that is in confrontation to the current presidential system patterned after the United States of America.

A variant of the political system reformists is the **Regional Confederacy** that we have linked to the **Devolutionists** with the belief that the Nigerian structure is 'too top down' and 'too top heavy'. For example, former vice president Atiku Abubakar reportedly canvassed the "devolution of powers to the lower tiers of governments" (Alike, 2018; Bakare, 2017). Advocates for regional confederacy argue that the only way to ensure harmonious co-existence among the disparate ethnic groups fused together without their consent is to have a weak centre. It must be added that the 1914 amalgamation superintended by the British was to allow the country to be modelled on a loose federation of regions, with their own economic and political systems. Supporters of this tendency prefer a weak central government and strong regional governments with each region having its own army and Police. The devolutionists contend that there is enormous concentration of powers and resources at the centre or the federal level with the other tiers of government namely the states and the local government authorities wholly dependent on federal allocations to survive.

Furthermore, they argue for a "balance of distribution of competences" and the increasing accretion of power to the federal government functions previously allocated to the regions or state government (Asobie, 1998). The prevailing situation of concentration of power on the federal government has rendered nearly 87 percent of the 36 states in Nigeria economically not viable. They envisage a constitution with a leaner exclusive legislative list, a more robust concurrent list, and a workable residual list (Asobie, 1998). They strongly advocate for the review of the national revenue sharing formula with greater benefits to the regions (Suberu,

2003). This includes regional or state police, and local government autonomy as part of the devolution.

Devolution of powers and governance has responsibilities and implications for the regions that still facing ethnicity and religious intolerance. Also, considering that almost all state governors run their states as near dictators, there would be need to ensure that the third tier of government and State House Assembly in each state are truly independent to checkmate the additional powers that governors will wield, if this tendency becomes part of the restructured Nigeria.

Another grouping within the Constitutional reformists is **called State Creation Advocates.** State creation advocates want to ensure that Nigerians from disparate ethnic groups who desire to gain greater autonomy and self-determination in the administration of their affairs can do so within the Nigerian federation. State creation advocates are led by people from the former South-east region of Nigeria, who insists that their region has been marginalized in the state creation process. They argue that other regions have 6 states each, while only the South-east region has 5 states, and that this needs to be balanced out to ensure fairness and equity.

The issue of state creation however, cut across the regions. During the 2014 national conference, 18 new states were proposed by the conferees. The advocates seek to take advantage of such state creation to distribute the national cake more widely. As champions of the new fiefdoms, they are likely to emerge as the new elites that will be at the helm of affairs when such state creation become a reality. Furthermore, they are likely to feel short-changed and cry marginalization in as much as their dreams of new states are not met as part of the restructuring. However, considering the cost that the creation of more states entails and the unviability of many of the existing states, it is doubtful if this constitutes a priority and remedy for restructuring for national development.

Still within the constitutional reformist school of thought is the group referred to as **Resource Control.** Resource control proponents range from ethnic nationality groups like the Ogonis and the Ijaws, to most oil producing states and communities in the Niger Delta (Tamuno, 2011). They insist that Nigeria's economic philosophy that prescribed the prevailing formula for the distribution of the nation's wealth is unacceptable. The distribution of revenue from the federation account has been historically controversial and contentious, especially after oil began playing a critical part in bolstering export earnings and foreign exchange receipts from the 1970s.

They demand outright resource control to regulate the exploitation of resources in a geographical area in line with the prevailing arrangement at independence when regions controlled their resources and paid royalties and taxes to the federal government (Suberu, 2003). With the advent of oil and petrol-dollar economy from the early 1970s, the regional control of resources was watered down and currently stands at 13 percent derivation principle. This group further insists that the only middle ground they can countenance for restructuring is one where the derivation formula returns to at least 50 percent to the areas where the resource is extracted and 50 percent to the centre. This group is sometimes belligerent and often swings between devolution and secession.

The Secessionist group tended to be within the constitutional reformist grouping because they seek legitimate and constitutional process for secession rather than the orthodox methods of arms struggle that is costly in human and material terms. In recent times, there has been vociferous renewed agitations by some members of the Igbo ethnic nationality exemplified by

Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) and MASSOP, ethnic nationalities groupings that have reignited the Biafra movement in their attempt to throw off what they see as the overbearing power and influence of other major ethnic nationalities, as well as the constraining of the enterprising spirit of the Igbos by other sections of Nigeria, whom they accuse of wanting to maintain a status quo that undermines growth and development of the Igbos. With the formation of the Eastern Security Network, a military wing under the aegis of IPOB the struggle has tilted to a pseudo arms struggle for the actualization of the Biafra state with heavy casualties on the Nigerian military and civilians alike. The recent arrest of its leader Nnamdi Kanu has implications to the manner of the struggle and survival hence the need for the federal government to trend carefully (Orjinmo, 2021).

Resource conflicts and perceived marginalization led to the civil war fought 1967-1970 although analysts argue that the tendencies which led to the war are still manifesting in large doses daily making this an urgent issue to tackle. It is not the Eastern Region alone that is expressing sentiments of secession. There are several other splinter groups in the South-west such as the Oduduwa Peoples Congress and the Niger Delta region (Pan-Niger Delta Movement, and dozens of militant groups), whom, frustrated by the seemingly intractable problems besetting the nation, and the absence of a clear path to resolving them, have sporadically embraced the option of seceding from the Nigerian Federation. While the secession sentiments are strong the idea of one nation indivisible provides a formidable counterforce to this group.

During the last elections in 2019, the Presidential flag bearer Alhaji Abubakar Atiku for the main opposition party has been vilified by some citizens for proposing national restructuring to which some have seen as a ploy for vote catching. The debate remains how convincing his electioneering political agenda for restructuring and devolution of power as a pathway to unity and development which some see as a different ball game once he becomes the President of the nation. A nascent group, Yoruba Self-Determination Advancement Forum (YOSEDAF), equates such restructuring agenda in the forthcoming 2019 elections as "approximates the quest of the Yoruba ethnic nationality towards renewing hope of the generality of our people in the Nigerian polity" and thus endorsed the opposition party candidate (YOSEDAF, 2018). Similarly, the Ijaw Youth Council has not only embraced restructuring but has presented a strategy of "by any means necessary", which implies that whoever supports the Ijaw agenda of resource control will secure their vote any time any day. While some politicians may seek to take advantage of restructuring to secure votes, that some ethnic groups mostly from the south sought to make it an the electioneering campaign is significant in building consensus. In retrospect, it turned out that restructuring was hardly a determinant factor on who became President of the federal republic of Nigeria.

Post Extractivism, Energy Transition and Environmental Accountability Advocates

A post-extractivism proponent calls for system change in the modes of production and consumption that is highly dependent on a carbonise economy that is leading to run away climate change and its catastrophic events. From the global to the local, development offers the opportunity for transformation (Langford, 2015). Advocates of this tendency are environmental and human rights campaigners and development experts. They argue that the major problem with Nigeria lies in its addiction to fossil fuels extraction that has resulted in petrol-dollars politics of a unitary state. They argue from the premise of catastrophic climate change impacts and a transformative energy transition from fossil fuels to options in renewable

energy by 2030 as a fundamental basis for restructuring (Ojo, 2010).

Since the entire country is built on extraction and more extraction with untold ecological catastrophe hence the environment and people need to take a break, a Sabbath or Jubilee to allow for ecosystem rejuvenation. From the mid 1990s, Nigeria's foremost environmental advocacy group, the Environmental Rights Action/Friends of the Earth Nigeria (ERA/FoEN 2010) argues for oil exploration and exploitation moratorium on new fossil fuel extraction activities around the country, while it reflects on, and carries out a cost benefit analysis of the impact of unregulated extraction of fossil fuels on our environment, on social and cultural norms and the protection of the fundamental rights of oil-bearing communities. At the grassroots, national and international levels, ERA/FoEN continues to champion the call that oil be left in the ground, coal in the hole and Tar sands (bitumen) in the sand in an emerging fossil free world yet to be embraced by the Nigeria government and citizens.

In place of our addiction to extractive activities, the struggle for a Just Energy Transition from fossil fuel extraction to clean community-owned or controlled renewable energy has been proposed (Ojo, 2012). This form of energy democracy that is decentralised will ensure that individuals and communities are co-producers and co-suppliers of clean energy by sharing in responsibilities and investments as well as any accruing benefits. The recent launch of the energy transition Manifesto for Nigeria with sets of principles emphasized legislative backing for decentralised Peoples power, fiscal policy and budgetary allocations across the tiers of government (Ojo, 2018).

Convergence and Divergence of Restructuring

Several varying but not extremely dissimilar ideas have been put forward on how and to what ends, the restructuring exercise should serve. While some approach the issues emanating from restructuring from a narrow ethnic bias, others have broader concerns of the country's future and the economic viability of the present 36 states. There are at least three broad categories that are discernible. On the one hand, the so-called conservatives and their wares for a reform agenda has been considered tokenism because it firmly seeks to maintain the *unitary federalism* that allows the 3-tiers of governance (federal, state, and local government authority) in perpetuity. They are of the view that the state is already in existence and hence the change in system of relations and governance should be the focus.

Some shades of the Conservatives exist. They argue for a change of the government system from the present 36 states structure to a regional system of government to address the perceived inequities that had led to the growing calls for restructuring. The several propositions for restructuring are key questions raised that cut across the nature of the existing states as federating entities that are fundamentally flawed; (re)grouping of some states or ethnic nationalities in regions or regionalism; and the nature of the federal character to be weaker or stronger than its component states or regions.

Those in this category tended to be government officials, politicians, and elites in power or in the corridors of power wielding huge political and economic influence. Hence, they concur to the views that the present 36 states including the federal capital, Abuja sufficiently address the issue of restructuring through calibration. In this regard, they align with state creation advocates for periodic upward review.

On the other hand, the second and more radical category implies the makeup of a new Nigeria project that has the true reflection of "we the people" secured through a referendum.

They want to alter the power imbalance, strong regions, and a weak centre. In this category, the issue of resource control has been a challenging issue as part of the political and economic reforms that has assumed centre stage. They posit that the only way Nigeria can move forward is restructuring the makeup of the entity Nigeria which could have serious implications for the people and national physical boundaries. Since the wealth of nations is determined principally by population size, resource endowments and physical boundary including access to the sea, this has serious implications for restructuring that impinges on economic prospects.

The thin line separating the two forms of restructuring is significant. The fear expressed especially by Conservatives is that the Secessionists might capitalise on a referendum to challenge the mainstream narrative of indivisibility. This fear is really buttressed by a secessionist movement in place that is assuming military manoeuvres to achieve their aim. In practice, both tendencies can reinforce each other in building an egalitarian society. This makes it daunting to formulate the tendencies in any pecking order. From what may seem as nonsensical and mundane to the common sense, the ideas are as diverse as the social actors behind each category and influenced by differing political cleavages, ethnicity, and level of natural resource endowments in the various regions.

The third category tended to be futuristic and is the more radical and relates to a new model in post extractivism and the call for a post petroleum economy (Ojo, 2010). Against the impact of climate change and responses in mitigation and adaptation they argue for the need for transition from fossil fuel dependence to renewable energy sources that is decentralised and les capital intensive. This category signals an alternative to the neoliberal model of development and still requires some engagement to map its trends.

The actors are not only mutant but also come from a wide spectrum making it difficult for a clear-cut categorization. Yet, they all collectively present the issues of the nation and the urgency to address them. That said, there is a level of consensus building on a common agenda for restructuring a virile nation state. Most of the proponents seem to contend that citizens are better off together and should find acceptable ways to stay together. By searching honestly and diligently, they argue that the pathway to a far more perfect union is underway. The positions canvassed going forward are intended to establish a framework for the urgent realignment of the contending interest groups tearing at the seams of the nation state. It is also aimed at engendering the integration of the diverse ethnic groups into a true bond of nationhood and facilitates the evolution of an acceptable functional government structure for Nigeria.

Practicalities of Engaging in the National Restructuring Dialogue

The practicalities of engaging in the national dialogue are many and include active citizenship and the process of selection of delegates. There is the need to encourage citizens' participation from an informed position which is the essence of this effort. Our intention is not necessarily to take sides or openly support any of the tendencies in the restructuring debate, but to provide clear and concise information about the full spectrum of the debate. This we hope will allow ordinary Nigerians make sense of the various tendencies and strands of the restructuring debate. Every Nigerian has a stake in this important process of re-imagining the Nigeria of our dream and, we feel obligated to providing them with the necessary information, tools and facilities to enable effective participation by Nigerians from a position of knowledge. Therefore, we encourage active citizenship in which they can make their voices count. Perhaps the trickiest, yet critical part of the restructuring question is the procedural inclusion of who and how to

conduct the debate, to give it not just acceptability, but also legitimacy and binding powers. There are diverse and varying options, much of which are tenable, if there is sincerity of purpose and the political will.

It has been an age long complaint that the ethnic nationalities that make up Nigeria were not consulted and did not give their consent to the British to fuse them into a new country. The distinct ethnic nationalities, till the amalgamation in 1914 by Lord Lugard, the area now known as Nigeria was inhabited by different ethnic groups with distinct language, population, level of education and geographical terrain. Many of these indices were not taken into consideration in cobbling the Nigerian State together. Expectedly, the politics and governance of the Nigerian State continues to be rudely punctuated by very disturbing ethnic and ethnic related crises that threaten its continued survival (Achimugu, 2013). In any process of restructuring Nigeria this historical oversight must be addressed. It is the safest point from which the restructuring of Nigeria can proceed. It is critically important that balance, equality and equity is brought to bear on the fundamental question of ethnic nationality representation, so that there will be no complaints of marginalization or oppression by larger ethnic groups. In this vein we propose equality of representation for all ethnic groups. This works quite well in the Senate of the National Assembly, where all states, despite their size, population, educational and economic advantages have three representatives each.

Delegates to the Restructuring debate can be chosen via elections, nominations, or appointment from the recognized structures. Elections have been considered a priority whereby local constituencies or communities' elect representatives from among the people to the national restructuring dialogue (NRD). This need not be a knotty problem as we already have constituency delineations and wards within the states. A formula of representation to ensure equal numbers from each state may be agreed upon. The downside of this though will be the potential of having too many representatives to prosecute the dialogue if all the wards are accounted for. But we are left with little choice, if the question of representing the numerous ethnic nationalities is to be simultaneously taken care of. Besides, election of representative gives greater legitimacy to the process and persons so elected and has the potential of resting the fears of the constituent members and allaying suspicion of any hidden agenda.

Another, though less legitimate option, is for representatives to be nominated either by their local community leadership, such as the traditional elders and rulers Council or local community political leadership, or both working together.

A less democratic option is for local and state governments in the states to appoint members to represent the state in the dialogue, based on the subjective assessment of government, who assumes the argument to act for its citizens on matters affecting the state. They may be subject to popular approval by the general public of the states although, this is a more complex option given that there are no clear instruments to determine the so-called popular approval. Although it is an easier option, yet, it throws up questions on legitimacy, parameters for assessment and choice, trust and equity. If the local politicians and the state governors conduct the selection to the NRD, there are those who may never make it to the confab because of their ideological inclinations which might out-rightly disenfranchise them from the dialogue. Therefore, clear guidelines will have to be drawn up to ensure that delegates as much as possible reflect the unique character and the general interest of the groups they represent.

Other groups such as political parties may also send delegates to the national restructuring dialogue but the current number of 91 registered political parties is problematic if each is to

send a representative. Others are youths, women, religious organizations, professional bodies such as the Nigeria Bar Association, Nigeria Medical Association, Civil society groups, students' body, labour unions, and similar organizations may also send delegates to a proposed national restructuring dialogue (NRD).

Vehicle for Facilitating National Restructuring Dialogue

The content of the national restructuring dialogue is as contentious as the representation and the process to be adopted in organizing the dialogue. The critical question is how best to organize the dialogue that it does not derailed into a catastrophic end but delivers on the aspiration of Nigerians for a more united and egalitarian society, and its decisions also carry legal or sovereign force of "We the People." This is quite important considering that there exists currently, political and power structures supposedly elected by the people that would be impacted by the recommendations and conclusions of the restructuring debate. Several proposals have been put forward and rather selectively a few has been presented here. They include proposals for a presidential commission to plebiscite or referendum.

A presidential Commission is preferred by many actors as the most enduring process to achieve National Restructuring Dialogue (see also Bakare, 2017). This is a process whereby the NRD is constituted by the sitting president who sends an Executive Bill to the National Assembly compelling the implementation of the conclusions and recommendations of the presidential commission by all relevant bodies and institutions. There are some who are opposed to this approach. They argue that this road sounds familiar, and after two Confab, the implementation is in comatose. It is also highly susceptible to political manipulations from the federal government that can constitute a stumbling block to this process.

Another option is a constituent Assembly or National Conference whose conclusions and recommendations would be given legal validity via a referendum by Nigerians. This option is supported by many since the 4th region called the Midwest Region was created by a referendum in 1963 until it was balkanised into Delta and Edo states in 1987.

The option presented by the National Assembly is highly favoured, but it is a daunting task to secure far reaching reforms or restructuring at the national assembly. For example, the National Assembly engaged in some piecemeal amendments of the 1999 Constitution, which many Nigerians insist lied when it declared "We the people of the Federal Republic of Nigeria hereby declares…do hereby make, enact and give to ourselves the following Constitution" (FGN, 1999). Indeed, the 1999 Constitution has so far undergone four processes of alterations by the National Assembly with little or no success. The alterations proposed by the 7th National Assembly (2011-2015) included the contentious issues of state police, free candidates for elections, and electronic transmission of results that are tearing the hallowed house in tatters.

Another option could be the Peoples Assembly by direct citizens' referendum for restructuring where citizens decide whether restructuring is necessary and the issues to be considered. The option of convening a People's Assembly is necessary if the Executive and Legislature fail or refuse to conduct any of the options above. The People's Assembly could grow organically from town hall meetings at village and community levels, until it gets to the national level, where salient issues militating against Nigeria's progress would be discussed without hindrance. This can be organised from the ward levels and collated at the state and national levels to arrive at the people's choice.

The outcomes of such discourses can be turned into a Charter of Principles and demand inherent for national restructuring, so that all, who are interested in holding public positions from all our communities have as their standard a clear charter of principles and demand that would form the template for political party manifestoes and government development priorities. While this is novel it is hardly practicable because weak citizens remain the bane and inability of citizens and CSOs to hold government and officials accountable for their excesses and impunity remains largely the norm. This needs to change and a Peoples' Assembly might create further impetus for this change to occur.

Findings and Conclusions

The paper has provided comparative analysis of the various perspectives that are rooted in seemingly diagonally opposed ideas hard to reconcile. Yet, there are discerning patterns in terms of both processes of restructuring and substantive elements. First, notably, the idea of building a virile and egalitarian society is dominant in the forms of restructuring. This is borne out of the desire to make Nigeria attain to its full potentials and make the country great. However, within this narrative, populist ideologies are emerging especially those promoting ethnic cleavages and fiefdoms as the fulcrum for restructuring. Yet, the choice for Nigeria is hardly a one-size-fits-all. A careful consideration of all the options for national restructuring is to be preferred to the option of cherry picking.

Secondly, the social actors are engaged in conflict of interests arising from contestations over control of political and economic power that impinges on natural resource governance and citizens' welfare. Not surprising, it is hard to extricate national restructuring from natural resource governance as an underlying current and as a major deliverable. While most actors argue from a robust national perspective, the findings of the research is that the type of social actor and their environment attracts the type of restructuring discourse. Such views are mainly informed by the consideration of political interests, economic benefits, and ethnic considerations. While those from perceived resource rich areas pursue vigorously devolution of political power, fiscal federalism and derivation principles, regionalism and even secession, others less endowed would require some level of assurance to cushioning some envisaged developmental challenges in their region. That Nigerians need a dose of compromise based on collectivism, reorientation and attitudinal change towards fellow citizens and nation state cannot be discounted.

Thirdly, more investment of energy and resources are required to push through restructuring. The national government should lead the way to formally adopt the need for national restructuring in line with the wishes of the majority clamouring for national restructuring. Citizens and policy makers can also push for an Executive or Private Member Bill to the National Assembly to provide legislative backing and binding mechanism. In the same vein, CSOs and communities need to immediately be self organizing and mobilizing for this cause to complement any effort in this regard. Educational materials and the use of mass communication outreaches and social media should be deployed to enhance holistic understanding of the key proposals.

Lastly, since Nigeria is a country struggling to attain its full potentials as a fragile nation with governance incongruence, perhaps strength in socio-cultural diversities could be a major comparative advantage to other nations. Although harnessing these differences remain a burden, yet, it has potentials for transformative change built on strength in diversity and a sense of nationhood where no man is oppressed.

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