

## Perspectives of the Call to Restructure Nigeria

The elite are the ones championing the call to restructure Nigeria. The call is selfish since they are not getting what they thought should be their own as far as their education, exposure and the constituencies they purportedly represented are concerned. Their call, regardless of the motivations, found a receptive ground because Nigeria is not working for most Nigerians. As a result of the shade of persons involved, there are many perspectives of restructuring as there are nationalities dissatisfied with Nigeria.

One noticeable feature of the prevailing clamour is the prominence of the voices of the major nationalities more than those of the minor nationalities. This is because they have the infrastructure to echo their demands. It is a throwback to the view of Nigeria orchestrated by the British that sandwiched other nationalities within the major nationalities. In other word, the major groups speak for the minor groups. It was, for some, the first perspective of restructuring available – going back to the regions of old.

The reason that Nigeria is not working for most Nigerians is because of the faulty conception and practice of security and governance. Security targets human being and being human. Governance is the use of human and material resources to create opportunity for most human beings. A proper pursuit of security anchored on people seeks to create security for most people.

A proper pursuit of governance creates security for most people. Thus there is a security route to attaining security. There is also a governance route to attaining security. The governing elite have demonstrated the lack of will to try both of these two routes to the attainment of security for most Nigerians. As a result they have resorted to pursuing security as law and order which seeks to amongst others to protect them and their interests.

The perspective of restructuring that call for Nigeria to return to the old regional arrangement was anchored on frozen time and/or the view that Nigeria was for the three major groups – Igbo, Yoruba and Hausa. Under this arrangement, the regions control their resources, institutions and services and joined hands to manage few common services such as defence, monetary affairs and external relations.

The arrangement did not prevent rivalry amongst the regions of the type that would invite the military. The regional behemoths – Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo – that saw the regions as their own were intolerant of their minorities. They were also intolerant of one another at the centre. They were resisted by the minorities. The military operating as a

class stepped into the fray. The entry of the military changed the dynamics and sowed the seed of what is today "Nigerian federalism."

The second perspective of restructuring call for the retention of the 36 states structure and the devolution of power similar to what exist in the regional days with common services in the area of defence, monetary and foreign affairs.

The third perspective of restructuring is to use the six geopolitical regions as basis of restructuring. In 1995-6 constitutional assembly, the country was divided into six geopolitical regions. They are north west, north east, north central, south west, south east and south south. In other words, north west falls under the sway of the Hausa Fulani, north east under the Kanuri empire, north central as the middle belt, south west under the Yoruba, south east under the Igbo and south south under the Niger Delta.

The utility of these areas as autonomous political entities is open to conjectures. The Nigeria of now has evolved beyond the cleavages that are inbuilt within the geopolitics that it would be uncertain how it would work in reality. Institutions and services will be devolved to be controlled by a yet to be determined administrative and organisational structures. Again certain common services within the Nigeria structure would be permitted to include defence, monetary and foreign affairs.

The fourth perspective hinged on fiscal devolution that would significantly reduce the concentration of power at the centre. The argument was that it was this concentration of power at the centre that was the sources of the attraction for the centre for most Nigerians. This centre-focus killed initiatives at the local levels – states and local government areas. The devolution of financial power and commensurate services of all types to the states and local governments would imbue the effectiveness of the states and local government areas in the management of affairs. The argument was that states and local government areas should have the power to retain and use resources within their areas for the benefit of the people and not the common pool that is the case today.

Of these perspectives, the one that most resonate among the elite at the receiving end of the present system is fiscal restructuring. In whatever guise the structure of Nigeria takes, if and when restructuring comes, it would be meaningless if the present order of common pool of resources continues. The argument is that it does not provide platform for engagement between politicians and electorates as far as democracy is concerned. It does not encourage democratisation of persons, processes and institutions.

A situation where an aspirant will have to source for ways to generate resources with which to provide services in a state or local council would encourage resourcefulness rather than the laziness that waiting for monthly subvention from the common pool

encourages. The electorates would be in the position to ask question and demand accountability from those they elected.

In the event of restructuring from the perspectives sketched in the preceding, how would the North Central, Central Nigeria or the Middle Belt fare?