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RESTRUCTURING AND GOOD GOVERNANCE; A PANACEA TO ETHNIC AGITATIONS IN SOUTHEAST NIGERIA

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Abstract

There is an 'imminent security and war threat' to global stability, from one region to another. Nigeria, is among the nations, and is currently being obsessed with the security threat emanating from the agitations for restructuring and equitable distribution by some elements of secessionist struggles, ethnic/tribalism, politicians and human right activists in the country. The study deals with cross-pollination of ideas for restructuring and good governance, and to end ethnic agitations in the southeast, Nigeria. In recent time, the clamour for a restructuring of the polity has occupied the center stage of our national political discourse. Good Governance on the other hand, is a 'suspension of disbelief', which has kept the nation underdeveloped since independence. Against this backdrop, the study focuses on the restructuring and good governance, as a panacea to the current agitations in the country. This study

adopts the Structural Functionalist Theory as propounded by Emile Durkeim, Talcott Person and Robert Merton as theoretical framework to analyze this ugly development of crisis in a political structural system like Nigeria. Also, analytic research methodology was used. Data collected where chiefly secondary sources. The research revealed that the concept of good governance will take care of current agitations in the country, if practice, but its advocates have maintained the controversial label because of our political undertones inherent in the nation since independence. It also asserted that non-equilibrium in the political and social structures of Nigeria is responsible for the radical agitation for equitable distribution control of national income. The study recommends the enthronement of a cross-pollination of dialogue ideas, patriotic, visionary and transformational leadership as a way of rendering relevant views on the current incessant demand for a political restructuring and good governance, to end the ethnic agitations in the country.

***Keywords**: Restructuring, Good Governance, Agitation, Ethnic, Politics, Development*

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is a wealthy nation, blessed with natural resources and healthy climate for living. But what is lacking is the strong will by the leadership to uphold the true indicators of good governance, in performance and service delivery for the populist. The protagonist of restructuring and good governance have been recognized as way forward for the attainment and achievement of the political, economic and social objective of any political community in Nigeria. The significance of leadership to good governance is seeing in the fact that good and visionary leadership sets the tone and standard of governance in the organization. The Nigerian regional polity as presently are agitating in one form or the other, ranging from restructure of political system, governance and policies of personal interest which its' future has no base and leads the nation nowhere, rather than underdeveloped. The Nigerian system of political parties and electoral contest for power as seen presently cannot ensure nor guarantee political stability in the country. The issues of regional politics and marginalization without proper dialogue and policies, making led to the issues of agitating and clamoring for national reforms in every sector in the country. However, as remarked by Charles Kumolu, in 2020, 'when discussing Nigeria's quest for nationhood and dignity, 'the only problem facing leaders and politicians in Nigeria, is the issue of personal interest(greedy) rather than public interest, which have held the nation's will of progress in dilemma since independence in 1960 till date'. This retrogressive state of the nation since independence has remained a stark dilemma which both national and international pundits have been trying to demystify, to no avail, Shanum S. (2013). Notably, the issue of leadership style of personal interest that override interest of public, is the vice that kept the nation in dilemma since inception.

In the recent times, the nation's memory lane is affected and punctuated by both politics, ethnic and religious disturbances beginning from the agitations of administrative restructuring that led to civil war in 1970, which have contributed baseless on the foundations of the dialogue, peace

element and unity in the country. Presently, tensions are incessantly increasing in Nigeria, following the organized 2019 End-SAS protest and agitation attack on government owned properties in the country, due to 'bad governance', demanding for change for the well-being of all citizens in the nation. Discussing in the view of Southeast region, in Aba, Abia State, it was noted as unknown gunmen to be enforcers of the sit-at-home order directed by the Indigenous People of Biafra, (IPOB), had attacked citizens by the means of compliance to the order and as well as interrupting government economic activities of the area. The agitations focused on the issue of referendum, good governance and release of Biafran nation agitator Mazi Nnamdi Kanu, which Ndarani, was optimistic that the move will lead to peace and unity in diversity (Leadership paper, 2025). All these were in line with ethnic agitations seeking for referendum, membership freedom, restructuring and good governance in the country, which some scholars sees as 'true federalism'. On the issue of agitation and insecurity ravaging the political stability in the nation, government authorities have vowed to continue cracking down on arms trafficking networks threatening the nation's peace and security (Sun, 2025; 3). There was a dramatic bust happened along Asaba-Onitshia expressway on 29th May, 2025, following the credible intelligence security operatives moved and apprehended a truck carrying over 164,000 live cartridges in Anambra State. During the interrogations, it was discovered that the apprehended man was part of an International Ammunition Trafficking Syndicate that moves weapons from Ghana to Nigeria.

Globally, over the years, countries have adopted political arrangements that best suit their nature, context and composition that make them independent (Southern and Northern Sudan). In some cases, for instance, this arrangement facilitates a substantial amount of co-operation among the various segments and institutions all in a bid to achieve the desired end of the good life for the citizens in their country (Alsame Abdul-Wahab & Yusof, 2016). The federal system is one of such political systems mostly adopted by heterogeneous societies/states (Alsamee et al, 2016; Babalola, 2016; Chukwuemeka & Amobi, 2011; Elekwa, Mathew & Akume, 2011; Ewetan, 2012; Ezeji-Okoye, 2009). Similarly, it is in this regard of heterogeneous nature that Nigeria adopts and practices federalism as a system of government where some certain political, administrative and economic powers/functions are shared between the central government and its component units. According to Wheare (1963), cited in Obi & Nwankwo (2017), who noted that each component units with different expenditure responsibilities and taxing powers among the levels of government. On this view that some scholars like; Tamuno (1983), sees Nigeria's federalism as a form of government where the component units of its political organization participate in sharing some powers and functions in a co-operative manner, though the combined forces of agitation, ethnic pluralism and cultural diversity among others that pull the nation apart.

The most persisting problem of Southeast region agitations in Nigeria, is on the issues of marginalization, seeking for true federalism, referendum, restructuring and good governance in the country. Federalism is generally accepted by many as necessary for managing the country's ethnic diversity as reflected in the adage 'Unity and Diversity' (Obi & Nwankwo, 2017).

Understanding the link between the ethnic pluralism in Nigeria, its origin reflects earlier in the 19th century, when the British had conquered the different parts of current Nigeria at different times and established control and authority over them (Ezeji-Okoye, 2009). These areas were grouped into Southern and Northern protectorates, for the convenience of their administration and easy control of the regions. The Northern and Southern protectorates were later amalgamated in 1914 by the colonial masters thus; which gave birth to the country currently called Nigeria we are now (Ezeji-Okoye, 2009). However, as time went by, the British colonial rule, with its incessant alienation and subjugation of the indigenous people, which resulted into agitation for self-government and restructuring of policies in Nigeria. This also indicates that the political history of Nigeria was dominated by agitations/struggles for freedom more especially between 1922 (Aba Women Riot) and 1959. However, it is a well explicated knowledge that some prestigious and notable Nigerians, like; Dr. Nnamdi Azikwe, Sir Herbert Macaulay, Sir Abubakar T. Balewa, Sir Ahmadu Bello, Chief Obafemi Awolowo, and many others, are regarded as the founding fathers of Nigeria's nationalism. Given their agitations/struggles as mentioned above, for freedom. The British colonialist gave concessions to Nigerian activists that led to the rise of the series of constitutions that come into existence, which is not healthy for Nigerian's sustainability till date, rather it turned to their political personal interest and assuage their feelings for the well-being of all in the society. However, the constitutions include the Clifford constitution, 1922, Richards constitutions, 1946, Macpherson constitution, 1951 and Lyttleton's constitution, 1954 which gave birth to Nigeria's federal approved arrangement. While the constitutions on the other hand have played significant roles, historical, social, political and cultural factors in keeping and also made Nigeria's adoption of federalism (Babalola, 2016; Elekwa et al, 2011; Ewetan, 2012; Ezeji-Okoye, 2009). But the true federalism does not function well here. In the words of Obi (1998), cited in Obi and Nwankwo (2017), “the issue of revenue allocation strikes at the very basis of the existence of the Nigerian federation and the rules of entry and exit from the ruling class”, where all the component units are not involved in the sharing formula. These factors are diversities in nationalities, religions, cultures, resources, and fear of domination among the various entities in Nigeria. In the light of this federalism, is thus; seen as a system that grant units' considerable freedom and autonomy in the internal governance of their people given its decentralized powers (Elekwa et al, 2011; Chukwuemeka & Amobi, 2011; Ewetan, 2012; Alsamee et al, 2016;). Also, it is an intent for the

creation of states and local governments in Nigeria, where all the component units are involved in their responsibilities and functions and also, in revenue sharing formula.

Although, federalism has been practiced in Nigeria over the years, but the agitation for restructuring and good governance in the southeast and Nigeria at large becomes the primary concern to achieve resource control or what some scholars termed as "true federalism". On the other hand, (Anugwam, 2005; Ojakorotu, 2008; Agwanwo, 2014; Babalola, 2015; Chijioke, Innocent & Emeh, 2012; Elekwa et al, 2011; Madubuike, 2015; Awofeso, 2017), noted that secession is not a new phenomenon in Nigerian political history. In fact, it is clear that all parts of Nigeria are not comfortable and satisfied with the present federal approved arrangement. According to Anugwam, 2005; Ojakorotu, 2008; Agwanwo, 2014; Chijioke et al, 2012; Elekwa et al, 2011; Madubuike, 2015; Awofeso, 2017), as they totally agreed in the facts that the central government and the other component units of the federation of Nigeria, heavily depend on revenue allocation from the federation account with greater percentage coming from the crude oil revenues. On the other side, the issue of the Niger Delta region agitation remains on the front-line of discussion. Over the recent years, militants from the area have held the nation's oil industry hostage, through a series of workers strikes and abductions of workers that serve the purpose of divestment from the industry and lowered the nation's crude earnings by decreasing the volume production. Notably, on the 4th October, 2009, the amnesty offered militants in the area expired. It remains a pertinent question, if it would be seen in the days to come, how the amnesty initiative of the federal government turns out at containing militancy and move development of the region. Within the corridors of the political economy of crude oil in Nigeria, the question of control as some scholars termed it "resource control" is not totally surprising. It is a suspension of disbelieve. To make it specifically, Agbu (2004), maintained that agitation in Nigeria's federal set-up has fundamentally manifested itself over the quest for access and control over the political power to federally collect revenue for personal interest rather than well-being of all the citizens in the country. Moreover, the entire economic character of the Nigerian state is also a fundamental factor in understanding the dimension and interests of political forces in this agitation/struggle.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Restructuring and good governance is the protagonist of the ethnic agitations in Nigeria. Interestingly, the crude oil rent revenue constitutes a significant proportion of her national income, but political domination and exploitation interest supersedes good governance for all. However, fear and confusion have enveloped in the Southeast of Nigeria as two separatist groups, the proscribed Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), headed by detained leader, Mazi Nnamdi Kanu, and Simon Ekpa's Biafra Republic in Exile (BRGIE), issued conflicting directives on the agitation of restructuring and good governance,

enforcing sit-at-home to express their grievances and celebrate the year's Biafra Hero's Day' (30th May, 2019), plunging the region into a state of uncertainly. This happened as the military and police authorities have issued stern warnings to the secessionists, daring them to carry out their threats. IPOB has been celebrating 'Biafra Hero's Day' on May 30th, since 2017 till date to honour those who died during the civil war and commemoration of the declaration of Biafra 58 years ago by late Dim Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu whose agitations were on the issue of administrative restructuring and true federalism in the country. However, former Head of State, Yakubu Gowon on 5th Convention of Christian Men's Fellowship (CMF) on Saturday 7th June, 2025, in Abuja, said that the 'Nigerian Civil War was never, driven by hatred, but by a difficult necessity to preserve national unity (Leadership News Paper, 2025). According to Okey in Umuahia, who noted that there was a huge and total lock-down by enforcement of sit-at-home exercise on 30th May, 2025, marking Biafra's day. More disturbingly is that, there has been a failure of governance at all levels of democratic governance structure mostly due to bad leadership and corruption over the years (Abbas, 2013). In fact, most indicators of underdevelopment are still present in the country regardless of its varied geo-political regions. While the idea of true or fiscal federalism, resource control, and restructuring are aimed at ensuring balanced national development, unity and peaceful co-existence in the society. This have been debating the pertinent question, "what is wrong with Nigeria's federal system in view of its current challenges?" Similarly, "can the current ethnic agitation in the nation calls for through restructuring dialogue agenda", as pushed by some interest groups to address the contemporary political and economic challenges in the country? In responds, the above questions posed by this study, emphasis that there is the need to find out the factors responsible for the current agitation that is posing threat to the corporate existence of Nigeria. On this note, an Abuja-Grand Patron of one Nation for Asiwaju Support Group, Mohammed Ndarani SAN, on Thursday 5th June, 2025, appealed to the federal government to settle the issue of Biafra nation agitator, Mazi Nnamdi Kanu and other agitators, out of court through formidable National Committee of Arbitration. Ndarani, was optimistic that the move will lead to peace and unity in diversity. The greatest problem here is on the issue of good governance and strategic management of regional development in Nigeria (Onyeulo,F. & Abasili, 2024).

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY:

Specifically, the study aimed to examine:

1. The factors responsible for the incessant call for restructuring in Nigeria.
2. The areas of contention or dissatisfaction that led to agitations, by extension responsible for threatening the political stability of Southeast Nigeria in particular and corporate existence in general.
3. The best strategies to go about restructuring Nigeria's federalism politically and

economically for national development.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS OF THEORETICAL ISSUES

Good Governance

Good governance is a valued asset for development to thrive in any nation, it provides the enabling environment to foster sustainable development in Nigeria. However, there are divergent opinions articulated by various scholars on the concept of governance. Maserumule and Gutto (2008) define governance as the process of decision or policy making, and the process by which decisions and policies are implemented/not implemented. Kaufmann, Kraay, and Mastruzzi (2006), on their views offer an understanding definition of governance. According to them, governance is the traditions and institutions by which authority in a country is exercised which include the process by which governments are selected, monitored and replaced; the capacity of the government to effectively formulate and implement sound policies; and the respect of citizens and the state as the institutions that govern economic and social interactions among them. They further highlight six indicators of good governance to include, accountability, rule of law, transparency, political effectiveness of public service provision and the quality of the bureaucracy, soundness of policies pursued by government, while the sixth indicator is control of corruption, which has eaten deep into our political and bureaucratic system.

In another dimension, Rotberg (2009), argues that national security, rule of law, participation, economic opportunity and human development are political goods which determine the effective performance of a government of any nation. He argues that the better the quality of the public service delivery of these political goods to the citizens, the higher the level of good governance in the country. The gospel truth is that; any man who can distinguish between right and wrong in actions, decision-making and performance, “is a human being”.

Akanba (2001), expressed that good governance is the capability of leaders to sustain social peace, guarantee law and order, promote conditions for generating economic growth and ascertain a minimum level of social security, for the well-being of all in the society, is 'transformational leader' and a 'human being'.

LEADERSHIP IN NIGERIA

Leadership has been viewed to play an important role in governance (Lord, Atkinson, and Mitchell, 2009). According to Soludo (2007), governance is the traditions and institutions by which authority in a country is exercised, and leadership is the act of exercising that authority in the society. The nexus of leadership and good governance is the reason for the assertion by Othman and Rahman (2014), who noted that governance is about leadership. According to them, the connection of leadership with governance is seen in efficiency, probity, responsibility, transparency and accountability in decision-making and performance. Similarly, Nnablife (2010) avers that good leadership sets the tone and standard of governance. Supporting the nexus of leadership

and good governance, Soludo (2007) argues that governance and leadership are so intricately related that one circumscribes the other for efficiency. Kellerman (1984), defines leadership as a process by which one individual consistently exerts more impact than others on the nature and direction of group activity. Ologbenla (2007), however defines leadership in its simplest term as the quality of being good at leading a team, organization, a country, etc. According to Blondel (1987), leadership entails the ability of the one or few who are at the top to make others do a number of things (positively or negatively) that they would not do or at least might not have done. For Okadigbo (1987), leadership is the process through which one individual consistently exerts more influence than others in the pursuit of group behaviour. Nnaji, Onyeulo & Ojiako (2024), noted that group behavior is concerned with the understanding, prediction and control of human behavior in organizations. In other words, political leadership could be described as the mobilization and direction, by a person or group of persons using essentially non-coercive means, of other persons within a society to act in patterned and coherent ways that cause (or prevent) change in the authoritative allocation of values within that organization.

Osaghae (2010), on the issue of political leadership, identified the attributes and expectations of good leadership to include altruism, patriotism, moral uprightness, sense of historical mission, comprehension of developmental challenges and how to overcome them, courage, boldness and determination of oneself for the interest of all in the society. This is not two sides of the same coin in attributes of Nigerian political leadership.

In another dimension, Elgie (1995), cited in Onyeulo, (2023), identified three main views or theories of leadership.

The first is the Great Man theory of leadership; which argued that leaders were morally good, human being and great men, able to change the course of history as agents of social and political change in the society (transformational leadership).

The second is the Cultural Determinist theory; which is contrary to the Great Man theory, that stated that individuals had little or no significant impact on the course of events, rather determined by the impersonal interplay of social and cultural forces over which individuals had little control in the society. In this regards, the environment in which leadership operates shape its action and performance. Thus presently, individuals had little or no opportunity to make a personal impact on historical events that will benefit all in the society. Due to personal interest and quest of political power at all cost.

The third is the Integrationist theory of leadership; which holds that leadership is the product of the interaction between leaders and the leadership environment (political, social, economic, and cultural) with which they are faced. The theory argues that political leaders do have the opportunity to shape the environment in which they operate and have the potential to leave a legacy and their mark on the system, but only if and to the degree that the environment permits it

(Elgie,1995) as cited in Onyeulo et al (2023). The reality here, is that the leader must be part of the environment that knows the masses need that also affects him in one way or the other. Not leadership in diaspora'.

Governance and leadership have been identified as indispensable for social change, economic growth and human development of any country (Mangu, 2008). As identified by many scholars, remarkably; that governance and leadership are two sides of the same coin and also critical for the establishment of democracy and for democratic consolidation in the country. As observes by Huntington (1991), democracy will spread in the world to the extent that those who exercise power in the world and individual countries want it to spread! The war and agitations ravaging the world today are based on who exercise power and administratively control the polity. Gowon in his speech noted that the civil war, was driven by difficult necessity to preserve national unity. Ojukwu on the other hand, noted that the war was on the issue of administrative control.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study adopts the Structural Functionalist Theory as propounded by Emile Durkeim, Talcott Person and Robert Merton as theoretical framework of analysis. The theory is chosen based on the facts that it serves as a means of explaining the functions performed by the structures in a system (Nigeria). The theory suggests that every system (Society) has various departmental structures that perform certain functions for the utmost survival of the whole system (well-being of all citizens in the society). It also argues that every system has structures that must function to remain in balance; if one structure of the political system changes, equilibrium or balance is temporarily disrupted until other structures change (agitate) to create a new equilibrium otherwise the entire system may go dysfunctional. Like Pro-Biafra groups incessant sit-at-home enforcement, and the remembrance day of their fallen Hero's on every 30th May, in the southeast region, in which it was observed this year 30th May, 2025, which was observed by all the states in the southeast region. (Okey Sampson; from Umuahia). The study focuses on social integration, participation, stability and co-operation among individuals in the society (Umar, Ogbu & Ereke, 2019). According to Merton (1990) as cited in Umar (2019), indicate that some functions are manifest functions and they are intended and recognized but latent functions are unintended and unrecognized as the author noted. These social patterns that contribute to the maintenance of a political system are regarded as functional while those that have negative consequences are considered dysfunctional. In other words, talcott persons observed the structural functionalist theory as a political system made of different but interrelated parts in the society. These parts are supposed to work harmoniously and to ensure the survival of the whole system. However, when related to society, structural functionalism can be described as a means of explaining basic functions of societal structures in the economic and political system and it also serves as a tool of

investigation. Since the society is made up of parts, structural-functional approach explains the relationship between the parts (structures) on one hand and the relationship between the parts and the whole system (economic and political system) on the other hand. The structures are many and they can take any form. It is the contribution of each part (structure) that sustains the economic and political system as a whole). Relating the structural functional theory to this study, good governance and infrastructure is the correlation between structural, functional and basic element needed for economic development of the State to take place and uphold the ethnic agitation for unity peace of the nation. For a political system to be effective, every facility including the social and physical must be made available and functional system. Therefore, it is important to acknowledge the fact that good governance and infrastructural facilities like roads, electricity power, transport, telecommunication, healthcare system, educational system, governance process amongst several others must be put in place and adequately developed to suite the societal need of the people in each region, for peace to rain. When not made available, the region may suffer incomprehensible level of institutional decay and backwardness in development as the above instances of good governance and infrastructures are necessary condiments for the survival of each region. Therefore, the theory provides basic tool for understanding the nature and character of the ethnic agitation in the country, as well as considering restructuring and good governance as panacea to investment and development. Drawing from the above, Clinton (1993) as cited in Umar et al (2019) apparently relating good governance from the point of view of the structural-functional perspective, noted that it is the framework of interrelated and interdependent networks and systems comprising identifiable industries and institutions including people and procedures, cap distribution abilities that provide reliable flow of product and services essential to the economy, and the defense of United State. However, the interrelated and interdependent functioning of the various institutional subdivision of any political polity, rest solely on the viability of infrastructural facilities in that area.

LEADERSHIP AND GOOD GOVERNANCE ISSUES IN NIGERIA

The nexus of leadership and good governance is the crux for the study. It has been observed that the major challenges of Nigeria, like many other African countries is bad leadership and governance in the system (Rotbert, 2009). Hence this is a challenge, it brings to the line, the faulty foundation structure in the emergence of Nigeria's leadership which has in its very origin as passed on by the colonial master's method of leadership and governance that is self-oriented and self-aggrandized (personal), rather than leadership and governance that is nationalistic and after the common good and well-being of the citizens in the society. Against this backdrop, Nigeria's governance and leadership failure and the high decay of her national infrastructures in different regions, such as Southeast can be traced back to the political, economic and social preconditioning

and orientation passed on from her British colonialists which contributes to the country's present ethnic agitation for restructuring and good governance for the well-being of all. According to Ocheni and Nwankwo (2012), on the views on colonization in Africa, they noted some valid points; (1) the first objective of colonialism in Africa is political domination. (2) the second objective of colonialism in Africa is to make possible the exploitation of the colonized country. Against this back drop, Nigeria's colonial experience affects our political leadership structure where they dominate and exploit for their self-orientated interest rather than the interest of the masses they governed. Still on the issue of personal interest, leadership in Nigeria since independence till date affirm with corruption of looting, embezzlement and a complete detachment from the citizens they governed. They continuous plugging out of resources for personal interest with little or no interest in investment and development of the nation, which gave rise to the citizen's agitations in their various regions. This was the orientation of Nigerian leaders learnt from their colonial masters from the on-set of independence and has continued to show its ugly head in the nation till date. It was further highlighted by Ocheni and Nwankwo (2012), who pointed that "the complex nature of political instability and socio-economic malaise being experienced in most African states today has recourse to the nature and character of classes introduced in Africa by colonialism" and Nigeria not exception from it. Having been independent for sixty-five years (1960-2025), the political structure is still in shambles, due to lack of leadership willpower in restructuring of policies and good governance to foster peace and development in the country.

However, transitioning from civilian rule to military rule and the current democracy Nigeria experiences since 1999 till date, should be expected that by now, lessons should have been learnt and transformational leaders would have emerged but that is far from reality as the present democracy in the nation which kicked off in 1999 is an adulterated democracy (suspension of disbelief), lacking in itself democratic participation of citizens, arbitrary use of power and subjugation of the rule of law. "The crop of leaders that have attained leadership position since independence had in one way or the other lacked vision, most of them have been engrossed with corruption and political bickering leading to the enthronement of maladministration and mismanagement of public resources, and consequently economic setback and abject poverty as nation heritage", (Lawal and Owolabi, 2012). Ethnic agitations over the decade arose as a result of bad leadership and governance of true federalism which has kept the nation in dilemma and underdeveloped. Lacking in its' totality foreign investments for development in the regions. With the fear of loss, many foreign investment companies have left Nigeria to another country to establish their firms and operate, due to bad leadership policies and ethnic agitations in the country.

Irresponsibility: the act of leadership and governance in Nigeria has become grossly

irresponsible, since the inception of the present democracy in 1999 till date and is not answerable to the governed and not accountable to the masses in the society. The present electoral and judiciary system in Nigeria as seen in 2023 presidential election is a mirage to the development of our political system, and for 'true federalism'. In what areas do you think INEC is getting it wrong and what in your own opinion, should be done to increase the efficiency of INEC? There have been in recent times much clamour for reforms in Nigeria. The good question remains; do you think that this can in any way contribute positively to the standardization of the Nigerian electoral system? According to Kenneth Okonkwo speaking on Arise Television on 11th June, 2025, noted that INEC is effectively operating as a department of the ruling All Progressive Congress (APC) and deliberately undermine the oppositions. The worst of it all, is the pertinent question on the issues privatization and oil subsidy removal drive by the government that has privatized almost every key industry and public service providing agency in Nigeria, bring to the citizens' mind the question, 'what then is the responsibility of the government to the people they governed? If all basic amenity providing institutions of government are under private control, certainly the cost would rise based on commercialization of one-man business and the quality reduce because the government possesses financial weight to run these organizations, as they are administratively established for service delivery of public interest not personal interest (Nnaji, Onyeulo & Ojiako, (2024). Supervisory responsibilities and equally in the process of rules and regulations have been breached without disapproval. Where this state of affairs has become prevalent, the public service has lent itself to abuse by dishonest politicians who 'masquerades to be good'. “According to Chigbu, (2007), In his search for the cause of the Nigerian problem, he noted that Chinua Achebe, lamented in his book; 'The trouble with Nigeria'. That the trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership. According to him (Achebe), 'there is nothing basically wrong with the Nigerian character. There is nothing wrong with the Nigerian land, climate or water or air or anything else. 'The Nigerian problem is the unwillingness or inability of her leaders to rise to their responsibility, to the challenge of personal examples which are the hallmarks of true leadership, not greedy leaders of personal interest rather than public', which they learnt by their British colonial masters of domination and exploitations of the populist.

Lack of rule of law: Rule of Law: in this aspect, the rule of law establishes a framework for fair and equitable governance, but it is lacking in Nigeria democratic system. In a democratic setting such as Nigeria, government and its' agencies should ensure the rule of law which promotes trust and predictability in administrative actions, which is crucial for fostering an environmental conducive to sustained development. The World Bank's emphasis on the rule of law (Okonjo-Iweala, 2018), underscores its importance in creating a

stable governance structure in a country. There is an insufficiency in the supremacy of the law in Nigeria. This lends its features from the fact that they are the vital part which is an arm that upholds the rule of law and punished the offender as the last hope of common man in the society, is now held by the greedy political actors in the country that control the judiciary system. Nwekeaku (2014), established that Nigeria's constitution provides for the fundamental rights of the citizens and roles for every level of government to play in jurisdiction. However, it is not the lack of good laws that troubles Nigeria since independence, but the lack of transformational leaders and good governance that seeks to personally twist these laws to its own curves, for his interest rather than for interest of the public. Further discussing, Lawal and Owolabi (2012), noted that the rule of law is undermined in Nigeria system of bureaucracy, Executive interference on independency of the judiciary, affect its responsivities in the system. True democratic system in Nigeria declined, due to lack of independency among the arms of government. There is an evident in the direct influence Nigeria's political leaders have over the judiciary (in appointments, promotions, threats and gifts), which undermined their responsibilities, their adjudications and the weakness of the judicial machinery to enforce the law and judicial decisions as an independent body.

Oppression, Suppression and Intimidation on the Citizens:

The British colonization and system of ruling among the legacies of colonial rule in Nigeria, few names are more steeped in contradiction than Harold Monday Douglas. However, the study revisited the exploits Douglas and the long shadow of terror he cast across Eastern Nigeria, which remains a symbol of unchecked colonial brutality, repression and violence. A reign of terror; the rule of fear in Owerri Province (CO 520/14), (1902). It was reported, that when medical officer Dr. Stewart was mistaken for Douglas and killed in Ahiara Mbaise Imo state, the retaliation was unprecedented. Entire villages were wiped out in what became one of the most savage campaigns in colonial history. Farms were torched, people were massacred and some victims were reportedly buried alive by British soldiers. On the same vein, the military regimes and their autocratic leadership style in Nigeria, have been identified to the issues of intimidation and oppression to enforce obedience, compliance and cooperation from citizens in the society, and from government bodies and organizations at all levels (Osumah and Ikelegbe, 2009). It is thus an aberration when a much sought civilian/democratic government use same pattern as identified above in governance, as seen by the present politicians in Nigeria today. Party indiscipline evaporates as cliques, pursuing narrow and shallow agendas for appropriate state power and use it to settle old scores as personal interest, intimidate the opposition and steal public resources (Osumah and Ikelegbe, 2009). These are used as tools of enforcing their wills and caprices on opponents and the masses in the society. They used law enforcement agencies and

units of control like the Police, EFCC, ICPC, SSS, INEC and hired thugs among others, to carry out these horrendous acts as they have personally become increasingly authoritarian, blatant and unruly (above-the-law), without considering the interest of the citizens they governed.

These have resulted in a rise of human rights abuses at various levels including the masses which have in most cases enveloped the issue of agitation in the country (Majekodunmi, 2012 & Osayande, 2008), and "wielding the powers of life and death" (Idadaand Uhunmwuangh, 2012). This intimidation and oppression as presently utilized by our politicians is also very evident in the electoral system which have turned into a 'do-or-die' affairs by desperate incumbents and various party loyalists in the society (Osumah and Ikelegbe, 2009). The quest to sit-tight in office has turned governance in Nigeria and other African countries to an animalistic venture, for they no longer distinguish between right and wrong in their action, for the one that wields the stick the most fiercely. On Democracy Day, 12th June, 2025, protesters assembled at Ikeja under bridge. The protest, organized by a coalition of Civil Society Organizations, saw demonstrators calling for good governance, accountability and end of hardship across the country (Vanguard News, 2025).

Lack of Patriotism and National Unity:

Federalism is usually viewed as a form of governmental and institutional structure, deliberately designed by political 'architects', to cope with the twin but difficult task of maintaining unity while also preserving diversity (Obi and Nwankwo, 2017). They also noted that the peoples of Nigeria are diverse in different respects; culturally, historically, socially, religiously, educationally, and industriously. Here, self-interest overrides national interest, individualism against nationalism, ethnicity against unity in diversity. The drive and push of government seeks to amass as much properties and assets as possible and lip-service declarations for national development. This position is succinctly captured by Ebegbulem (2009) in Imhonopi and Ugochukwu (2013), who stated that these leaders "accumulate wealth at the expense of national development without deference to the basic needs of the masses". Further reiterating this assertion is the position of Idada and Uhunmwuangh (2012), who described governance in Nigeria as "politics of personality". According to a report from Channels TV on Monday 9th June, 2025, Senator Ali Ndume of Borno South, has expressed grave concerns about the current political climate in Nigeria, stating that citizens have lost faith in the government and that the recent endorsement of president Bola Tinubu for second term holds little significance. The incessant defection of other political parties to the current ruling power party (APC) is creating a huge sense of agitation, where it serves like the president Bola Tinubu is trying to pull the nation into one-party-state.

Effects of Bad Governance and Leadership Failure in Nigeria

The effects of bad leadership and governance

failure manifest in all facets of Nigeria including masses of poor and decayed infrastructure (Ene, et al, 2013). These be devilled the nation's political and economic development system with high agitations rate; urban degradation, increase in slums and poor living conditions; high cost of living; widening of the social class gap between the rich and the poor in Nigeria; loss of will by public workers to carry out their duties with efficiency or passion as it is seen as a waste of time; high rate of unemployment and growing restiveness of the youths; citizens agitations ; never-ending growing insecurity, terrorism and ethno-religious clashes; break down of law and order, lawlessness and ineptitude; assassinations; man-know-man syndrome which erodes meritocracy and promotes mediocrity in the public sphere and administration; crisis in poverty reduction; incessant corruption at all levels in the society; waste of manpower, mineral and capital resources; loss of confidence, faith and trust in the government; loss of interest in political participation; economic instability occasioned by frequent strike actions thereby stalling government economic activities (Arowolo and Aluko, 2012). However, all these constituted to the issue of ethnic agitations and restructuring in the nation. There also exists growing levels of anger in the mind of the masses, that may eventually explode into major rebellions and revolutions that would threaten the very existence of the nation, if care is not taken. Borrowing a leaf from the 2020 nation wild End-SAS Protest in Nigeria and demonstrators calling for good governance and an end to hardship across the country. Madukovich (2014), posits that "this disillusionment may not be unconnected to the frustration many Nigerians feel over the insensitivity of those in power to their plight. Democracy rather than bring smiles to the faces of Nigerians have turned to the direct opposite to the majority of her peoples. However, from the lowest to the highest position of authority, Nigeria is dominated/constrained to develop by political cabals that have been clogs to the wheel progress in Nigeria. Nigeria's kind of leadership and governance has always been the product of cabals that is influenced by greed, selfishness, and primitive wealth accumulating tendencies of personal interest, (one man standing tall at the expense of others). This they have made nonsense, the potentials of greatness for Nigeria, our government 'amiss' (Arowolo and Aluko, 2012). According to Agbor (2011), as cited by Imhonopi and Ugochukwu (2013), "the result of poor leadership in Nigeria is embodied as poor governance manifested in consistent political crisis and insecurity, poverty of the extreme order among the citizens, incessant miasma of corruption and rising unemployment indices in the country". Ebegbulem (2009) in Imhonopi and Ugochukwu, 2013), ascertain the believes that; "the leadership from 1960 has criminally managed the country's affairs and resources and throwing the people over the precipice where they now wallow in absolute poverty, illiteracy, hunger, rising unemployment, avoidable health crisis and insecurity". US Secretary of State, Hilary Clinton, during her last visit in office to Nigeria in August 2012 expressed her

disappointment on governance in Nigeria saying, "the most immediate source of the disconnect between Nigeria's wealth and its poverty is a failure of governance at the federal, state and local levels. The various ethnic militia and insurgent attacks in Nigeria give credence the fact that lack of transparency and accountability have eroded the legitimacy of the successive government and contributed to the rise of groups that embrace agitation and violence and reject the authority of the state (Imhonopi and Ugochukwu (2013). Elucidating on the right of the citizens, 'education' Madukovich (2014), avers that the sector is presently in the most declined state ever. Neither the federal or state governments allocate to education 26% of the budget as deemed by the UNESCO as minimum to cater for education, especially for developing nations like Nigeria. The university strike system that resumed recently which lasted up to eight months, due to bad leadership and governance that has little or no interest in the development of education sector in Nigeria, as their children are not schooling in the country they are ruling. Education of our youth toward good governance is affective for revival and national development. In this context, educational institutions play a major role in giving value knowledge to individuals from egg to adult.

METHODOLOGY

Research simply means the quest to search and gain or re-examine a given phenomenon thoroughly. Okeibunor and Anugwom (2005), noted that research supports the growth of theory in social and management sciences, by providing the forum for the verification and testing the theory. The research methods used in this study is "quantitative research design". In other words, it is an ex-post facto research design which Abasilim and Ebhohiem (2017), explain as essentially phenomenon under research which was of the present and this method ultimately deals with the situation under study. According to Chukwuemeka (2002), in Kerlinger (1977), who defined ex-post facto as systematic empirical inquiry in which the scientists do not have direct control of independent variables because their manifestations have already occurred. He also noted that it is a form of descriptive research in which an investigator starts with the observation of a dependent variables and then studies the independent variables in retrospect, for their possible relationship to any effects on the dependent variables. On the other hand, secondary sources of data were chiefly used for this study before the conclusion and recommendations were made. The study made use of descriptive analysis to examine the issues of restructuring and good governance; as panacea to ethnic agitations in the southeast Nigeria. The study which is theoretical in nature draws its argument basically from secondary data which include journal publications, newspapers, textbooks and internet sources for cross-pollination of ideas.

CONCLUSION:

Nigeria is at war for doing things right. Basically there is no doubt that Nigeria as a nation, is in serious crisis due to ethnic agitation for

restructuring and resource control. However, in spite of the shortcomings of federalism being practiced in Nigeria, federalism is still the only suitable system of government that can be used to govern a heterogeneous multi-cultural and religious society like Nigeria. On the other hand, Mrs. Miriam Abacha, the wife of late General Sani Abacha, in her speech on TVC's Television interview on Abacha's allegation of annulled June 12, 1993, presidential election and looted national treasury. She in her appeal, urged Nigerians to move past ethnic and religious sentiments when discussing national issues (Daily post, 4th June, 2025).

However, as the Nigerian political system continues to evolve, and change forms and structure, it is expected that an acceptable federal system that will take care of agitations from every component units that may emerge. The main argument of restructuring and agitation in Nigeria is that during pre-colonial era traditional rulers were key players in the area of governance in various regions and capacities in the country. This was until 1970, when the then military government created states and introduced a uniform local government administration system in the country. Problem upon this, is that traditional rulers were insulated from politics and formally assigned advisory roles which are not binding on the elected local government authority (Fatile and Adejuwon, 2009). This therefore means the return to status quo to pre 1976 where most traditional rulers in the country had constitutionally assigned roles and responsibilities. In another respect, these traditional rulers are being controlled by our so called politicians presently.

Basically, every region in Nigeria today is clamouring for restructuring and good governance ranging from one point of view to another. The constitutional basis for restructuring Nigeria's federalism as discussed, as most of the issues raised earlier are considered valid, the unethical practice of federalism in Nigeria has resulted in the emergence of ethnic, regional or religious based groups most of which are militant in nature championing one agitation or another for the internal autonomy of their people as captured in 1967 civil war. In the current Nigeria's agitations, its realities reflect this view, with over 250 tribes and ethnic groups each guided or misguided by different religions and regions in the country. The relevance of Afenifere, Ohaneze N'digbo, Arewa Consultative Forum, Southern Leaders Forum, and Ijaw National Congress etc; each representing sectoral cleavages aid it all (Abbas, 2016). There also some other groups in this context such as the Movement for the Actualization of Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) in the South-East, Odua People Congress (OPC) in the West, Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP) in the South-South, Arewa Consultative Forum (ACF) in the North among others (Ezeji-Okoye, 2009; Abbas, 2013; 2016). Over the years, there are other issues that have been presented and defended by the sesocio-political groups include; the rotational presidency, claims and counter claims of marginalization, local government financial autonomy, sovereign national conference, among

several others.

There is also an ongoing agitation, alleging that the establishment of the Nigerian Army School of Islamic Affairs which is supposed to be a force of unity in a secular country, is aimed at Islamizing and destroying the nation. However, it was noted that the initiation of such policies in countries like Turkey and Libya resulted in crisis which the countries and others like them are yet to recovered.

In all, African leaders till date, believed in the ruling style of domination and exploitation, played by the British colony. Nebo, (2010), comment on his paper presented at the Ahiajoku Festival; Owerri, Imo State, on good governance from the perspective of Nigeria sectoral underdevelopment and leadership challenges. Emphasizing that true practice of democracy is lacking in the system. Leadership in Africa is for personal interest against the interest of other citizens they governed, which constituted the incessant issue of agitations in the country, calling for referendum, restructuring and good governance among the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. National security must not be compromised to diplomatic optics. Nigeria need a transformational and visionary leader who can distinguish between right and wrong in sound decision-making, not policy of personal interest masquerading to be good. The fact here is that it is easier to weak someone that is sleeping, than to weak someone who is pretending to be sleeping. Such as our so called leaders are pretending to have the interest of citizens at heart only during the period of campaigning and election.

2.Leaders in Nigeria should stress on public interest rather than self-interest for good governance and community development to thrive in the nation. Akanba (2001), expressed that good governance is the capability of leaders to sustain social peace, guarantee law and order, promote conditions for generating economic growth and ascertain a minimum level of social security. However, development in local communities in Nigeria will be a great thing where good govern.

3. Problem of leadership style of old culture and policies that does not suit the present needs of the citizens in the society should be unlearn and embrace policies of transformation and good governance that will bring development in the country. This is due to the fact that agitations for restructuring are affected by one constitutional section or the other.

4. Therefore, for a meaningful restructuring in Nigeria to take place, a total of all round amendment of the entire 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria should be made and considered as an alternative, as noted by many scholars in the society.

5. However, depending on area or aspect that requires restructuring, it has been advanced that; one reason for restructuring is to improve national peace and unity in diversity for peaceful co-existence, political stability, foreign investment and balanced national development for the well-being of all. With regards to implication for the

restructuring, Nigeria's constitution provides a legal basis for the general operation of government (levels and organs) as well as the procedure for amendment through a joint resolution of the National Assembly and States Houses of Assemblies.

In order to address the ongoing agitation for restructuring and resource control in the southeast Nigeria, the study further suggests that:

6. Where it is considered necessary, and for the purpose of promoting national unity and political stability, relevant constitutional sections being sought for change which should be amended with national interest as the main guiding post, not personal interest that have been masquerading to be good by our so called leaders.

7. The government at all levels should address corruption as the major problem in order to achieve meaningful development across regions of the country. On this note, the leadership in Nigerian can achieve the aims of being catalyst for national transformation by becoming development oriented, shun every form of corruption, tackle every form of agitations and insecurity ravaging the nation today, and become more transparent and accountable and having greater respect for the rule of law. On the other hand, citizens should be empowered through adequate provision of basic amenities as to be involved in the developmental process of their communities in the nation.

8. The study also noted that a number of issues raised for restructuring and good governance, cannot be addressed in isolation of the efficient and effective implementation of government's socio-economic policies and programmes through strict adherence to the constitution. But the biggest challenges on this affair is that leaders in Africa, nay Nigeria act to be above the law because of greed and personal interest in making policies.

9. Constructive engagement for dialogue with crosspollination of ideas among the ethnic agitators, still remain the best path forward for true democracy and federalism in Nigeria.

10. Freedom of the detained agitators will contribute significantly to national healing and unity in diversity, while fostering better relations between the federal and various ethnic groups, particularly in the southeast.

11. Focusing on the issues of agitations for restructuring, it is a reality that every region in Nigeria is in a serious developmental crisis that requires true federalism for the utmost utilization of the allocation meant for the welfare of the citizenry. The leaders needed in Nigeria governments for national peace and development in various regions should be integral part of the people in terms of infrastructural development and vision for a better future for all citizens in the country.

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