

NIGERIA: TO BE RESTRUCTURED OR NOT BE RESTRUCTURED?

Professor Kamal Bello

Department of Political Science

National Open University of Nigeria, Abuja

kbello@noun.edu.ng

Abstract

Nigeria, a product of the British colonial legacy, gained independence in 1960 and has since grappled with the challenge of forging an integrated and developed nation-state. Despite experimenting with various forms of governance, including parliamentary, presidential, and military systems, the country continues to face issues of national cohesion, economic disparity, and political instability. These persistent challenges have reignited calls for restructuring, perceived by many as a panacea for Nigeria's systemic problems. This paper critically interrogates the question: Should Nigeria be restructured or not? Employing documentary sources and content analysis, the study explores both the historical antecedents and contemporary debates on restructuring. It examines competing viewpoints—those advocating restructuring as a pathway to true federalism, resource control, and autonomy, and those arguing that structural changes without leadership reform, institutional accountability, and economic diversification may prove ineffective. The paper also analyses the rentier character of the Nigerian state, emphasising how elite interests and rent-seeking behaviour often shape the quest for restructuring. It concludes that restructuring alone is insufficient unless accompanied by constitutional reforms, political consensus, and improved governance. A dual strategy that integrates structural reform with systemic transformation is proposed as the most viable approach to sustainable development in Nigeria.

Keywords: Restructuring, Federalism, Governance, Rentier State, Constitutional Reform

Introduction

To understand the Nigerian type of politics, one needs to go beyond mere formalism or face value. One has to search for those seemingly intangible building blocks that give meaning and intelligibility to the real process and structure of its politics. Therefore, the dialectical framework of analysis articulated by Marx and Hegel will be appropriate here. Their philosophical basis of assumptions is that critical thinking begins with a refusal to accept 'reality' as it is constituted in the observable world. As summarised by Bangura (1991:155), "The task of intellectual work was to probe beneath the exterior level of objective reality to unravel the discrete elements of historical process and meaning."

It is based on this premise that this presentation is carried out to understand the universal concept of restructuring and its meaning in the context of the contemporary Nigerian polity, which is laced with personal interest and gain. To adequately address the question posed by this paper—whether Nigeria should be restructured or not—it is essential to evaluate both the arguments for and against restructuring. While proponents see restructuring as a pathway to true federalism and national development, opponents argue it could deepen fragmentation, encourage

secessionist tendencies, or serve as a political smokescreen for elite interests (Aduma et al., 2023). This paper, therefore, seeks to engage both perspectives critically. The ongoing debate over restructuring reflects deeper tensions within Nigeria's state-building efforts. At the heart of the issue lies a paradox: while Nigeria has been structurally reorganised multiple times, fundamental problems of governance, equity, and national integration persist. This raises critical questions about the efficacy of restructuring in addressing these long-standing challenges. Is Nigeria's predicament primarily structural, or are deeper institutional, leadership, and political culture issues at play? This paper explores these intersecting layers to understand what kind of restructuring—if any—is both desirable and feasible within Nigeria's federal framework.

Conceptual Clarifications

Restructuring

Restructuring is a drastic and fundamental internal change that alters the relationships between different components or elements of an organisation or system. According to Olukoshi (1991), restructuring is to organise a company, business, or system in a new way to make it operate more effectively. In words, making things better. Restructuring is a type of corporate action taken when significantly modifying the debt, operations, and structure of an organisation as a means of potentially eliminating financial harm and improving the organisation. Restructuring is a corporate management term for the act of reorganising the legal, ownership, operational or other structures of an organisation to make it more profitable or better organised for its present needs. Other reasons for restructuring include a change of ownership or ownership structure, or a response to a crisis or significant change in the organisation, such as bankruptcy, repositioning or buyout. According to Berry (1989), restructuring implies re-engineering, reorganising, redesign, realignment, transformation, reconfiguration, reshuffling, reshaping, rescheduling, reform, revamping, reconversion, and adjustment, among others.

In Nigeria, the quest for restructuring means all this, depending on who is discussing the concept and for what purpose. Thus, the call for restructuring means different things to different people in Nigeria.

While the concept of restructuring spans corporate, legal, and political domains, in Nigeria's context, it is primarily a political reorganisation aimed at correcting structural imbalances, decentralising power, and fostering equitable development. Its interpretation often varies with the interest groups involved—political elites, regional agitators, and civil society actors—leading to a multiplicity of meanings that complicate consensus-building.

Prebendalism and Rentier State

The Nigerian state has a prebendal as well as a rentier character, which are suitable for the present discourse. Prebendalism in this sense means that the distinctions between the public and the private domains have become blurred, and power, which has become a primary source of wealth, has become personalised. Nigeria has gone far in the process of what Medard (1982, p. 33) called the production of a "state patrimonial bourgeoisie". The Nigerian state also has a rentier character. The primary characteristic of the rentier state is that its main relationship with society is mediated through its expenditures on the military and state security, development projects, consumption subsidies, construction, and other related activities. Rent in this sense is not merely an income earned by landlords but is, in general, a reward for the ownership of all natural resources. A rentier economy relies on substantial external rent. The creation of wealth is centred on a small fraction of society; the rest of society is engaged mainly in the distribution and utilisation of the wealth so created.

In a rentier state, the government is the primary recipient of external rent. One of the significant features is that production efficiency is relegated to the background, and there is at best a tenuous link between individual income and activity. Getting access to the rent circuit is a greater preoccupation than attaining production efficiency (Beblawi and Luciani, 1987, p. 13). The importance of access in a rentier economy leads to what has been termed a rentier mentality, which embodies a break in the work-reward causation. Reward-income or wealth is not related to work and risk bearing, but rather to chance or situation. For a rentier state, a reward becomes a windfall gain, an isolated fact, situational or accidental, as against the conventional outlook where reward is integrated into a process of the result of a long, systematic and organised production circuit (Beblawi, 1987, p. 52). Thus, there is a glaring contradiction between rentier and production ethics. The rentier state is oriented away from the conventional role of providing public goods that have been extracted from the people through taxation; it is a provider of private favours. It becomes what Luciani (1987, p. 70) describes as an allocation as distinct from a production state. Thus, the fact that rentier states do not have to wrest taxes from their citizens has profound implications for political practice.

Whenever the state essentially relies on taxation, the question of good governance becomes an unavoidable issue, and a vigorous agitation in favour of good governance inevitably arises. This is because people will naturally be induced to coalesce according to their economic interests, and those groups that find no way to influence the decision-making process in their favour claim an appropriate institutional choice. The state, for its part, must give credibility to the notion that it represents the common good. That is how state legitimacy is constructed. While it is logical that the necessity for sustained taxation demands the construction of legitimacy in production states, it does not follow that the marginality of taxation in rentier states reduces the importance of legitimacy and domestic reforms. Rentier states are capable of generating a level of legitimacy when they succeed in guaranteeing access to resources to a relatively large cross-section of society. When they are no longer able to do that due to a shortfall in rent or because a small oligarchy monopolises the rent or both, they lose legitimacy; they are often able to remain in power only through extreme coercion. They tend to face a regime

crisis when they experience a drastic shortfall in rent and are thus unable to allocate resources at a level their populations have become accustomed to. The tendency is for the ruling elite to exclude more and more people from access to state resources, thereby creating the basis for a widening political crisis. This has been the situation in Nigeria.

Nigeria has a rentier economy which revolves around petroleum revenues. Therefore, whatever agitation in Nigeria, including those for restructuring, is geared towards the rentier economy with its rentier mentality. The implication is that the call for restructuring is just to get access to cheap resources without any real effort.

A striking example of prebendalism is the recurring controversy over fuel subsidies in Nigeria. Despite being framed as a public good, subsidy regimes have often been manipulated by a small elite for rent-seeking, with little transparency in expenditures. Likewise, political appointments—such as ministerial roles or board memberships—are frequently awarded based on patronage rather than merit, reinforcing prebendal logics in governance.

Restructuring: Nigerian Experience

To be candid, Nigeria has been a country experiencing one form of restructuring or the other since its independence in 1960, all towards access to cheap resources. Thus, Nigeria has been restructured for over 6 decades and is still counting. So, when shall we stop restructuring Nigeria? Alternatively, Nigeria shall be restructured perpetually. For instance, in 1960, Nigeria was a federation of three regions: East, North, and West. By 1963, a fourth region was added: the Midwest. By 1967, the four regions became twelve states. By 1976, the 12 states were restructured into 19. By 1987, they became 21. By 1992, they became 30 and by 1996, they became 36. Similar restructuring was made at the local government level (301 in 1976, 453 in 1989, 774 in 1996).

While these restructurings expanded access to governance, they also introduced significant inefficiencies. Many newly created states remain fiscally dependent on federal allocations, lacking viable revenue bases. Furthermore, repeated restructuring without accompanying accountability has led to administrative bloating, duplicated functions, and blurred policy responsibilities among federal and subnational agencies. With state creations came more appointments of governors, commissioners, permanent secretaries, directors, and chief executives of agencies, among others. The executive, the legislature and the judiciary were not left behind in this restructuring jamboree. In the executive, more Ministries, Departments & Agencies (MDAs) and chief executive positions were created, resulting in duplications and overlapping functions. In the legislative arm, the country started in 1960 with a House of Chiefs and a House of Assembly at the regional levels, which was later restructured to only a House of Assembly. Still, it remained bicameral at the national level with padded salaries and allowances. As of 1960, it was a parliamentary system of government, which was restructured to the presidential system of government in 1979, among other changes.

Restructuring: Contemporary Nigerian perspective

A practical illustration of restructuring debates can be found in the Niger Delta agitation for resource control. Movements like the Ijaw Youth Council and the Niger Delta Avengers have consistently argued that the current

federal arrangement disenfranchises oil-producing communities while transferring their wealth to the centre. Similarly, Lagos State's push for fiscal independence and railway development—often at odds with federal regulations—reflects another dimension of restructuring: the struggle for economic autonomy and infrastructure development within Nigeria's centralised system.

In contemporary Nigeria, the concept of restructuring means many things to many citizens, depending on the interest one wants to pursue. Thus, the meaning of restructuring in contemporary Nigeria depends mainly on the interest of the individual who describes it.

The diversity in restructuring demands underscores the fragmented nature of Nigeria's socio-political aspirations. These interpretations often reflect regional, ethnic, and class-based grievances, making the national dialogue complex and occasionally polarising. Some of those meanings include, among others.

A. Federal Structure Adjustments

- True federalism
- Fiscal federalism
- Resource control
- Creation of more states
- Splitting Nigeria into Biafra, Oduduwa, and Arewa republics

B. Governance and Power Devolution

- Autonomy for local governments
- Removal of State-Local Government joint account
- Devolution of more powers and resources to states
- Creation of the State police

C. Legislative Reform & Political Representation

- Removal of immunity clause for the president and governors
- Giving immunity to the Senate President and Speaker
- Making present geopolitical zones into regions
- Unicameral in place of bicameral National Assembly
- Rotational Presidency
- Abolishing the federal character and quota system

D. Constitutional Visioning

- People's constitution to replace military-drafted version
- Return to the parliamentary system

Arguments Against Restructuring

While restructuring has gained significant momentum, several voices remain sceptical about its necessity or timing (Ajenifari & Omotunde, 2025; Dapo-Asaju & Bamgbose, 2019). One argument is that Nigeria's real problem lies not in its structure but in its leadership (Ikegbu et al., 2020). Poor governance, corruption, lack of accountability, and institutional decay are seen as the primary obstacles, and restructuring alone cannot solve them (Kaufmann et al., 2005). Another criticism is the fear that restructuring may fuel ethnic nationalism and secessionist agendas (Nnam, 2024; Ejibowah et al., 2001). For example, agitations for Biafra or Oduduwa Republic may be emboldened by a weakening of central authority. There is also the concern that elites use restructuring as a diversionary tactic to distract citizens from more pressing socio-economic issues (Suberu, 2025). Some argue that Nigeria has been restructured multiple times (from 3 regions to 36 states and 774 LGAs) with no significant improvement in governance or development (Abubakar et al., 2022; Manor, 1999). Therefore, restructuring without a change in mindset and values may be a futile exercise (Meagher, 2010; Simon, 2023).

While concerns about ethnic nationalism are valid, comparative studies suggest that decentralisation—when carefully implemented—can strengthen national unity. For example, Switzerland's multilingual cantonal system and Canada's Quebec autonomy reflect how tailored federalism can manage diversity. Nonetheless, in Nigeria's context, weak institutional enforcement and politicisation remain significant risks.

Elite Resistance and Constitutional Stagnation

Despite growing public consensus on the need for restructuring, progress has remained elusive due primarily to entrenched elite resistance within Nigeria's political system. This resistance is deeply rooted in fears of losing centralised power, disruptions to patronage networks, and threats to ethno-regional dominance (Klopp, 2012; Manor, 1999). While Nigeria's constitutional amendment process is inherently complex—requiring a supermajority in both chambers of the National Assembly and endorsement by at least two-thirds of state legislatures—legal hurdles alone do not fully explain the stagnation. The greater challenge lies in the persistent absence of political will among the ruling elite. Lessons from other federal systems indicate that elite consensus-building requires strategic incentives. In South Africa, the post-apartheid constitution was brokered through multiparty negotiation and transitional justice frameworks. Nigeria could emulate aspects of these approaches by fostering inclusive national dialogue, empowering independent institutions, and institutionalising stakeholder commitments across party lines.

A notable example is the 2014 National Conference, which proposed over 600 far-reaching recommendations, including the devolution of powers, resource control, establishment of state police, and a rotational presidency. However, these proposals were ultimately shelved, reflecting a lack of commitment from the political class to operationalise transformative reforms. Similarly, multiple constitutional amendment attempts have repeatedly failed, often derailed by partisan rivalries, ethnic mistrust, and geopolitical suspicions.

Moreover, the rhetoric of restructuring is frequently instrumentalised during election campaigns, only to be abandoned once political power is secured. This cyclical pattern suggests that without deliberate mechanisms to foster elite consensus, build cross-regional trust, and actively involve civil society in the reform process, restructuring will remain more of a political slogan than a substantive national agenda. As long as the drivers of elite intransigence persist, the promise of constitutional reform risks indefinite postponement.

The Implications of Nigerian perspectives on restructuring

All these agitations are affected by one constitutional provision or the other. Therefore, for a meaningful restructuring in Nigeria in those directions, a total overhaul, if not a rewriting, of the 1999 constitution is required. Mere amendment may not suffice. For instance, Section 2 (2) of the 1999 Nigerian Constitution, as amended, states that, "Nigeria shall be a Federation consisting of states and a Federal Capital Territory"

Section 3 (1) There shall be thirty-six states in Nigeria, that is to say, Abia.....and Zamfara.

Section 3 (6) There shall be seven hundred and sixty-eight local governments in Nigeria ... and six area councils.

There can never be the creation of more states unless those constitutional provisions are amended. In addition,

merging the thirty-six states into six states/regions as part of the proposed restructuring in some quarters violates these constitutional provisions. However, it should be noted in passing that state creations up to 36 in Nigeria were to give autonomy to some perceived oppressed minorities within the polity, so to ask them to fuse into six states may not be palatable to those minorities. Though as more states were created to satisfy the yearnings of some minorities for autonomy, more marginalised minorities were discovered yearning for autonomy and more states.

Essentially, the point raised is that most of the 36 states are not economically viable and cannot survive without a substantial federal allocation. This is because the rentier economy in the country discouraged the states, including the federal government, from generating revenue internally. Therefore, without an aggressive tax generation effort, there is no state, including the federal government, that can survive without allocation from the federation account. Sections 162-168 of the Nigerian Constitution provide for the Distributable Pool Account.

Moreover, the bicameral legislature at the federal level cannot be abolished or replaced without removing the following constitutional provisions.

Section 4 (1) The legislative powers of the Federal Republic of Nigeria shall be vested in a National Assembly for the Federation, which shall consist of a Senate and a House of Representatives.

Section 47 There shall be a National Assembly for the Federation, which shall consist of a Senate and a House of Representatives.

Section 48 The Senate shall consist of three Senators from each of the states and one from the Federal Capital Territory.

Section 49 Subject to the provisions of this constitution, the House of Representatives shall consist of three hundred and sixty members representing constituencies of nearly equal population, so that no constituency shall fall within more than one state.

Furthermore, there cannot be a reduction in the salary of the legislators unless the Revenue Mobilisation Allocation and Fiscal Commission (RMAFC) says so, as provided in the constitution; Section 70, A member of the Senate or the House of Representatives shall receive such salary and other allowances as the (RMAFC) may determine.

To devolve powers from the federal to the state, the following constitutional provisions need to be restructured: Part I of the Second Schedule (Exclusive Legislative List), which is the exclusive area of legislation for the federal government. It consists of 68 items. Item 34 is on Labour, including trade unions, industrial relations conditions, safety and welfare of labourers, industrial disputes, prescribing a national minimum wage for the Federation or any part thereof and industrial arbitrations. Thus, the fixing of minimum wage for the whole Federation is a constitutional provision. Consequently, states fixing a less salary structure different from the national wage are a violation of this constitutional provision unless and until the provision is amended.

It should be noted that the controversy over one of the main problems in Nigeria, which is the generation, transmission, and distribution of power, has been settled by the following provisions in the 1999 constitution. Maybe that's why the call for its restructuring is not too loud.

Part II, first column of the second schedule (Concurrent Legislative List), which contains a list of the areas where federal and state governments have legal jurisdiction. It contains 30 lists. The Third Schedule, Part I, Item 14 states

that A House of Assembly may make laws for the state with respect to

- (a) Electricity and the establishment in the state of electric power station,
- (b) The generation, transmission and distribution of electricity to areas not covered by a national grid system within that state, and
- (c) The establishment within that state of any authority for the promotion and management of electric power stations established by the state.

On the issue of local government autonomy, the constitution is explicit; it is its implementation and interpretation that remain controversial. For instance, Section 7 (1) of the constitution states that; The system of local government by democratically elected local government council is under this constitution guaranteed; and accordingly, the government of every state shall subject to section 8 of this constitution, ensure their existence under a Law which provides for the establishment, structure, composition, finance and functions of such councils.

This provision does not allow caretaker or interim management for local government, but only for democratically elected officials.

The fourth schedule of the constitution is (Local government council functions). Those functions empowered the third tier of government to generate its revenue internally.

Agitators for resource control or fiscal federalism should note the following constitutional provisions.

Section 80 (1) All revenues or other moneys raised or received by the Federation.... shall be paid into and form one Consolidated Revenue Fund of the Federation.

Section 162 (1) The Federation shall maintain a special account to be called "the Federation Account" into which shall be paid all revenues collected by the Government of the Federation, except the proceeds from the personal income tax of the personnel of the armed forces of the Federation, the Nigerian Police Force, the Ministry or department of government charged with responsibility for Foreign Affairs and the residents of the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. Section 162 (2), The President upon the receipt of advice from the Revenue Mobilisation Allocation and Fiscal Commission, shall table before the National Assembly, proposals for revenue allocation from the Federation Account and in determining the formula, the National Assembly shall take into account the allocation principle especially those of population, equity of states, internal revenue generation, land mass, terrain as well as population density.

Provided that the principle of derivation shall be constantly reflected in any approved formula as being not less than thirteen (13) per cent of the revenue accruing to the Federation Account directly from any natural resources.

Section 162 (3) Any amount standing to the credit of the Federation Account shall be distributed among the Federal and State Governments and the local government Councils in each state on such terms and in such manner as may be prescribed by the National Assembly.

These provisions show that neither the state nor local government goes to Abuja to collect handouts as we were made to believe in some quarters, but to collect their constitutional right. Indeed, by interpretation, they were not even taking this right from the federal government account but from the federation account, which belongs to the three tiers of government: federal, state and local. Unfortunately, for 26 years of the fourth Nigerian republic,

1999-2025, the RMAFC has yet to present a revised Revenue Allocation Formula.

Section 162 (4) Any amount standing to the credit of the states in the Federation Account shall be distributed among the states on such terms and in such manner as may be prescribed by the National Assembly.

Section 162 (5) The amount standing to the credit of the Local Government Councils in the Federation Account shall be allocated to the states for the benefit of their local government councils in such terms and such manner as may be prescribed by the National Assembly.

Section 162 (6) Each state shall maintain a special account to be called "State Joint Local Government Account" into which shall be paid all allocations to the local government councils of the state from the Federation Account and from the government of the state.

Section 162 (7) Each state shall pay to local government councils in its area of jurisdiction such portion of its total revenue on such terms and in such manner as may be prescribed by the National Assembly.

Section 162 (8) The amount standing to the credit of local government councils of a state shall be distributed among the local government councils of that state on such terms and in such manner as may be prescribed by the House of Assembly of the state.

These provisions show that the state government has no constitutional right to sit on the local government allocation from the federation account. The allocation to local government is for the benefit of the local government, even if it passes through the state government. What some state governments are doing by sitting on local government allocation in the name of a joint account is illegal. Therefore, if there will be any restructuring on the operation of local government or its relationship with state government, it is not on the relevant constitutional provision but on the operation and implementation of those provisions. It should also be noted that the present federal government, under the leadership of President Bola Tinubu, promulgated an Executive Order based on a Supreme Court judgment that local government allocation from the federation account should go directly to them without passing through the state-local government joint account. Unfortunately, more than six months have passed, and it has yet to be implemented.

The solutions to all these agitations on restructuring centre on constitutional amendments and sincere implementation of its provisions. This has been provided for in Section 9 (2) of the constitution which states that "An Act of the National Assembly for the alteration of this constitution.....shall not be passed in either House of the National Assembly unless the proposal is supported by the votes of not less than two-thirds majority of all the members of that House and approved by resolution of the Houses of Assembly of not less than two-thirds of all the states". Thus, the call for a National Conference, whether sovereign or not, to restructure Nigeria is not necessary but could be diversionary. The 2014 National Conference is a reference case. It consumed billions of naira, yet its report is not implemented.

Conclusion

If there is restructuring, the attention of all and sundry in Nigeria, particularly the political office holders and other stakeholders, is to focus on the following;

- i. Poverty reduction, reducing inequality and prioritising development projects should not be handled with kid gloves.

- ii. Population growth should be commensurate with economic growth and development,
- iii. The agricultural sector should be made attractive to reduce the rural-urban drift of young people with disabilities who are supposed to be involved in farming, since agriculture contributes over 30% of the country's GDP.
- iv. Training and retraining should be prioritised to ensure human capital development.
- v. Environmental degradation should be addressed,
- vi. Local production of goods and services is to be encouraged to enhance export promotion and import substitution, and
- vii. Debts, both local and foreign, are to be discouraged, but where unavoidable, should be judiciously utilised.

In addition, emphasis should be laid on the implementation of the following constitutional provisions. Chapter III Fundamental Objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy.

Section 13 says that: It shall be the duty and responsibility of all organs of government, and all authorities and persons, exercising legislative, executive or judicial powers to conform to, observe and apply the provisions of this chapter of the constitution.

Section 14 (1) The Federal Republic of Nigeria shall be a state based on the principles of democracy and social justice. A democratic government is a responsible and responsive government.

Section 15 (5) The state shall abolish corrupt practices and abuse of power. Unfortunately, corruption is becoming our culture by the day, and it is killing us slowly.

Section 17 (1) The state social order is founded on ideals of Freedom, Equality and Justice. Unfortunately, all these democratic ideals are not yet found in Nigeria.

Section 18 (1) Government shall direct its policy towards ensuring that there are equal and adequate educational opportunities at all levels. Despite this beautiful provision, the majority of Nigerians have no access to functional education.

Section 18 (2) Government shall promote science and technology. Although the country's educational policy says a 70:30% ratio in favour of science and technology education, the practice is the opposite, favouring Humanities and management education. Even the universities of science and technology have shifted to running courses in management technology instead of science and technology.

Section 18 (3) Government shall strive to eradicate illiteracy and to this end, government shall, as and when practicable, provide,

- (a) Free, compulsory and universal primary education
- (b) Free secondary education
- (c) Free university education
- (d) Free adult literacy programme

This free education philosophy has been in the Nigerian constitution since the promulgation of the 1979 constitution, and was even predated in the 2nd National Development Plan (1970-1975). Yet, it has not been practicable to implement it about 65 years later. It is even becoming more difficult to access minimum educational attainment.

Section 23 of the Constitution states that "The national ethics shall be Discipline, Integrity, Dignity of Labour, Social Justice, Religious Tolerance, Self-Reliance and Patriotism". All these provisions are becoming increasingly difficult to implement.

Section 33 (1) Every person has a right to life. So no one shall be deprived intentionally of his life, save in execution of the sentence of a court in respect of a criminal offence of which he has been found guilty in Nigeria.

Other rights include respect for the dignity of a person, personal liberty, fair hearing, freedom of expression and the press, peaceful assembly and association, freedom of movement, freedom from discrimination, and freedom to acquire and own property anywhere in Nigeria.

Section 220 (1) The Federation shall establish and maintain facilities for carrying into effect any Act of the National Assembly providing for compulsory military training or military service for the citizens of Nigeria. All these provisions are observed in breach.

In conclusion, the question of whether Nigeria should be restructured or not cannot be answered simply. While restructuring may address some systemic imbalances, it is not a panacea. Genuine change must come through responsible leadership, accountable institutions, and citizen participation. Therefore, a dual approach is needed: reforming the structure where necessary, while also reforming attitudes, institutions, and governance practices.

This paper affirms that restructuring is neither a magic bullet nor a hollow slogan. Instead, it is a complex, multi-layered challenge requiring a dual approach: addressing structural imbalances in Nigeria's federal arrangement while simultaneously promoting institutional accountability, sincere leadership, and active citizen engagement. Structural reforms, though necessary, are insufficient on their own. Without the synergy of good governance and participatory processes, restructuring risks devolving into a perpetual political bargaining tool—detached from the lived realities and developmental needs of the Nigerian people. Therefore, the national discourse must move beyond abstract political rhetoric to embrace practical, inclusive, and phased reforms rooted in law, economic diversification, and democratic participation.

A dual-track reform strategy should be considered:

- **Short Term:** Enforce existing constitutional provisions (e.g., local government autonomy) and prioritise judicial review mechanisms.
- **Medium Term:** Facilitate constitutional amendments focused on devolution and governance efficiency via National Assembly procedures.
- **Long Term:** Invest in civic education, leadership accountability, and value-driven public service to shift political culture.

Success Metrics Proposal:

Success should be measured not only by constitutional alterations but by improved development indicators, reduction in elite rent-seeking, and expanded citizen participation.

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