

THE PATTERN OF AGITATIONS FOR RESTRUCTURING, RESOURCE CONTROL AND SECESSION IN NIGERIA FOURTH REPUBLIC

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Abstract: Although, Nigeria has enjoyed successive transition from one administration to another since the return to civil rule in May 1999, unfortunately, none of these administrations reigned without the traditional agitations for political restructuring, constitutional review, and contestation for resource control. However, understanding the pattern of the agitations in Nigeria means understanding the motives behind them, and the impacts they have on national cohesion. It is on this background that this study examined the pattern of these agitations in Nigeria with a focus on the fourth republic. Descriptive analysis was adopted and qualitative method of data collection was utilized to gather data for the study. This study finds it appropriate to adopt 'Failed State theory' as its theoretical framework. Following the findings of this study, it was revealed that the flaws in the 1999 Constitution and failure of government to amend the contested sections of the constitution that led to the deepening agitations for restructuring and resource control and more secessionist movements in the Niger Delta and South-East Nigeria. Thus, the study suggests that the present administration should strengthen the weak institutions, ensures there is political inclusion, and restructure the economic system as measures to address the agitations in the country. The study also suggests that the present administration should amend the 1999 Constitution in order to accommodate the issues under contestation. Government should also call for a referendum to decide the faith of the pro-Biafran agitators, especially the issue of secession.

Keywords: Agitation, Fourth Republic, Restructuring, Resource Control, Failed State, Nigeria.

Introduction

From the time of restoration of democracy in Nigeria in May 29, 1999, agitation for political restructuring and contestation for secession, aside the insurgencies of Boko Haram and ISWAP, and criminal activities such as banditry, kidnapping for ransom, armed robbery, ritual killings, sea piracy, crude oil theft, and Fulani herdsmen militancy have dominated public discourse. Igwe and Amadi (2021:101) noted that, "democracy in its real sense embraces inclusion of all and exclusion of violence, and renders violence unnecessary". In Nigeria, it obviously does not apply because democracy in itself has created more problems than good among the people who are dispersed all over the country". The restoration of civilian rule is also associated with issues such as rioting and protest, militancy and terrorism, uprising and separatist agitations, armed insurgency, politically motivated assassinations, arson, and hooliganism, among others.

The Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) like its predecessor movement, the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) was predicated on the breakdown of law and order that followed the elections conducted in 1964 and 1965 for the federal and western region respectively. This development served as the impetus for the coup d'état of 15 January 1966 and the suspension of the federal constitution, and subsequently, burden of the Supreme Military Council (SMC) which was at its core during the period. Another issue of note was the countercoup of July 1966 which was linked with the protracted conflict among the rank and file of the Nigerian Armed Forces (NAF) and the January 15 coup d'état. Additionally, this development was the reason for the full-blown civil war which occurred between 1967 and 1970 (Akpotor & Oromareghake, 2010).

Currently, there are three self-determination movements in southern part of Nigeria, namely the South-East IPOB, the Biafra Customary Government (BCG), and lastly, the South-West Oduduwa Republic Separatist Agitation Movement (ORSAM). Some of the notable terms adopted are by these movements are resource control, marginalization, secession and restructuring (Civil Society Legislative Advocacy Centre, CISLAC, 2022). Amanamburu (2017:57), and Onuoha, Ochuba, Onuoha & Ani, (2021) affirmed these circumstances in Nigeria when they stated that the avoidable but self-inflicted civil war emerged to change the Nigerian narrative. Some ethnic groups across the country, including the Yoruba state of the South-West region have also risen to question the rationale behind Lord Lugard 1914 merger of the two protectorates of Nigeria as one country (Amanamburu, 2017:57). In recent times, the pro-Biafra movements in South-West has gathered momentum while contestation for resource control from the Niger Delta has receded after Presidential Amnesty was granted ex-militants by late President Umaru Musa. This did not end the emergence of other agitators, including private individuals and human rights groups, pressure groups, and ethnic and regional groups from campaigning for political structuring and resource control.

Statement of Problems

Aside the contestations for restructuring and resource control, the call for independence by Nigerian Biafra has gathered momentum since the return to civilian rule in May 1999. While it is considered achievable in some sections of the public, many believe it is not achievable, and will remain part of national issues under the fourth republic. This situation is made complex by the best guess that the administration of President Bola Ahmad Tinubu has no will power to call for referendum to decide the faith of the nation. There is also the argument as to whether these agitations are legal or illegal despite the provisions made for engagement and actualization for self-determination in the Constitution of 1999 (as amended), the Charter of African Union on Human and Peoples' Rights of 1981, the Declaration of the Commonwealth of Nations on Democracy and Human Rights 1945, and other international human rights laws such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) ratified on 10 December 1948, as long as the principle of non-violence is strictly observed by the aggrieved and frustrated party (Amanambu, 2017:58). Nigeria remains in disarray despite the successful transitions from one civilian administration to another, which is the reason political analysts and the academia argue that the forceful union known as 'amalgamation' in 1914 is not the problem of post-independence Nigeria, but the flaws in the Constitution of 1999 (as amended), and failure of the fourth republic governments to adhere strictly to the physical administrative enactments, for example, the

federal character principle, etc. Also conceived as problems is the issue of fiscal federalism and decades' marginalization of the minority ethnic groups that are dispersed throughout the nation. These factors accompanied by ethnocentrism, tribalism, mediocrity and corruption emerged to change the Nigeria's narrative that now evolved the albatrosses that fuel the agitations for restructuring, resource control and secession in Nigeria (Adekoya, 2017). The desolation caused by oil spillages, high gas flaring rate, and other forms of under-governed spaces produce an avalanche of new generation of militant and restive youths in the Niger Delta that continuously call for resource control, while others are engaged in criminal activities such as piracy, oil bunkering, pipeline vandalism, hostage taking and kidnapping. However, the dissension between the oil multinationals and the federal government on one side, and the aggrieved Ijaw youth on the opposite side heightened criminal activities, including abduction and hostage taking of foreign oil workers which consequently created deepening tension. Despite the region being the host of rich oil deposits, it is highly marginalized and underdeveloped. Oronto, Von Kemedi, Okonta and Watts (2004:1) affirmed this development when they stated that the oil conflict in the Niger Delta marked the watershed and upward spiral violence in the region. Furthermore, frustrated armed Ijaw youth with new ambitions and capabilities to engage government forces in combatant war, a resemblance of the specter of Colombia emerged (Oronto et al., 2004). Like the Ijaw youth, same reasons applied in South-Eastern region, though with a very long history of marginalization. Prior to the Nigerian-Biafra war of 1967, the feeling of abandonment, and recession in the affairs and leadership of the nation dominated the thought of the Igbo people of Nigeria. The consequence of this development was the counter military coup staged by Igbo high ranking officers in the army, declaration of Biafra republic, and subsequently, the Biafran genocide caused by the war staged against the federal government of Nigeria by Lieutenant Colonel Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu led Biafra republic (Childs, 2021; Maiangwa, 2021; Fornie, 2023; Bassey, 2023).

Excessive tribal consciousness and unrestrained discords between the three main ethnic groups of the Hausa/Fulani, Yoruba and Igbo constitute a problem, though fueled by political inclination for federalism by the colonial masters and the military regimes. Accompanied by ethnocentrism, tribalism, nepotism and chronic corruption, the minority groups find expression in the call for resource control, and in the struggle for separation from Nigeria. Joseph (2021:79) argues that the dissatisfaction for obvious reasons among the different segments in Nigeria, perhaps, is a problem that promoted the persisting calls for constitutional and fiscal reforms, using different phrases, such as political restructuring, true-federalism, devolution, resource control, regionalism, among others. How much these debates are propelled by the desire for national integration and development across the different segments remain doubtful because many observers and analysts believe these calls are driven by grievances and competing interests among the different ethnic groups instead of the real sense of the calls which is national integration and unity diversity. It is on the premise that this study deemed it necessary to examine the actual reasons for these national issues of agitation for restructuring, resource control and secession in Nigeria with a focus on the fourth republic.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to identify the pattern of agitations in Nigeria since the return to civil rule in May 1999. While the specific objectives are to:

Identify the fundamental reasons for the agitations for restructuring, resource control and secession in the fourth republic,
Examine the patterns of the agitations for restructuring, resource control and secession in the fourth republic,
Examine the benefits of restructuring and resource control in Nigeria, and
To suggest policy options to ameliorate this form of agitations in Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following questions are provided to guide this study:

What are the fundamental reasons for the agitations for restructuring, resource control and secession in the fourth republic?

What are the patterns of the agitations for restructuring, resource control and secession in the fourth republic?

What are the benefits of restructuring and resource control in Nigeria?

What are the policy options to ameliorate these forms of agitations in the country?

Method of Study

This study finds it necessary to adopt historical research design because of its unity and consistency. Data on past events can explain what happened and why it happened, and impacts on contemporary situations, particularly on a new research endeavor (Greenwood, 2012). Historical or analytical research design specifically can accommodate all-inclusive knowledge of past and current events. On a general note, research design is use to state the conceptual structure within which research would be conducted. Its function is to provide for the collection of relevant data with utmost effort and time (Kothari, 2009; Kothari & Garg, 2019). Significantly, research design defines the validity and usefulness of data is source in any research endeavor.

Conceptual and theoretical review

Agitation: Conceptual Explanation

The meaning of the concept 'agitation' has evoked several meanings based with the situation that the word is related. The term can be best described as an extreme state of arousal and it means that an aggravated person can be stimulated to "stir up", be excited, tense, befuddled or irritated. This does not always mean a health issue, but if other signs manifest then it is indicative of disease (National Library of Medicine, 2022). When a person is unable to rest and be calm it can be referred to as agitation (The National Cancer Institute, 2024). Anyone who is anxious can end up tensed and feeling irritated all at once. He may be angry and ready to fight and do not want to change the situation to be better. Someone that is found to be very worried or upset situation, or frustration is said to be in a state of agitation. On general perspective, the term agitation means a state of excitement, disturbance, or worry about something. It is the act of moving something vigorously or the act of attempting to stir up public opinion for, or against something. It is a persistent urging of political or social cause or theory before the public (Collins English Dictionary, 2024). In the context of this study, the term is used to mean protest, or clamor or contestation against illegal, or something not proper, especially illegitimate government or policy not good enough for the citizens and that affect them as a nation.

Theoretical Framework

Amidst other theories such as frustration-aggression theory, plebiscitary theory of secession, system theory, structural-functionalism, social contract theory, and others, the failed state theory is adopted in this study. Zartman (1995) collapse states theory carried out to evaluate state failure conjures a graphic picture of state failure and its consequences. Rotberg (2002) also contributed to the development of the theory. He describes a failed state as one which the government for one reason or another cannot perform the terms of its social contract with the people. Failed state deteriorates to the extent that the expectations of the people are not met with by government. A strong and stable state provides for its citizens and possesses high sense of security, political liberation, civil liberty and forward economic opportunities for all. A strong and stable state thus possesses a higher per capita GDP, and internal security and respect for the rule of law (Rotberg, 2002; Rotberg, 2003).

State failure has two aspects, first, states are termed failed when they are consumed by internal violence and ceased to deliver positive political goods to their inhabitants, and secondly, the primary public good is to provide security within a territory, therefore, if a state is safe and secure for its citizens, every other thing like dispute settlement, rule of law, political participation, education and health care will spring forth, thus, security is the critical factor that determines all other developments and reasonable activities in a state (Rotberg, 2004). This is acknowledged in 1999 Constitution which arrogates responsibility of providing security and welfare services. On the contrary, Nigerian government is far behind in carrying out these responsibilities. Jacob (2015) used the terms “fragile state, collapsed state and shadow state” to describe a failed state. Watts (2000) describes a failed state as one that fails to protect the citizens from harm deliberately to incapacitate and prevent them from achieving their own goals, which they might use against the rulers.

Funke and Solomon (2002) aver that failed or shadow state operates only in the interest of the rulers, deliberately withholding basic rights to be enjoyed by citizens. Other names giving to a failed state are a rogue state, a weak state, a quasi-state and a lawless state, and one that is existing for nothing; incapable and good for nothing (Bilgin & Morton, 2002). The failure of a state takes gradual process, especially when government fails to discharge its responsibilities (Potter, 2004). Nigeria perfectly fits this description since Senator Ahmed Bola Tinubu administration despite the massive natural and human resources fails to protect the people from hunger and starvation, insecurity and increase in crime rate, social injustices and violations of citizens ‘rights. Disregards for reverence for the rule of law, institutional corruption, mediocracy, tribalism, marginalization, and unaccepted policies of government are obviously in the increase in Nigeria, providing the impetus for analysts to refer to Nigeria as a ‘failing state’, while many refer to it as a ‘failed state’.

Irrepressible insecurity, institutional corruption and underdevelopment are obvious factors that categorize Nigeria one among the failing state in the world. This study thus argues that Nigeria is not a state, as the core responsibility of the incumbent administration is to destroy the nation. How does one expect the masses to cope in the current situation of harsh political and economic atmosphere? Nigerians are so frustrated and fed up with the socio-economic conditions of the nation that currently, the privileged few have been moving in large numbers to the developed nations of the world. They cannot be blamed for their action because nobody wants to identify with failure. The recent End Bad Government nationwide protest is a clear indication that Nigeria is moving toward total breakdown, and need to be rescued by government through restructuring of the current political structure, or

introduction of popular policies and programmes. There is the need for change of orientation among the people of Nigeria and of governance, which gives credence for the need for political restructuring and resource control.

Results and discussions

Reasons for the Debates for Restructuring and Resource Control in Nigeria

The self-adopted federal system in Nigeria that differs from the type practiced in the United States, Switzerland, Canada, among others remains the fundamental reason for the agitations in Nigeria. Though, characterized by distinct dates of emergence, the agitations in the country are not new, neither do they differ in ideology compare to the old forms of protestations since independence. Aside the 1967 civil war, the contestations for secession by prof-Biafran groups, political restructuring and resource control were peaceful, but with the emergence of militant groups that adopted hostage taking, kidnapping, piracy, vandalization oil installations and oil bunkering within the Niger Delta region the narratives changed for worse. Like the Igbos, Ijaw youths share the same feeling of marginalization in the affairs of the nation. Egocentrism and domineering and bossy attitude of the Hausa/Fulani oligarchy also created more problems in Nigeria that becomes more obvious after restoration of civilian government in 1999. Several attempts by some members of the Hausa/Fulani oligarchy to harm the reputation of President Olusegun Obasanjo's administration increased the protests for political reform and control of resources. Though interpreted differently but a repeat of same behavior against Vice President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan after the unfortunate demise of his boss, President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua on 5 May 2010, and subsequently, the gang-up to vote him out of power by some politician of northern origin and their cohorts from the southern region heightened the anxiety that was already budding among the people of the south (Abbas & Tijjani, 2024). This fear that was entertained by southerners increased the calls for political reform through constitutional amendment. Chiamogu, Onwughalu and Chiamogu (2012) identified intergovernmental social, political and economic conflict among the different levels of government, as well as revenue allocation sharing formula, control of resources, internal security and terrorism, state creation, wage fixing, and establishment of the sovereign wealth fund, structural composition of government and funding of local government councils as reasons for the agitations in recent year. These situations developed into different relationships that have also created different situations in each of the regions. Gurr (1993:123) outlined unequal treatment, competition for access to power, contagious effect of ethno-political activism, pattern of state building, lack of political power and economic development and emergence of new ethnic minority class who were unwilling to mobilize their constituents in the face of the changing political developments as reasons for ethnic minority grievances in Nigeria. Also, a contributing factor to the increase in protestation for restructuring, resource control and separation by IPOB members is absence of good governance often predicated on patriotism, transparency, accountability, fairness, and infrastructure development. Bad governance, insecurity and ethnocentrism evolved into the national issues that now fuel protests in the country. Ekpo and Agorye (2019), Oluwatobi (2018), Childs (2021), and Onichabor (2022) opine that the reason the pro-Biafra groups continued with their pursuit for secession, even after the end of the civil war that was experienced in 1967 and 1971 is perceived marginalization of the Igbos. Another

issue of note is that Igbos in diaspora provided the energy for the pro-Biafran movements to continue the agitation for secession in Nigeria. IPOB and its military wing, known as the ESN, like their predecessor group, MASSOB advanced the same grievances against the federal government of Nigeria. Little or no federal government investment in southeast region, as well as political alienation, ethnic marginalization, heavy military presence, inequitable distribution of federal resources, and extrajudicial killings are associated with the renewed hostility against the federal government by IPOB and other pro-Biafran movements in Nigeria. Prominent among the reasons advanced for the calls for restructuring, resource control and separation is the failure of the fourth republic administrations, from the time of Obasanjo to the incumbent administration restructure the self-imposed federal structure contained in the 1999 Constitution (as amended).

Okereka, Oluka and Igbini (2020) and Fornies (2023) express the view that egocentric and preservation of dominant power by the power by the military and brokers from the north, and illegally control and taking over of significant portion of the proceeds from the resource endowment in the south into private pockets aggravated the feeling of marginalization, and consequently leading to augmented protest for constitutional review, resource control and separation. Since the actions of government concerning the grievances remain for several years, the agitations for who should control the resource control and secession continue to grow more assertive (Isa, 2016). Political imbalances in social, economic and cooperate governance, management and sharing and allocation of commonwealth, as well as social neglect and political isolation of the Igbos are identified as reasons for the increasing calls for restructuring, resource control and secession in (Onuoha, Ochuba, Onuoha & Ani, 2021; Olomjobi, 2015; Sadiq-Bamgbopa, Ehinmilorin & Popoola (2022). The declaration of IPOB as a terrorist organization in September 2017, and detention of Nnamdi Kanu in custody of the Department of Security Service (DSS) since 2021 have obstinately driven IPOB quest to break away from Nigeria (Ukong, 2021; Maiangwa, 2021). The same government that failed to declare Fulani herdsmen of the Miyetti Allah Kaute Hore Association a terrorist organization despite obvious brandishing of dangerous weapons in different places, the government failed to declare them terrorist group. This development is described by many as double standard by government in in handling the security challenges in Nigeria. Perhaps, the obvious failure of government to address this issue exacerbates the security issues in the fourth republic, including agitations for resource control in the Niger Delta (Akpotor & Oromareghake, 2010; Akinola, 2013). The never-ending political differences and latent feelings of disunity among the ethnic groups are also affirmed as reasons for the uprising in Nigeria, including the pro-Biafran movements. These developments changed the country's narrative, now ravaging the public space with specific issues in each of the geopolitical zones.

Patterns of Agitations in Nigeria

Since the military reinstalled of democracy in May 1999, demand for good governance dominates public discourse. Also ravaging the public space is the persistent clamor for the review of the constitution and who should control state resource between the central and state governments. There is also the secession movement by pro-Biafran groups in South-East Nigeria. Many acknowledged that the pattern of agitations in Nigeria since the time of colonial rule through independence and post-independence eras remained the same. Suberu (2013) argues that the intimidating responses of governments to the grievances in

issues concerning the minority and marginalized group in Nigeria exacerbate the crisis of agitation for freedom by the pro-Biafran group in Eastern Nigeria. Rather than ending the challenges caused by its failure to adhere to the popular demand of the agitators through policy actions, the government resorted to its usual repressive strategy against the aggrieved groups in the country. This was the case in the Niger Delta before amnesty was granted to the militants by late President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua. After the death of President Yar'Adua, his successor Dr. Goodluck Jonathan maintained Yar'Adua's policy towards the insurgent group which undeniably ameliorated the tension in the Niger Delta. From the inception, the pattern of agitation in the country has been centered on four waves, mainly agitation for political reforms, or political restructuring. The first wave was the aftermath of the merger of Northern and Southern protectorates in 1914, whose consequences lasted up to 1947 because there wasn't any room for national integration since the regions of the West, East and North were governed independently by the colonial masters. The reason for the agitations during the period was the apparent discrimination against the native population by the colonialists, especially in the civil service. The second wave was in 1947 and 1966. The apparent imbalance that was caused by the Richards Constitution was the basis for agitation during the period. The merger of the three regions into a single legislative council rather than having separate legislative councils for the three regions became the reason behind the agitation during the period (Nwokolo, 2020:173). Notably, the pattern of agitation in Nigeria during the fourth republic hasn't changed much from its traditional pattern, but the only notable difference is the modus operandi and sophistication and advancement in technology. The opportunities permitted by the restoration of democracy, such as freedom of association, freedom of press and freedom of speech, etc., provided the agitators the impetus to move farther their grievances against the government, and in different manners. In the South-South region, the various militant groups have agitated for control of resources and development of the sub-region in a related manner. The militant groups, notably the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), Niger Delta Liberation Front (NDLF), Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force (NDPVF), Niger Delta Revolutionary Crusade (NDRC), and the Niger Delta Avenger (NDA) shared the same ideologies. In the South East, there are the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), Biafra Zionist Movement (BZM), and IPOB, all of which emerged due to the weaknesses and defects observed in the 1999 Constitution (as amended) (BBC News, 2017; Taiwo & Ariyo, 2020; Onichabor, 2022). Olufemi (2005) argues that the failure of government to do the needful imports ethnic militia groups in Nigeria, notably, the Oduduwa People's Congress (OPC), Arewa People's Congress (APC), Ijaw Youth Congress (IYC) and the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) which advocates for secession. In South West Nigeria, Afenifere, the pan-Yoruba socio-cultural group has also joined in the agitation as a better option that may promote growth and development across the regions. Like the other protagonists of the restructuring debate, Afenifere was bitter about the federation controlled by the Hausa/Fulani tribes and the discriminatory attitude towards the south (Ogefere, 2017). As Ogefere (2017) puts it, "while a larger number of the citizens advanced political restructuring as a better option to enhance good governance, national unity and development, the central government and some conservatives from the northern Nigeria see it as a threat, or rather, call to divide the country". No matter how these agitators for restructuring in Southern Nigeria seem to be, they are motivated by a sense of bitterness

against the central government, and its failure to adhere to the calls for political restructuring and resource control which Maina (2020) refers to as “minoritarian nationalism” that has consistently questioned national unity.

The agitation for withdrawal that continued after 12th June 1993 presidential election, judged by many as the freest and fairest election in the history of Nigeria was annulled by President and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida. The continued agitation following 1994 and 1995 non-implementations of Constitutional Conference report and General Sani Abacha’s Conference report respectively, as well as President Olusegun Obasanjo’s 2005 Conference Report, and President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan’s Conference Report import the current debate for political restructuring and the push for referendum by IPOB members (Igboke, 2020:4). Apart from the calls for restructuring of the political structure in Nigeria by a number of socio-political groups and political configurations, including regional groups, all age groups are now engaged in the agitations in Nigeria (Nche, Otu, Ugwueze, Groupson-Paul, Ejem & Ononogbu, 2020).

Benefits of Restructuring and Resource Control in Nigeria

The multiple national issues associated with Nigeria’s fourth republic are undoubtedly inherited from the military regime that structured and handed over the 1999 Constitution when returning power to the civilians. The defects in 1999 Constitution have been consistently debated by public and academia, yet, government have done very little to resolve these contests through constitutional means. As Igboke (2020:3) puts it, “the persisting contestation for restructuring, resource control and separation by different interest groups in Nigeria, including the Niger Delta agitators and IPOB and its associate groups found their basis from the shaky federal structure enshrined in the sections of the 1999 Constitutionals amended”. The conceived defects in the post-independence 1966 Constitution led to the first military coup of 29 July 1966, and non-implementation of the agreement reached between General Yakubu Gowon and Col. Odumegwu Ojukwu in Ghana aimed at addressing the challenges cause the war of 6 July 1967 (Igboke, 2020). Nche, Otu, Ugwueze, Groupson-Paul, Ejem and Ononogbu (2020), and Suberu (2013) affirm that aside the calls for agitation for political restructuring by some political configurations, including regional groups, the old and young are now engage in agitations for political restructuring in Nigeria. These developments did not change the impression that fairness, transparency, accountability, patriotism, meritocracy and infrastructure development are panaceas of good governance which can only be done effectively through restructuring, autonomy and resource control. However, the needfulness of restructuring and resource control in actualizing national cohesion, integration and unity in diversity cannot be underestimated. Joseph (2021) and Sagay (2017) argue that restructuring Nigerian federal system will not only guarantee the autonomy of the federating units, but will also ameliorate the issues of marginalization and contestation for separation by IPOB as every state in Nigeria will have the opportunity to explore and manage their resource endowment and finances, and will be held responsible for their own success or failure, and development and underdevelopment. Furthermore, it will eliminate over-centralization of government powers at the central thereby empower the local dwellers to take charge of their own development. It will no doubt encourage the state governments to put mechanisms in place to promote transparency and accountability in their respective states

(Joseph, 2021; Sagay, 2017). There is however no doubt that amending the 1999 federal constitution will help the people of Nigeria to firmly resolve all the challenges of political and economic marginalization, and ethnic and religious differences, and to live in unity and harmony as one indivisible and indissoluble sovereign nation. Amending the constitution will also promote good governance at all levels, as well as welfare of all persons in Nigeria.

Conclusion

The failure of government to resolve the numerous problems and tackle them appropriately is the reason for the confrontations between the government and various groups in Nigeria. Despite the threats from calls for restructuring that will empower the regions, the administrations under the fourth republic seemed not to have done enough to end this form of national issues through constitutional reform. The truth remains that the fourth republic administrations have no solution in hands to salvage these predicaments that are now confronting the nation in the face. Among the issues confronting the administrations, contestation for secession has been the most forceful and threatening issue, yet, government seems not to have solution to it soon. On daily basis, Nigerians are exposed to hardship which is heading beyond remedy. As the reasons for the contestations remain the same, the trend for these contestations and the IPOB agitation also remains same with no solution in sight soon.

Recommendations

The following suggestions are considered relevant:

The current administration should strengthen the weak institutions and ensures there is political inclusion. It should also restructure the economic system to address all the grievances that propelled the agitations in Nigeria, including restructuring campaign, state creation, resource control and separation movements. This should be done through amendment of the current constitution. This no doubt will accommodate the issues under contestation that now desolate the public space.

Government should shelve its self-conceived antagonistic behavior against the Igbos and put machinery in motion to review the sections of the current constitution, especially those sections under contestation to mitigate the crises of secession from the pro-Biafran groups, and resource control from the Niger Delta youths.

Government should create opportunity for dialogue and negotiation with all aggrieved and self-acclaimed marginalized ethnic groups for national integration and unity, and peace and security to be sustained across the federation.

Government should also recall, study and enforce the recommendations of the various national conferences, particularly the 2014 Conference which will help to mitigate the agitations for constitutional review, resource control, and probably, the movement for secession by the pro-Biafran groups.

Government should also call for a referendum to decide the faith of the nation, especially the issue of secession by the southeast pro-Biafran group, the IPOB.

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