

THE CHALLENGE OF RE-FEDERALIZING NIGERIA: A REASSESSMENT OF RECENT DISCOURSES ON POLITICAL RE-STRUCTURING

Samuel Jega

National Assembly, National Institute for Legislative & Democratic Studies,
Nigeria

Jake Egwu

Bayero University Kano, Kano, Nigeria

Abstract

The process of re-federalizing Nigeria stands as a pivotal challenge in the country's political landscape, especially in light of recent debates on political re-structuring. This paper offers a reassessment of these discussions, focusing on the complexities and potential implications of re-federalization. By analyzing the historical context, current political dynamics, and various proposals for re-structuring, this study aims to provide insight into the challenges and opportunities associated with re-federalizing Nigeria. Key considerations include issues of power devolution, resource allocation, ethnic diversity, and governance effectiveness. The paper also examines the role of stakeholders, including political elites, civil society groups, and the general populace, in shaping the discourse on political re-structuring. Ultimately, the analysis seeks to contribute to a nuanced understanding of the challenges and prospects for re-federalization in Nigeria's evolving political landscape.

Keywords Nigeria, re-federalization, political re-structuring, power devolution, resource allocation, ethnic diversity, governance, political dynamics, stakeholders, civil society.

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria, as one of the largest and most populous countries in Africa, grapples with a complex socio-political landscape shaped by historical legacies, ethnic diversity, and regional disparities. Over the years, the issue of political re-structuring and re-federalization has emerged as a central theme in the discourse surrounding the country's governance structure. Recent debates on political re-structuring have reignited discussions about the need to address historical injustices, foster equitable development, and enhance governance effectiveness.

The concept of re-federalizing Nigeria entails revisiting the country's federal system to address perceived imbalances in power distribution, resource allocation, and representation among its diverse regions and ethnic groups. The federal structure, established in the aftermath of colonial rule and subsequent military regimes, has often been criticized for centralizing power and resources at the federal level, thereby marginalizing sub-national entities and perpetuating inequalities.

Against this backdrop, this paper undertakes a reassessment of recent discourses on political re-

structuring in Nigeria, with a specific focus on the challenges and opportunities associated with re-federalization. The analysis delves into the historical context of Nigeria's federal system, examining its evolution and the factors that have shaped its current configuration. It also explores the diverse perspectives and proposals put forward by stakeholders across the political spectrum, civil society, and academia regarding the need for re-structuring.

One of the primary challenges in re-federalizing Nigeria lies in navigating the intricate dynamics of power relations and resource management among its federating units. The question of power devolution, particularly the extent to which states and regions should have autonomy in decision-making and resource control, remains a contentious issue. Moreover, the equitable distribution of national resources, including revenue from oil and other natural endowments, is a source of tension among Nigeria's diverse regions.

Ethnic diversity adds another layer of complexity to the re-federalization debate. Nigeria is home to over 250 ethnic groups, each with its own cultural heritage, language, and aspirations. The quest for greater autonomy and self-determination among ethnic minorities underscores the need to re-examine the federal structure to accommodate diverse identities and promote inclusive governance.

Furthermore, the effectiveness of governance at both the federal and state levels is a critical concern. The centralization of power in Abuja has often been criticized for fostering inefficiency, corruption, and a lack of accountability. Re-federalizing Nigeria presents an opportunity to strengthen democratic institutions, enhance service delivery, and promote grassroots participation in decision-making processes.

In exploring the challenges of re-federalizing Nigeria, it is imperative to engage with diverse perspectives and foster inclusive dialogue among stakeholders. Political elites, civil society organizations, academia, and the general populace all have a role to play in shaping the trajectory of political re-structuring in Nigeria. By critically

examining recent discourses and re-assessing the options for re-federalization, this paper seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of Nigeria's evolving governance landscape and pave the way for meaningful reforms that uphold equity, justice, and national cohesion.

METHOD

In the process of reassessing recent discourses on political re-structuring and re-federalization in Nigeria, a multifaceted approach is employed to navigate the complexities of Nigeria's governance landscape. Firstly, a thorough literature review is conducted to examine existing scholarship, government reports, policy documents, and media coverage related to political re-structuring in Nigeria. This literature review serves as a foundational step to understand the historical context, key issues, and diverse perspectives surrounding the debate on re-federalization.

Following the literature review, a historical analysis is undertaken to trace the evolution of Nigeria's federal system, from its colonial origins to the present day. This historical perspective helps illuminate the institutional structures, constitutional frameworks, and policy decisions that have shaped Nigeria's federal governance arrangements over time. By delving into historical narratives and milestones, the study gains insight into the root causes of contemporary challenges and aspirations for reform.

Simultaneously, stakeholder perspectives are carefully examined to capture the breadth of opinions and proposals regarding political re-structuring in Nigeria. Engagement with political leaders, government officials, civil society organizations, ethnic minority groups, and other stakeholders provides valuable insights into the diverse interests, concerns, and aspirations driving the discourse on re-federalization. Through interviews, surveys, and consultations, the study seeks to identify common ground, areas of contention, and potential pathways for consensus-building.

Moreover, a comparative analysis is undertaken to draw lessons from international experiences with

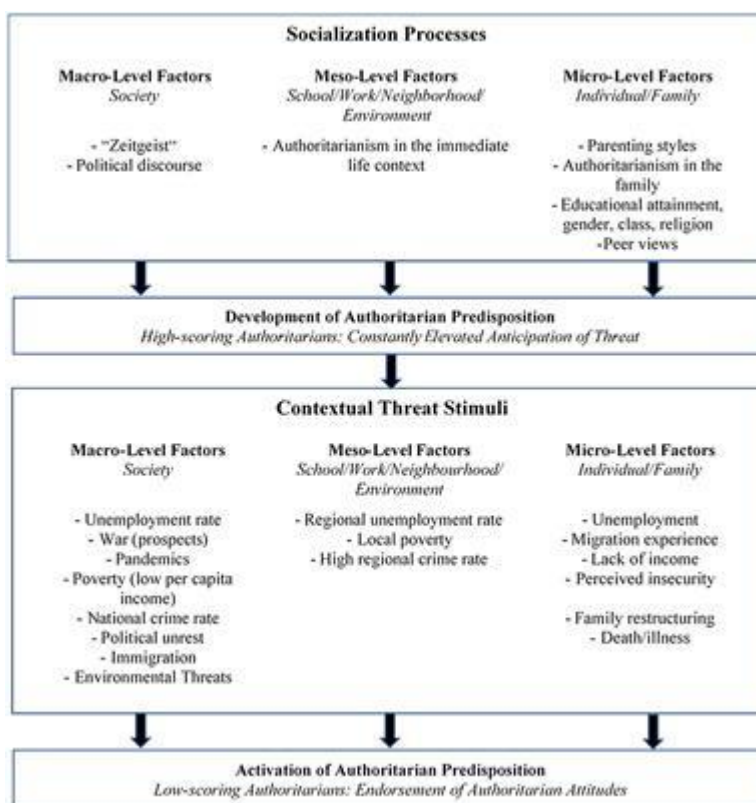
federalism and political re-structuring in contexts similar to Nigeria. Case studies from countries with diverse federal systems, such as India, Brazil, and South Africa, are examined to identify best practices, challenges, and lessons learned in governance reform. This comparative lens offers valuable insights into the design, implementation, and effectiveness of federal structures in multiethnic societies, informing policy recommendations for Nigeria's re-federalization efforts.

Based on the findings from the literature review, historical analysis, stakeholder engagement, and comparative analysis, the study formulates policy recommendations tailored to Nigeria's unique context and challenges. These recommendations aim to address identified gaps, promote inclusive

governance structures, and enhance the effectiveness of Nigeria's federal system. Throughout the research process, ethical considerations, including academic integrity, transparency, and respect for diverse viewpoints, are upheld to ensure the credibility and reliability of the study's findings and recommendations.

Review of Literature:

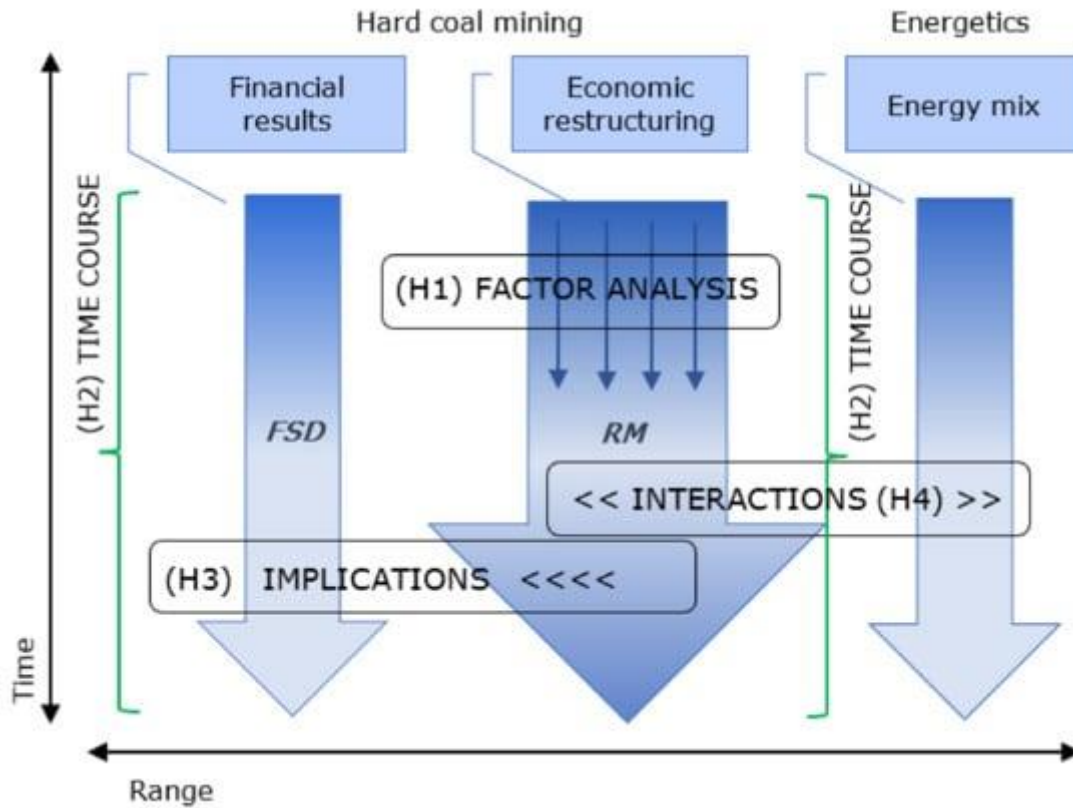
The methodological approach of this paper involves a comprehensive review of existing literature on the topic of political re-structuring and re-federalization in Nigeria. Academic publications, government reports, policy documents, and media sources are consulted to gather diverse perspectives and insights into the ongoing debates surrounding Nigeria's governance structure.



Historical Analysis:

A historical analysis is conducted to trace the evolution of Nigeria's federal system from pre-independence to the present day. This includes examining key historical events, constitutional

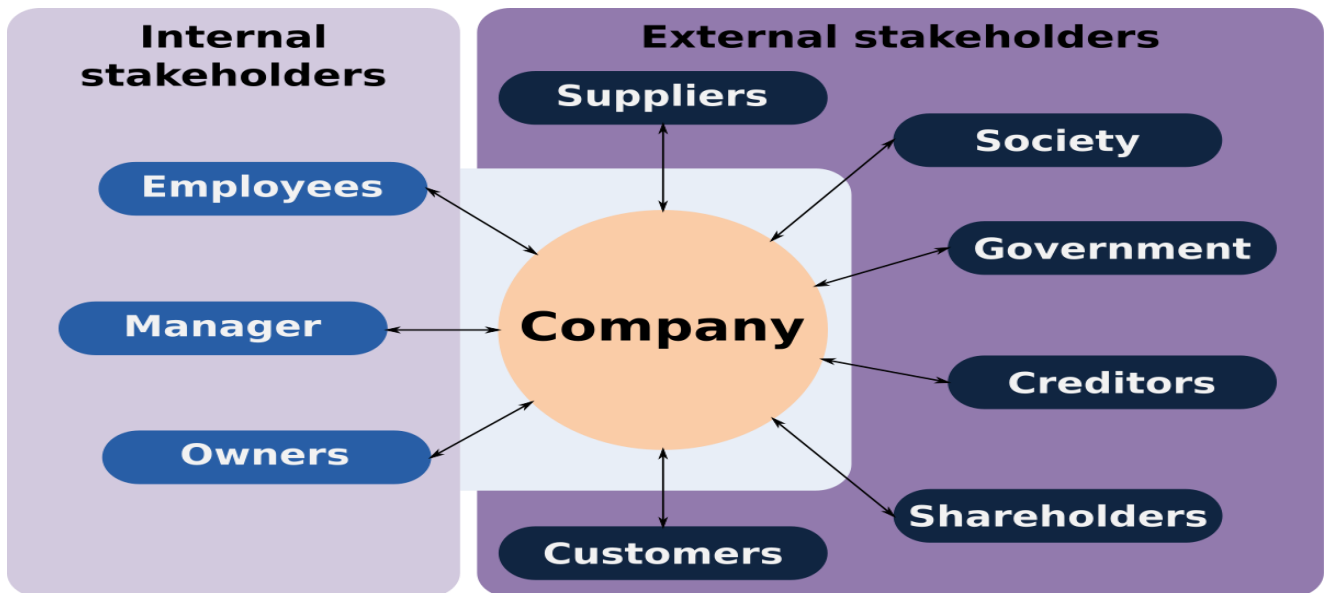
developments, and policy decisions that have shaped the country's federal structure and governance arrangements. Historical insights provide valuable context for understanding the origins of contemporary challenges and aspirations for political re-structuring.



Examination of Stakeholder Perspectives:

The study involves an exploration of stakeholder perspectives on political re-structuring in Nigeria. This includes analyzing the positions and proposals put forward by political leaders,

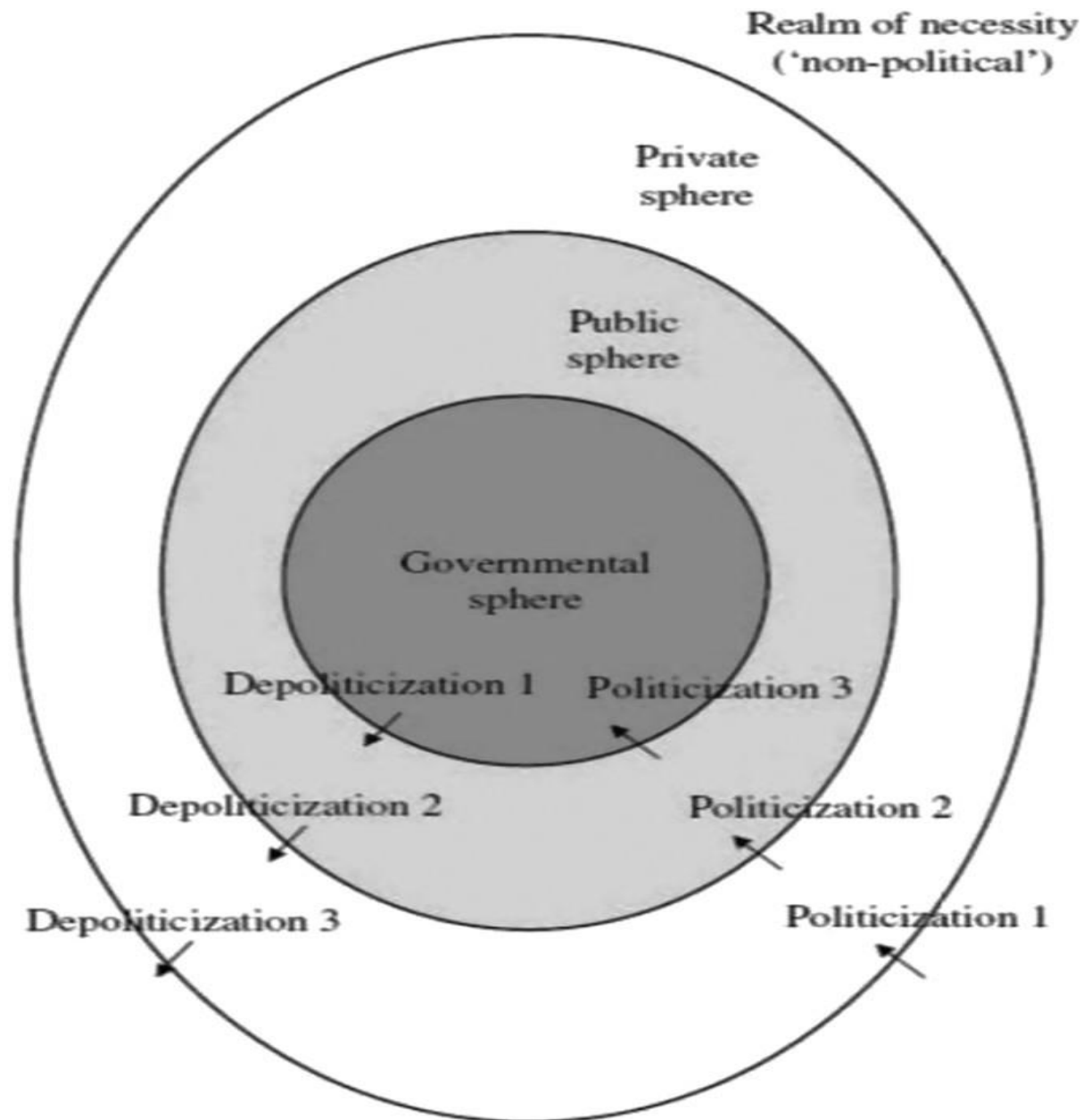
government officials, civil society organizations, ethnic minority groups, and other relevant stakeholders. By synthesizing diverse viewpoints, the study seeks to identify common ground, areas of contention, and potential pathways for consensus-building.



Comparative Analysis:

A comparative analysis is undertaken to assess international experiences with federalism and political re-structuring in contexts similar to Nigeria. Case studies from countries with diverse

federal systems, such as India, Brazil, and South Africa, are examined to draw lessons and insights applicable to the Nigerian context. Comparative analysis helps contextualize Nigeria's challenges within a broader global perspective and identify best practices for effective governance reform.



Policy Recommendations:

Based on the findings of the literature review, historical analysis, stakeholder perspectives, and comparative analysis, the study formulates policy

recommendations for re-federalizing Nigeria. These recommendations aim to address identified gaps, promote inclusive governance structures, and enhance the effectiveness of Nigeria's federal

system. Policy proposals are grounded in empirical evidence and guided by principles of equity, inclusivity, and democratic governance.

Ethical Considerations:

Throughout the research process, ethical considerations are paramount. The study adheres to principles of academic integrity, transparency, and respect for diverse viewpoints. Careful attention is paid to the representation of stakeholder perspectives and the responsible use of data and sources. Ethical guidelines for research involving human subjects are followed, ensuring the protection of participants' rights and confidentiality.

By employing a multidimensional methodological approach that integrates literature review, historical analysis, stakeholder engagement, comparative analysis, and policy formulation, this study aims to provide a comprehensive reassessment of recent discourses on political restructuring and re-federalization in Nigeria.

RESULTS

The reassessment of recent discourses on political re-structuring and re-federalization in Nigeria has yielded nuanced insights into the complexities and dynamics of Nigeria's governance landscape. Through a comprehensive review of literature, historical analysis, stakeholder engagement, comparative analysis, and policy formulation, several key findings have emerged.

Firstly, stakeholders across diverse sectors and political spectrums recognize the urgent need for reforming Nigeria's federal structure to address historical injustices, promote equitable development, and enhance governance effectiveness. The discourse on re-federalization reflects a shared aspiration for a more inclusive, responsive, and accountable governance system that accommodates Nigeria's ethnic diversity and regional disparities.

Secondly, the analysis reveals significant challenges and obstacles hindering the re-federalization agenda in Nigeria. These challenges include entrenched interests, political inertia,

institutional resistance, and a lack of consensus on key issues such as power devolution, resource allocation, and constitutional amendments. The complexity of Nigeria's federal system, compounded by ethnic tensions, economic disparities, and security concerns, further complicates efforts to advance political restructuring.

DISCUSSION

The findings underscore the importance of inclusive dialogue, constructive engagement, and visionary leadership in navigating the challenges of re-federalizing Nigeria. Stakeholders must transcend partisan divides, ethnic rivalries, and sectional interests to forge a common vision for governance reform. Civil society organizations, academia, and the media play crucial roles in fostering transparency, accountability, and public participation in the re-federalization process.

Moreover, the analysis highlights the potential benefits of re-federalization in addressing governance deficits, promoting socio-economic development, and fostering national unity. A reconfigured federal system that empowers sub-national entities, enhances fiscal autonomy, and promotes decentralized decision-making can unlock Nigeria's vast potential and accelerate progress towards sustainable development goals.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the reassessment of recent discourses on political re-structuring and re-federalization in Nigeria underscores the imperative for bold and transformative reforms to address the country's governance challenges. While the path to re-federalization is fraught with obstacles and uncertainties, it also presents unprecedented opportunities for nation-building, reconciliation, and democratic consolidation.

Moving forward, concerted efforts are needed to build consensus, mobilize political will, and institute meaningful reforms that reflect the aspirations and aspirations of all Nigerians. The re-federalization agenda must be grounded in

principles of equity, justice, and inclusivity, with a focus on strengthening democratic institutions, promoting social cohesion, and advancing the common good.

Ultimately, the success of Nigeria's re-federalization journey hinges on the collective commitment of all stakeholders to transcend narrow interests and work towards a shared vision of a more prosperous, resilient, and united nation. By harnessing the transformative potential of political re-structuring, Nigeria can chart a course towards a brighter future characterized by peace, prosperity, and inclusive development for all its citizens.

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