Abstract
This paper proposed the Spectators Approach to explain the behaviour of public policy assessment actors, evaluators and political office seekers in Nigeria, depicting them as spectators in a normal game who arrogate to themselves, superior potentialities for better performance than the players, but who never do better as players if and when granted the opportunity. Using the theoretical descriptive method, the paper outlined the basic tenets of the Spectators Approach, utilizing same to explain the back and forth calls and the recurrent promises for restructuring by political gladiators in Nigeria. Specifically, the paper analyzed the fact that though the ruling All Progressive Congress included restructuring as one of the prominent items on its manifesto before the 2015 election, the party later reneged on its implementation citing various excuses for its failure to keep the promise. The paper concluded that the Nigerian elites (because of their entrenched interest in power), rather than convolve a truly democratic constitutional conference whose final enactment carries the imprimatur of the generality of the people, resort to the restructuring mantra as a ballgame that is engaged when there is a pending election but abandoned once the election is won. The paper recommended, among others, the need for the electorate to vote out non performing politicians and sustain the advocacy for the enthronement of true democratic culture which will ensure even development for all Nigerians.

Keywords: Restructuring, Spectators Approach, Federalism, Constitutionalism, Decentralization

Introduction
Nigeria, since independence has gyrated between many frustrating options as regards what should constitute the best mode of governmental practice capable of engendering social cohesion and sustainable development to its largely impoverished population. While many blame the slow pace of Nigeria’s development on complexities arising from its colonial inherited disproportional, ethno fragmented socio-political structure, others have fingered poor leadership style by successive administrations (whether military or civilian) as the bane of Nigeria’s six decades of existence as an independent country. The former is perhaps the rationale behind the ever recurring clamour for restructuring (reforms/constitutionalism/modification) which itself is centered on the cries of marginalization, tri-podal regional domination and resource distribution/opportunity imbalances among its federating units, while the later is not altogether detached from the former but considered as its offshoot. This, in a way underscores the contention that Nigeria’s constitutional prescriptions coupled with the Land Use Act of 1978 perfected the centralization of national resources and revenue by the federal government, enabling the dominant ethnic groups who control the state to manipulate revenue distribution to their advantage, the lack of autonomy by states
resulting in the desperate struggle for access to the centre by political actors.

Adumbrating on the woes of Nigeria as a result of its structural imbalance, Bakare (2017) describes the nation as hanging on a precarious balance, enmeshed in a prolonged war against the retrogressive effects of a structure that was created by the fear of the past, has become institutionalized by the fear of the present and is being perpetuated by the fear of the unknown, insinuating that these fears have morphed into a horde of agitations which threaten the very core of the country’s existence as one indivisible entity. Whether this claim is right or wrong is a matter of perception but the fact remains that many Nigerians blame the myriad socio-economic and political problems that bedevil the country on the deformity of its politico-administrative structures, labeling it as the culprit for the country’s key national cataclysm which manifest in boundary disputes, inter-ethnic conflicts, religious strives, indigeneship/quota system questions, insurgency, armed banditry, herdsmen/farmers crisis etc. all which conspire to stifle its developmental processes. All these have therefore given verve to the calls for restructuring as the panacea to Nigeria’s problems. That is notwithstanding the fact that many efforts have been made by past regimes (colonial and post colonial) to resolve the restructuring imbroglio through various constitutional conferences. The question remains as to why the various efforts at restructuring, constitutionalism, constitutional reforms and national conferences have so far not yielded the expected results.

One of the arguments adduced to explain the failure of past efforts at restructuring in Nigeria is centered on the entrenched personal interest of leaders. It is these entrenched interests that determine their reformation calculus when spending billions of naira in intermittent organization of national conferences which usually culminate in constitutions considered as elite imposed, always promoting primordial, and sectional/group preferences instead of galvanizing the generality of diverse concerns of citizens and federating unites. This is what lends credence to calls for the convocation of a sovereign national conference which proponents believe will promote a bottom-up democratic opportunity for many Nigerians to participate in nation-building in an otherwise exclusionary political system dominated by a handful of elites including the military and key players in the different military regimes, their associates, powerful state governors, an increasingly powerful business class and media moguls. While canvassing for the SNC model of constitutional review, the late human rights activist, Gani Fawehinmi had justified it on the fact that Nigerians “never had the opportunity to make inputs into, accept or reject any constitutional framework through a referendum” and that a SNC would offer a catalytic opportunity for them (Nigerians) to “negotiate the terms” of living together, within a contraption of British colonialism (Usman, 2014).

Where a sovereign national conference is not made possible, pundits view the hitherto arranged conferences as constant ploy by the elites to perpetuate their entrenched interests which usually tend to manipulate the restructuring mantra as election gambit to hoodwink the masses to vote them into office. This ploy was suspected to be especially prominent during the campaign for the 2019 general election in Nigeria. The notion is that the politicians, apparently gauging the mode of the nation at that time, utilized ‘restructuring’ as their best bait to gain the mandate of the Nigerian electorate during the election. Restructuring therefore appeared to be the most significant item in the manifesto of the opposition Peoples Democratic Party. Ironically, though also included as one of the prominent items on the ruling All Progressive Congress’ manifesto before the election, the
party later reneged on its implementation citing various excuses for its failure. In the same ironic twist, frontline players of the opposition party (PDP) who dangled the restructuring mantra were the same people who not only promised to reform the Nigerian governmental system, but also spent billions of government resources on the convocation of reform conferences which were seemingly designed as populist campaign rhetorics, without the political will to address the concerns of agitating segments of the Nigerian federation.

In an attempt to explain the behaviour of political decision makers who bandit one idea or the other while out of office but fail to implement same when opportunity beckons, this author came up with the Spectators Approach to describe the attitude of political gladiators in Nigeria who would, while outside government, criticize government polices and recommend populist reforms, but do exactly the opposite while in office. The paper therefore adopted the approach to portray the restructuring debacle as a political ballgame that is engaged when there is a pending election, but jettisoned once the election is won.

Restructuring

Restructuring which literally means “to change, alter, or restore’ or “to effect a fundamental change in an organization or system (Harper, 2010), is fast gaining verve in the Nigerian socio-political lexicon. It means reorganizing or rearranging the existing order for mutual benefit; a call for reorganization of the existing political cum economic structure which many perceive as unfair, unjust, discriminatory and anti-development (Igboeche & Atakpa, 2018).

The calls for reformation or restructuring have always been about the change in structures or mode of operating Nigeria’s governmental processes, which in turn, have always dovetailed in constitutional reviews. Unfortunately, even those who agitate for restructuring have not been able to reach any form of consensus on its meaning such that the concept is differently defined by people according to regional relativity, for example, the South-East is asking for self-determination, the South-South is doing the same thing, the Middle Belt, just came clearly that they are Middle Belt, not Arewa, and Abuja indigenes are saying they are going to call the United Nations to come and supervise how they manage their own lives. There are those who have mixed restructuring with revenue allocation or fiscal responsibility while others have made it synonymous with regionalism, i.e. making way for sub-national constituents to develop at their own pace (Daily Trust Newspaper, 2017).

Further confusion in the conceptualization of the term “restructuring” was propagated by no less a personality than the National Publicity Secretary of the All Progressive Congress APC, Bolaji Abdullahi, who stated that his party which had earlier promised restructuring to Nigerians during the 2015 campaigns, was no longer sure of the meaning that people assigned to ‘restructuring’ He thus made allusions to the various slants of agitations for self determination by various groups which prevailed in the country, including that of the separatist group, Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB). In his words:

If Nnamdi Kanu uses the word ‘restructuring’ today, is it the same thing as intended in the APC manifesto? If the Arewa youths that gave an ultimatum to Igbo living in the North use the word ‘restructuring’, are they using the word as intended in the APC manifesto? (Sunday Punch, 2017).

However, the fervency of the clamour for restructuring is usually and rightly so premised on the notion that the centre is too strong, and that centralization of power is an enemy of individual creativity and self development which are always jettisoned, making nonsense
of the core values of subsidiarity which holds that what can be done at the lower level should not be done at the higher level so the lower level can grow and flourish. The tendency to centralize or concentrate national resources and revenue at the centre is interpreted to connote the impression that the dominant ethnic groups who control the state are always in a position to and in fact, do manipulate revenue distribution to their advantage, the lack of autonomy by states resulting in the desperate struggle for access by political actors. The outcry has therefore been very strident condemning the current structure of the country as being essentially unitary in form and that instead of it working for good of the Nigeria, it rather stifle its development and growth on all fronts, generating internecine strife all over the federation (Thisday, 2018).

In an attempt to rationalize on the term ‘restructuring’, the Nigerian Vice President, Prof. Yemi Osinbago recently tried to conceptualize the term beyond the schools of thought that tended to restrict it to definitional confines of state or regional boundaries. In his words, “restructuring is not just about the devolution of powers to the states, it is about transforming the respective roles of the federal, state and local governments to perform more efficiently in matters of territorial as well as economic governance; when we talk about restructuring, we are not talking about just constitutional tweaks; we are talking about a cultural revolution. It is not about re-shuffling a few responsibilities or resources, but about disrupting the authoritarian politics our democracy has inherited from its military and colonial rulers of past” (Sunday, 2018).

Tracing its origin, Bakare (2017) believes that “restructuring” is linked to the activities of pro-democracy groups like the National Democratic Coalition (NADECO), the Pro-National Conference Organisation (PRONACO), and the Patriots. He harps that leading individual voices in the restructuring movement were initially from the southern part of the country, including the likes of Chief Rotimi Williams, Chief Gani Fawehinmi and Chief Anthony Enahoro, all of blessed memory. Others included the likes of Prof. Ben Nwabueze, Prof. Wole Soyinka and Chief Emeka Anyaoku. However, in more recent times, leaders from the northern part of the country have increasingly lent their voices to this call. From former Vice President, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar to a former governor of Kaduna State, Alhaji Balarabe Musa, and former Head of State, General Ibrahim Babanginda, the call for restructuring appears to be reaching a tipping point. Thus the proposal for political cum economic restructuring of the Nigerian federation connotes the call for a new deal in solving the national question through some form of administrative reforms, through the decentralization or devolution of powers to the lower levels of government as well as the re-organization of the federal system into a number geo-political zones (probably six), each autonomous in its sphere of administration and coordinate with the central authority (Igboeche & Atakpa, 2018), all which should be delivered on the crest of constitutionalism, with a view to correcting the structural imbalances and functional inequalities in the present system and ensure greater levels of accountability, good governance, self determination and development for all in Nigeria.

One recurrent decimal in the restructuring debates and agitations in Nigeria has been the modality that should be adopted in order to convince all parties in the Nigerian project on the legitimacy and objectivity of the constitutional amendment processes that would convey and guarantee true federalism. Of course, the argument has been that the various constitutional amendment processes since independence in October 1960, have, though autochthonous, been more elitist than
desirable where, at its best, they offer slight amendments to the colonialists imposed constitution of 1960 or at its worse, they are a reflection of the self centered impositions of military fiats or its Siamese political petit political establishments. For instance, it is no news, the fact that the 1963 amendment was not processed by representatives elected by the people but by decisions and recommendations by an all-Party Constitutional Review Committee, while the 1979, 1989, 1995 and 1999 constitutions, though involving many actors and players, were all supervised by the military; the juntas having the final say (Basiru, et al., 2016). This is what gave rise to the different calls for variations in the tag for conferences, whether they are to be addressed as national conferences or as sovereign national conferences SNC, the later proposed on the ground that the qualifier “sovereign” would confer such capacity on the conference as to empower it to enable every nationality to be represented for dialogue on the contentious issues of the country's national existence and that decisions taken at such a forum would not be subject to review.

Spectators Approach
The author devised the Spectators Approach as a conceptual framework to explain the behaviour of public policy assessment actors in Nigeria. The approach states that policy assessors/evaluators in Nigeria are like spectators in a normal game (say soccer) who, whatever their knowledge, capacity and skills in a particular game, often presume or arrogate to themselves, superior potentialities for better performance over the players, whereas, if and when granted the opportunity, never do better as players. The approach is anchored on the following assumptions:

i. The Spectators is constitutive of myriad categories of persons who, themselves may either have some basic skills - as professionals, gifted players etc. or as ordinary fans who possess no skill or capacity in the game at hand, though some may have stakes to the extent of betting on the possible outcomes of the game (wagers).

ii. The spectators are relevant in the day’s business to the extent that their actions/reactions can either inspire or demoralize the players but their inputs at the moment are limited to these.

iii. The choices that have direct bearing on the outcomes of the game are determined more by the skill, training, temperament of the players and other extraneous environmental factors, than by the direct inputs of the spectators.

iv. Spectators are usually very critical of the skills and style of play, insinuating that they would do better than the players on the pitch, if granted the opportunity.

v. By such agitations and self promotion, some spectators actually sometimes get themselves or their nominees selected to play the next game whereas, they (and their nominees) perform below expectations.

vi. The former players who are now spectators become even more critical of the current players (incumbents), claiming capacity for superior performance than at other given opportunities.

vii. Unfortunately, the handlers of the team, probably influenced by the claims and counter claims (cheers and boos) of the spectators, keep rotating between successive critical spectators who possess no capacity to change the game beyond platitudes and excuses for not performing in the penultimate game.

viii. As the cycle continues, games outcomes keep diminishing since spectators who return as players do so in poor form and depreciating capacities, in which case, some critical spectators had better remain spectators than players.
In relation to the public service in Nigeria, the players are incumbent public office holders who are responsible for the policy choices of the day, implementing same for the whole gamut of the society; Spectators are a mass of relevant citizens including stakeholders, commentators, former rulers, opposition party men, election losers, aspiring leaders, their supporters and the ordinary citizens whose role on the policy choices or decision making processes of the day are only marginal though likely affected by the output processes (outcomes of policy). In terms of relevance to the policy process of the day, incumbents dominate the input processes (as policy makers) and are the greatest determinants of policy outcomes. While some of these relevant citizens posses some form of skills and experience in policy processes, others possess neither experience nor skill or capacity or will. Nevertheless these set of citizens are very critical of the entire policy processes, claiming superior knowledge, skills and capacity to make and implement better policies than the incumbents.

Unfortunately, the electorate (the handlers of the team), probably impressed by the claims and counter claims (cheers and boos) of the spectators, keep rotating between successive critical mass of spectators who possess no capacity or will to change the game beyond platitudes and excuses for not performing in the penultimate game. As the cycle continues, policy making-making, its implementation and outcomes keep diminishing since policy makers who return as players do so in poor form and depreciating capacities, in which case, some formally tested critical politicians had better remain spectators than players.

**Spectators Approach View of Nigeria’s Restructuring Albatross**

The restructuring debate in Nigeria, especially after the return of democracy in 1999 depicts a crop of people who, while out of office (as spectators), would promise restructuring to the masses but would do little or nothing when voted into office (as players) on the bases of the promises made to the people. It is either they lack the political will to do so or because they simply did not mean (from the outset) to do anything, except to deceive the masses in order to win their support during elections. This view is inferred by pundits including the former President of the Nigeria Bar Association (NBA) and human rights activist, Olisa Agbakoba, who before the 2019 general election, noted that restructuring is a ploy for the political class to capture power and that most politicians who were then advocating restructuring would abandon it when they acquire power. He further argued that because Nigerians are easily fooled, as they would normally go out and vote for them (the politicians) and that after the election, the politicians get what they want and carry on by still inflicting the same pain they campaigned against to get power. This makes the calls for restructuring like a vicious circle that must be broken (Daily Trust Newspaper, 2017).

It is not out of place to observe that past administrations in Nigeria spent huge sums of public funds amounting to billions of naira to convene several national conferences, without implementing such conference reports. One of such acts was exemplified in the third term agenda of former President Olusegun Obasanjo who spent some one billion naira to convene the 2005 national conference (Owete, 2014) but as a platform for realizing an extra third term in office beyond the constitutionally permitted two terms (Usman, 2014). Although the former President may not have expressly promised restructuring before his first election as a civilian president in 1999, the fact that he had had some romance with the National Democratic Coalition, (NADECO), during the regime of late General Sani Abacha (Ita, 2001) suggests the likelihood of a disposition in favour of restructuring during his campaign for
the presidency at the inception of Nigeria’s fourth republic.

It is believed that while canvassing for support during his second term bid, Obasanjo had promised restructuring to Nigerians, especially, while trying to woo the frontline Yoruba socio-cultural group, Afeniferi and Governors on the platform of the Alliance for Democracy. According to a chieftain of the APC, Chief Olusegun Osoba, Obasanjo made the promise during a meeting with the leadership of the group at his (Obasanjo’s) Ota farm where he promised that he would, among others, carry out the restructuring of Nigeria to ensure devolution of power including moving some items from the exclusive to the concurrent list, ensure fiscal federalism, organize a credible and transparent national censure and include merit as a condition that must be followed alongside federal character quota system in the recruitment to federal positions across the country. Chief Osoba regretted that though Afeniferi and the Governors decided not to presented a presidential candidate but support Olusegun Obasanjo on the basis of his promises, they later realised that they “had been fooled” as it later became clear that “Obasanjo merely played along with us and ended up deceiving us by telling our leaders what he knew they wanted to hear” (Folarin, 2019).

Although about 115 items were to be amended during the constitutional review exercise promoted by former President Obasanjo, the view among Nigerians is that he merely devised the conference as a platform to project a third term item for himself and state governors above all other salient items, thereby frustrating the whole exercise. It was therefore shocking to many Nigerians that during the recent clamour for restructuring in Nigeria, Obasanjo has been at the frontline of such agitations. This is instanced in a recent remark by the former Secretary-General, National Union of Petroleum and Natural Gas workers, NUPENG, Chief Frank Kokori who, though appreciating former President Olusegun Obasanjo’s call for urgent restructuring as crucial and timely to save the country from break up, however berated the former President for failing to restructure the country when he had all the opportunity to do so when he was in office for eight years (Thomas, 2020).

Another case in point was demonstrated in 2015 by the non-assent to the Fourth Alteration Bill (containing amendments to the 1999 constitution) by the former President Goodluck Jonathan facilitated conference which cost the country a whopping 7 billion naira (Owete, 2014). The thesis here is that if anyone had a compelling motive to facilitate a constitutional review in Nigeria, that person would have been former President Goodluck Jonathan given the crisis that attained his ascension to the presidency on March 3, 2010. Incidentally, the endless clamour for restructuring through constitutional review on the platform of a sovereign national conference was as ruckus as ever but Mr. Jonathan neither found it expedient to organize such conference during the nearly two-year period of his completion of the Umaru Yar’ Adua tenure between March 2010 and the next general election, nor put the machinery in place immediately after his substantive election in 2011.

When President Jonathan, during his Independence Day broadcast to the nation in 2013, declared the intention of his government to organize a national dialogue as a way of ”resolving the intractable security and political crises in the country”, many Nigerians took it with a pinch of salt. The main opposition party, the APC and some Nigerians labeled it as an instrument for attaining a nefarious agenda of tenure elongation while others saw it as a ploy to fool the citizens as he (Jonathan) was planning to vie for a second term in office against a purported understanding he had earlier entered into with core Northern
elements within his political party, (the PDP) while settling the imbroglio that saw him ascend the presidency in 2010. The former Governor of Lagos State and national leader of the APC, for instance, seemed to have captured the mindset of the crowd of doubting Nigerians when he “wondered why the president was proposing a national dialogue only 15 months to the 2015 general election, adding that those running the federal administration were not even smart in their deception” (Okulaja, 2013).

The argument here is that former President Jonathan’s organized conference may not have been anything more than a calculated ploy to impress Nigerians with the posture of a listening president who took “cognizance of suggestions over the years by well-meaning Nigerians on the need for a National Dialogue on the future of our beloved country” (Basiru, Salawu & Arogundade, 2016) whereas indeed he may not have been interested in getting the results of such a dialogue to a logical conclusion, knowing full well that the time was too short for such an exercise in the light of a general election in some 15 months time. The intent may have been just to impress the people so as to secure their support in the 2015 election, with a promise to get the results of the national dialogue implemented only during his second term, upon which the people would be further persuaded to vote for him in that hope.

Notwithstanding the opposition, Dr. Jonathan inaugurated the Justice Kutigi-led National Conference of 492 Delegates on March 17, 2014, with a mandate to deliberate on all matters that militate against Nigerian’s national unity and progress and Nigerians gave him the benefit of a doubt. After deliberations for about five months upon which voluminous recommendations were made, the committee had recommended that the President should either send an executive Bill to the National Assembly for the purpose of enacting such recommendations into enabling law or exercise his inherent powers under Section 5 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1999 as Amended), to convene the Conference. Most unfortunately, no such presentation was made before the 2011 election (Basiru, et al., 2016).

Speaking on why his administration could not carry out the implementation of the 2014 conference recommendations, Jonathan claimed that that since the implementation of the recommendations of the conference required amendment to the constitution, the report was submitted to him toward the twilight of his tenure when elections were approaching, and given that the executive and legislature were very busy preparing for the polls, the National Assembly did not have the time to go through the process (Premium Times 2019). The question is: did the president not know from the outset that the time between the convocation of the conference and the next election was too short to complete the process of either getting its recommendations enacted into law or call for a national referendum to ratify it? If he knew or had any such inkling, why did he proceed with such a venture at the economy cost of using such monies to address salient needs of the country?

The thesis remains that President Jonathan may not have been sincere in getting the process of restructuring through a national conference, except as a political gambit to curry approval for the next election, for as noted by Basiru, et al. (2016), the process seemed to have followed the country’s established patterns of constitution-making: the setting up of Review Committees to prepare a draft, the ‘nomination’ of delegates for a Conference, the inauguration of an Assembly by the Convener, the submission of the Assembly’s draft reports to the government, the release of white papers following minor tinkering, and (this time),
without any attempt to enact it into law. The whole process thus became an exercise in futility where the conference report, like others that were products of similar projects, has remained unimplemented. And fitting this into the perfect mold of spectators approach, the former president, sometime in July 2019, called for the implementation of the recommendations of the 2014 National Conference, still begging the question as to why he feels such reports could be implemented by another when in fact, his government did not do so during his time (James & Oluku, 2019; Premium Times, 2019).

The latest and most devastating let-down is that despite the fact that restructuring was implied in the manifesto of the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC), as stated in page one, paragraph one that ‘the government will initiate action to amend our constitution with a view to devolving powers, duties and responsibilities to states and local governments in order to entrench true federalism and the federal spirit’ (Ripples Nigeria, 2018), government seemed to have reneged on this promise to the chagrin of a lot of Nigerians. Apparently reacting to the agitations for restructuring, after a seeming endless delay to its promise, the former National Chairman of APC, John Odigie-Oyegun, on June 30, 2017 added a controversial twist to the restructuring debate when he claimed that his party was not unaware of the contentious nature of restructuring as a result of which it avoided it when putting together its manifesto (Rilwan, 2017). This was corroborated by the Minister of Information and Culture, Alhaji Lai Mohammed who said restructuring was not in the programme of President Buhari (Sahara Reporters, 2017). Although the Chairman had added that his party had however promised to ensure true federalism and devolution of power, by its choice of words, the party/government representatives gave an opportunity to many Nigerians to interpret these assertions as a volte face on restructuring (Thisday, 2018).

In what was apparently a face saving mechanism, the APC National Publicity Secretary, Bolaji Abdullahi, later stated that the party had not renounced its manifest, except that the party was no longer sure of the meaning that people assigned to ‘restructuring. By this, Abdulahi made allusions to various slants of agitations for self determination by various groups which prevailed in the country, including that of the separatist group, Indigenous people of Biafra (IPOB) (Sunday Punch, 2017). However the APC, in August 2017 constituted a ten-member Committee headed by Mallam Nasir El-Rufai, the Governor of Kaduna State, to address the increased agitations for restructuring. The committee was to consider and make recommendations to the National Working Committee on key items relating to the Nigerian Federation and the agitations for true federalism or restructuring. The committee submitted its report to the party in January 2018 and up until date, nothing has been done about it (The Nation, 2018).

Coincidently, as noted by Thisday (2018), most of the proposals by the El-Rufai Committee actually tally with those of the National Conference, which the Muhammadu Buhari led federal government almost swore not to implement. Indeed, in 2017, APC legislators in the National Assembly stood stoutly against the Devolution of Powers Amendment Bill, which sought to devolve some critical powers to the federating units by moving some items from the exclusive to the concurrent legislative list, killing it during the passage of amendments to the constitution.

Again, on September 9, 2019, the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC), through its spokesman, Yekini Nabena, indicated that a machinery had been set up to work out modality for the implementation of the
Mallam Nasir El-Rufai report on true federalism (Orji, 2018). This was by way of reaction to the raging restructuring debate between the Vice President, Yemi Osinbajo and his predecessor, Atiku Abubakar. Osinbajo had insisted that Nigeria’s problem is not “geographical” restructuring, but corruption; that prudent management of Nigeria’s resources is the way forward. On the other hand, Atiku, who had been clamouring for restructuring, criticized Osinbajo as showing “a lack of appreciation of the core tenets of the concept”. This back and forth posture of the APC led administration made majority of Nigerians to take the party’s claims on its resolve to restructure Nigeria with a pinch of salt. This further lends credence to the assertion by the National Chairman of Action Democratic Party (ADP), Mr. Yusuf Yabaji Sani that the APC led government rode to power on the back of great promises in 2015 without clearly fulfilling any till date, and that again, as we enter election year, they are coming up with what many of them strongly condemn and oppose. Also the opposition Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) insisted that the APC–led Federal Government lacked the capacity to restructure the country or fulfill the least of its campaign promises to Nigerians (Orji, 2018).

On the other hand, the APC questioned Alhaji Atiku’s sincerity, claiming that as the Vice President and Chairman of the National Economic Council throughout the eight years of the President Olusegun Obasanjo’s administration, he did not use his office to correct the imbalance in the federation as he expressed today. APC also queried the fact that Senator David Mark was Senate President for eight years and never sponsored a motion on restructuring (Adekunle, 2018). While the renewed restructuring debate particularly between the Vice President, Prof. Yemi Osinbajo and Alhaji Atiku Abubakar was trending, one was therefore constrained to believe that the APC’s earlier promise for restructuring was an opportunistic attempt to curry support from the supporters.

The back and forth claims/counter claims and the inability of the APC led administration to undertake a full-scale restructuring exercise as promised in its 2015 manifesto therefore tends to vindicate the position of those who earlier viewed the position of the party with cynicism.

As noted by Prof. Yadudu, a constitutional lawyer and former legal adviser to General Sani Abacha, it is becoming obvious that politicians, while seeking power may come up with any arrangement which may be in the All Progressives Congress (APC) or Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) or any other platform as the election approaches. He insisted that the only institution that remains intact in Nigeria is the political institution of the elite because they all speak one language and that is power (Daily Trust Newspaper, 2017). It is a language they all understand, whether in the APC, PDP or whatever grouping a political, so restructuring becomes a ballgame that is engaged when there is a pending election, whereas they cannot deliver because of entrenched personal interest.

In the same vein, Adekunle (2018) feels that the calls for restructuring by many politicians is often time a populist and opportunistic ploy to latch on and politically exploit simplistic public narratives on the panacea to Nigeria’s problems and not necessarily for its realism and practicability. He insists that past administrations have splashed billions of public funds to convene several national conferences but have subsequently left conference reports to gather dust and achieved nothing. Bad governance, corruption, bigotry and other ills remain the limiting factors that continue to hold the country back.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The cardinal thrust of this paper was the proposition of the Spectators Approach which likens the behaviour of public policy
assessment actors, evaluators and political office seekers in Nigeria to those of spectators in a normal game who arrogate to themselves, superior potentialities for better outcomes than the players, but who never do better as players if and when granted the opportunity. Applied in the explanation of the restructuring debate in Nigeria, the Spectators Approach depicts a crop of leaders who, while out of office (as spectators), would promise restructuring to the masses but would do little or nothing when voted into office (as players) either because they lack the political will to do so or because they simply did not mean (from the outset) to do anything, except to use it as a bait to manipulate the masses to vote for them during elections.

To check the spectator’s behavioural trend among Nigerian leaders, the paper recommended that the Nigerian electorate should hold political offices holders accountable to their promises/manifesto and mobilize to vote out “promise and fail” non performing politicians in the next election.

Civil society should sustain agitations for transparency in public governance and galvanize the generality of advocacy for the enthronement of true democratic culture which will ensure even development for all Nigerians. By so doing, the feeling of marginalization that engenders calls for divergent sectional models of restructuring would have been doused.

Lastly, the Buhari led administration should close ranks with the national assembly and see to the early review of relevant sections of the 1999 constitution to reinforce devolution of powers to states and local governments in order to entrench true federalism as promised in its manifesto.

References


Ofonmbuk Etido Atakpa PhD


A Journal Publication of the Department of Political Science, Federal University Dutsin-Ma, Katsina- Nigeria

Volume 3 Number 5 July 2020 114