

ETHNO-RELIGIOUS AGITATION, PEACEBUILDING AND POLITICAL RESTRUCTURING IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This paper converses ethnoreligious agitation, peace-building and political restructuring in Nigeria. Nigeria is undergoing the misery of terrorism, kidnapping, farmer/herdsmen conflict, and poverty. The nation is not free from ethnic violence, human rights abuses, political and religious intimidation and corruption. Ethnic and religious agitations in Nigeria have continued to take different dimensions from the cries of power-sharing, economic and infrastructural development distribution, state and local government's creation, resource control, and religious manipulation to the restructuring of the current federal construct. Political restructuring of the country has been on the political front burner since her independence in 1960. This led to a good number of constitutional conferences that have taken place over time. Nigeria as a form of restructuring has gone from a parliamentary form of government to a Presidential system. From the former regional governments, many states were created. The adoption of the federal character doctrine was a form of restructuring. These political policies were adopted to first, assuage the fears of many against the domination and marginalization of the few. They were adopted to reduce political conflict in the country and establish an atmosphere of justice. Political tension in a multi-ethnic country like Nigeria is inevitable. Building democratic structures and restructuring the political architecture of the diversified country becomes necessary as ways of building peace. Peacebuilding is about relationships to address particular human misery. This paper employed historical, phenomenological and qualitative research methods in its investigation. The data employed for analysis were gathered from secondary sources. Data used were, therefore, sourced from public and private libraries and the use of internet materials. The study made use of both content analysis and narrative techniques for the analysis of the data carefully extracted from chains of evidence presented in journal papers, conference papers, edited books, newspapers and documentary materials among many others. The theory used for the explanation of this study is the Inclusive Management theory. The theory facilitates the inclusion of experts, the public and politicians in collaboratively addressing issues or problems of public interest. The theory describes some practices of participatory democracy. The findings revealed that political restructuring if applied would favour the Nigerian populace due to Nigeria's multi-ethnic nature. The finding also revealed that political restructuring would strengthen peacebuilding, rebuild relationships, and enhance harmony, healthy competition and progress among federating units.

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Introduction

Many years after the first and second amalgamation of the Northern and Southern Protectorates in 1906 and 1914 respectively by Lord Lugard, Nigeria has never rested from agitations by her ethnic and religious groups. Initially, it was amongst the people who referred to themselves as the ‘majority’, that is — the Hausa/Fulanis, Yorubas and Igbos. However, the relegated ‘minority’ ethnic groups who reside in the North East, North Central, and South-South started to agitate as a result of marginalization. This led to the creation of the mid-western region and other subsequent states’ and local governments’ creation exercises. According to Ekot (cited by Paul, Audu and Eri, 2017), Nigerians on 1st October 1960 became independent with heaps of unresolved problems. Thus, the seeds of disunity sown at amalgamation are growing every day with ominous signs. In addition, Paul, Alih and Eri (2014) assert that “in Nigeria, the fear of domination of one region by the other is lively. Marginalisation and tribalism are still noticeable. The level of development in the country is still very low. Agitation for state creation is on the high. Religious conflicts are still common in the country” (p. 15).

Consequently, ethnoreligious agitations, protest for power sharing, economic advantage and restructuring of Nigeria since the emergence of federalism in 1954 till date has assumed a contemporary issue within the governance circle and recently, the 4th Republic. Again, the colonial masters have been blamed by some schools of thought for this amalgamation that created a national unity question. Up till now, no issue commands a greater, broader consensus in Nigeria today than the need for restructuring the Nigerian federation. Almost the entire Nigerian socio-cultural-political groups (South West /Yoruba nation; South-South; South-East; Middle Belt and the former Northern region) are working to announce their

template for restructuring. Even some political parties have either announced details of their position on restructuring or made 'true federalism' the centrepiece of their manifestos for a better Nigeria. It is fair to admit, however, that there is still reasonable disagreement regarding the consistency of the case for restructuring and the nature and content of restructuring. Nigerians are yearning for rapid growth, development of persons and infrastructure, judicial independence, justice of the one and justice of the whole. Rather than realizing these goals, they experience poverty, marginalization, injustice and winner-takes-all syndrome. It is in this view that this paper tries to discuss ethnoreligious agitation, peacebuilding and political restructuring in Nigeria.

The Present Political Structure and the Impact of Ethnicity and Religious Agitations in Nigeria

The political structure in Nigeria is operating today as a presidential form of democracy. It was adopted in the 1970s after experimenting with the parliamentary system handed over to her by the British administration. In the presidential form of democracy, the president holds enormous power. According to Kukah (2018):

The power of the Nigerian President is so great that he commands every structure of governance. The structure of the Nigerian presidential office makes the holders of the office extremely powerful, so much so that they can deploy power the way he wants. No president in the world has the kind of power the Nigerian president has and as such, no president in the world can be as irresponsible as the Nigerian president. Here in Nigeria, the local government chairman wants to be governor; the governor wants to be president and the president doesn't want to go! Many states have two governors representing them at the National Assembly. Governors have control and monopoly of resources of the state and they use the same resources to oppress the people.

This enormous power of the presidential system may breed corruption, which has eaten deep

Into her national life. A system if not constitutionally checked may lead to dictatorship. Henry (2018) held the opinion that “there can be no end in the foreseeable future to a do-or-die fight for the presidency of the Nigerian nation. The unbridled struggle to be top dog has generally been motivated by the attraction of the prospect of almost absolute power over her lives and her nation’s resources, particularly the lucrative proceeds from the oil wells in Niger Delta.” Henry(2018) went on to argue that, “in a political culture where plundering takes precedence over service and wealth creation, all Nigerians become victims of the greed of a parasitic political class — invariably championed by autocratic leadership; indeed, the greatest threat to her contrived democracy is a dictatorship.”

Ethnicity refers to some cultural factors binding a group of people together. These factors include language, dress, food, mode of greeting and sometimes religion. Obayi (2018) says that “they are people with a common identity.” Nigeria today was the creation of the British colonists through the amalgamation of the Northern and Southern Protectorates in 1914. Before this, “Nigeria” was a pluralistic society with many autonomous political entities, hence the multi-ethnic and multi-religious nature of the country. The polarization of religion as an instrumentality for administrative convenience in Nigeria began with the colonial Administrations. This led Akpanika (2017) to say that, “regrettably the seed planted 103 years (1914 — 2017) ago has gradually grown into a monster

that is becoming impossible to subdue.” (p.65). The historical root of this tragic development is traceable to constitutional regionalism and the divide-and-rule policy of the colonial administration. The policy rather than uniting the heterogeneous nation had many negative impacts on her among which are: Promotion of political bias; the Promotion of religious bias; Promotion of ethnicity and regional biases. Despite the 1914 amalgamation of the northern and southern protectorates by Lord Lugard, people from different ethnic groups are yet to accept a common identity as Nigerians. Nnonyelu (2001) asserts that “Nigerian citizens see themselves first, as a member of a clan, and more interestingly as a member of an ethnic nationality. Rarely, does he regard himself as a Nigerian, except if the sharing of the national cake occupies a prime position in the agenda of national discourse. Even then, his greatest qualification is his ethnic identity” (p. 145).

Regrettably, Olu-Adeyemi (2017, p.27) adds that “we seem not to have recognized yet, that the negative use of ethnicity can hinder the orderly development or enforcement of the rule of law as well as the overall conduct and management of national affairs. Today, there are still pockets of ethnicity-induced restiveness, replete with growing violence.” But it needs to be said also, that this restiveness continues because some elect to exploit them for political and material gains. Thus, the real culprit in managing inter-ethnic relations in Nigeria is not the diversity which Nigerians cannot abolish. Rather, it is the elite manipulation of ethnicity and religion and the failure to define

and agree on national rules of the game on which to base their political and economic processes.

Where you come from today in Nigeria determines your life chances and also your position in the social relations of production. Merit has been jettisoned on the altar of mediocrity, federal character, quota system and others which is evident even in unity schools' examination cut-off marks. Political parties, political participation, appointments and employment are viewed and handled with ethnic, religious or political biases. Nigeria as a multi-ethnic and multi-religious country has two major religious: Christianity and Islam, each competing and claiming superiority and dominance over each other in number and might. This claim of superiority as well as dominance fuelled by ethnicity and politics has served as the foundation for religious intolerance and several socio-political crises that have bedevilled Nigeria since independence in 1960.

Nevertheless, since Nigeria became a federal state in 1954 after the termination of Macpherson's constitution in 1951 - 1952 and subsequently the federal constitution of 1955, the struggle for ethnic development and dominance over the other started (even) along regional divides. Precisely, the "minority groups struggle" surfaced. The result of this agitation manifested in the creation of the mid-western region in 1963 with its headquarters in Benin; twelve states in 1967; nineteen states in 1976; twenty-one states in 1987; thirty states in 1991 and thirty-six states in 1996 and the current cry for additional one state to the present day south-east geo-political zone. All these state-creation exercises pointed to the steps taken to moderate

the effect of ethnic agitation within the Nigerian political structure. But Ato and Soyombo (2011) argue that “some ethnic nationalities have little or no respect for upholding the unity of Nigeria. With states creation, consideration of national unity assumed secondary interest.” (p. 42).

Nonetheless, ethnoreligious agitations nearly delayed the country’s independence due to fear of southern domination harboured by the North. Since then, ethnoreligious struggles and clashes have been very rampant in Nigeria and can now be seen as part of the nation’s politics. This coupled with the minority agitations has made ethnicity and religion occupy the centre stage in political discussions in Nigeria.

Although ethnicity and religion have been seen as having negative impacts on nations, studies have revealed that there are a lot of positive attributes to them. Among these positive impacts include:

- i) Contributes to democratic practice: Nonoil (cited by Obi and Obikeze, 2004) explains that: First, the political demands of many movements concern liberty and justice. They express fears about the oppression of their members by other groups and the nepotic distribution of public service jobs and social amenities, and the imposition of the culture of the dominant ethnic group on the others. In this way, ethnicity contributed to democratic practice through its emphasis on equity and justice in socio-political relations. Second, it leads to the appreciation of one’s social roots in a community and cultural group which is essentially not only for the stability of the individual and ethnic group but that of the

country as a whole. Third, it provides a sense of belonging as part of the intermediate layer of social relations between the individual and the state. Fourth, ethnicity provided a local mobilization base for the anti-colonial movement for national freedom. Fifth, ethnic identity has been instrumental in the promotion of community development in the rural areas. Sixth, the mobilization of the various ethnic groups behind the various factions of a nation's ruling class contributes to the decentralization of power in the country which is healthy for democratic freedoms (p. 208).

- ii) Serve as an outlet for political tensions: ethnic groups serve as an outlet for political tensions. It helps, for instance, to divert expectations from the state to other social groups. Performing this important scapegoat function may permit individuals to challenge persons rather than the authenticity of the office these persons occupy.
- iii) Promote national integration: Obasi (2001) agreeing that ethnicity has some positive sides claims that ethnicity aids national integration in the sense that ethnic groups serve as a mechanism of reconciliation. For example, using ethnic contacts, the individual is recruited into many non-ethnic nationalist groupings. Also, members of ethnic groups seek to raise the status of the whole group thereby engendering mobility and social contact. Ethnic groups help keep the class structures fluid and so prevent the emergence of castes. This is because encouraging social mobility minimizes any tendency towards castes formation.

Political Restructuring

Political restructuring is one concept or notion that means different things to different political leaders in contemporary Nigerian society. For Olukoshi and Agbu (1996), “political restructuring seems to be informed by the poor praxis 960 of an admittedly formal federal system” (p. 87). In other words, the clamour for restructuring is more stringent in countries with a federal form of government – and perhaps also a federal constitution — but with a unitary practice. As Stephan (cited by Amuwo and Hérault, 2004) has noted, “What counts is not the rather trivial constitutional structure, but rather the political and economic culture” (p. 5).

The political and economic culture of a federal system in terms of the aggregate premises both value and factual, of governance can, to varying degrees, depending on the nature and character of the federal state, be antithetical to the wishes, aspirations and goals of the individuals and nationalities. However, according to Yahaya (2018), “restructuring is a process to change how government conduct the business of public affairs” (p. 87). To him, restructuring does not mean the merging of states, as some people would think. Rather, it is a process people envisaged, that could allow each region to control its natural mineral and human resources and pay royalties to the central government. Thus, many scholars, politicians and other pressure groups advocate for restructuring in Nigeria with no fewer than two political grounds. First, it was argued that this type of federal system operated in Nigeria promotes disunity since the different ethnic groups in the

country have different norms and values. Secondly, it's being argued that the present federal system in Nigeria did not promote economic development because the central government dominate the economy while those who produce the wealth are living in hunger and abject poverty. Nevertheless, the truth of the matter is that Nigerian politicians have been calling for a new pattern of power-sharing not because they are genuinely interested in gaining a share of power in the interest of their respective nationality, religion or interest groups, but because they see such arrangement as an easy route to grab power and deploy it for primitive private capital accumulation.

The question that is yet to be addressed in a country where a few control the levers of power (both within the public and private sectors and have been over-empowered at the disadvantage of the majority), is how can these few minorities allow any kind of restructuring to take place for the benefit of poor majority? Thus, lending his voice to the call for restructuring in Nigeria, former vice President, Abubakar (cited by Yahaya, 2018) chose to say:

Our current structure and practices have encouraged a major impediment to the economic and political development of our country, in short, it has not served Nigeria well, and at risk of reproach it has not served any part of the country, the North as well. The call for structuring is even more relevant today in light of the governance and economic challenges facing us as well as a rising tide of agitations, some militant and violent, which requires a

resent in our relationship as a united nation (p. 87).

Problems and Challenges of Political Restructuring in Nigeria:

Although many Nigerians are clamouring for the restructuring of the country as a way of ensuring equity and justice for the development of the nation, this appears to be far-reaching as this process is faced with many problems and challenges among which are:

i. Divergent approaches to restructuring

The clamour for restructuring has polarised the country. Regions in the South believe in it, but they have different views of what it is all about. To the Igbo in the South-East, restructuring will guarantee confederation in the constitution; the Yoruba in the South-West want a restructuring that would take the country back to regionalism; while the South-South is pushing for resource control. While the positions of regions in the South are not irreconcilable, that of the three regions in the North is a different ball game. The debate has pitched the South against the North, which is different to restructuring in any form. Eminent leaders from the south believe what can save the country from disintegrating is restructuring. They are of the view that the unity of Nigeria and harmonious co-existence of the various ethnic nationalities will be strengthened by fiscal federalism and restructuring of the polity.

In as much as the concept of restructuring has assumed different meanings across the six geo-political zones of Nigeria following the renewed agitations, it is however challenging to establish a common meaning that will be acceptable to all. This resulted from the fact that Nigeria emerged in 1960 as an independent nation with a three imbalance regional configuration, autonomy and hegemony for the so-called majority Hausa/Fulani-North, Igbo East and Youth-West. Even in pre-independence, each ethnic group was operating its own different political, economic and administrative system. This metamorphosed into regionalism which empowered dominant ethnic groups in three regions. This arrangement was criticized notwithstanding. According to Suberu (2001), the palpable causalities and predictable critics of this trilateral federalism were the country's estimated 250 smaller or 'minority' communities, which constituted approximately one-third of the regional and national populations. He submitted further that, the secondary victims of regional federalism were the South Western Yoruba and South Eastern Igbo groups, whose regional security was menaced by the demographic preponderance and the political advantage that Hausa-Fulani dominated the Northern region enjoyed over the two southern regions respectively.

ii. **Insecurity**

Fifty-nine years after independence, calls for restructuring of the country have dominated national discourse with a lot of interest and obsession following the alarming rate of insecurity in the country. In the First Republic, Paul, Audu and Eri (2017)

observe that ‘restructuring took the form of region and native authority governments’ creation. Presently, stakeholders are currently emphasizing the entrenchment of fiscal federalism, resource control, state police, equity, justice and fairness” (p. 17). The issue became topical following the growing menace of Fulani herdsmen at the birth of Buhari’s (civilian) administration as well as the drastic reduction in the nation’s earnings with a slump of the price of crude oil; the return of militancy in the Niger Delta region; and the bid to review the constitution. Nigerian elders who witnessed the pre-independence and First Republic allude to the glorious days of the First Republic when there was healthy rivalry and competition among the regions. The regions as they were had relative advantages that revolved around rich agricultural resources and animal husbandry.

Be that as it may, Abubakar (2017) in his view states that:

If we cut out all sophistry, posturing and pretentious, it is clear to me that the resistance against restructuring is based on three interrelated factors, namely dependence, fear and mistrust. Dependency of all segments of the country on oil revenues, fear of loss of oil revenues by non-oil producing states or regions and mistrust of the motives of those angling for restructuring. The bulk of the calls for restructuring comes from the South while the bulk of the opposition to it comes from the North (p. 2).

This implies that it will be critical for all parties to put their cards on the table, give one another the necessary reassurances

and make the necessary compromises to secure a restructuring deal. Although arguments against restructuring came mostly from the North, there are, however, elements from the other regions who are in government and who argue against restructuring, claiming that it is only good leadership that is needed to resolve the nation's challenges as evident in the Vice-President Osibanjo's speech that the problem of Nigeria was not geographical restructuring but prudent management of national resources and providing for the people properly (Agbakwuru, 2018). Opponents also argue that restructuring is a ploy to break up the country. They insist that national unity is non-negotiable and claim that the matter has been resolved by the civil war. How the current structure is the only guarantee of unity is never really explained, nor is it demonstrated that devolving more powers and resources to federating units would lead to a breakup of the country.

ii. **Corruption**

The high level of corruption in the country poses a serious challenge to the clamour for restructuring. Indeed, a lot of Nigerians from all works of life, ethnicity and religion appear to believe that the current Nigerian federal structure needs restructuring. It is not uncommon to hear that Nigeria will never move forward or develop if the restructuring of the Nigerian Federation does not take place. Some are even saying that breakup of Nigeria is imminent unless restructuring takes place. Egbosiuba (2017) opines that:

The curious thing about the clamour for restructuring Nigeria's current federal structure is

that none of the advocates has detailed what they want to see Nigeria look like. It appears that the latest agitation is another excuse by some Nigerians to blame the lack of political, social and economic development of the country on the structure of the nation rather than on their fellow Nigerians and their leaders who have failed the country (p. 1).

How anybody thinks that Nigeria will ever develop with the type of rampant corruption that has permeated all aspects of Nigerian life is an illusion. Nigeria has one of the best constitutions in the world and is endowed with abundant natural and human resources but has managed to use these resources in an unproductive manner. The best constitution in the world will not do any good for Nigeria if the people that are supposed to implement it are corrupt and morally bankrupt.

The Inevitability of Political Restructuring in Nigeria

Political restructuring in a federal polity is intended to achieve certain specific objectives, it is meant to serve as a steering mechanism to properly give focus and locus to attempts at collective identity and distributive politics. The aim is to correct perceived structural defects and institutional deformities. To tinker with political structures is perhaps suggestive that whilst democratic practice may not yet have firm roots, the democratic idea has some form of expression. The importance of the latter ideal in a federal system can hardly be over-emphasized, particularly where there are not only existing irredentist movements but also nationalities being driven to agitate for separatist identities.

While those calling for restructuring may be driven by different motives, there is certainly a strong case for restructuring our federation. The reasons are simply that the current structure, which concentrated too much power and resources in the centre, makes us economically unproductive, uncompetitive, indolent, politically weak, disunited and unstable. It has made Nigeria's component units too suspicious of one another, a suspicion that makes any rational discussion very difficult. This structure, which can be called "Unitary Federalism," does not serve the country or any section well. It rests on the foundation of dependence on oil revenues, which seem to be in long-term decline and are, therefore, unsustainable. And a country remains united in the long term only because the component units believe that it is in their interest to remain part of the country and that there are more important things that they get from the remaining part of the country than not. Leaders from across the country acknowledged this and gave voice to it in the last political conference held in 2014.

Although, Nigerians have become so accustomed to the current structure and addiction to oil money that even some of the elites still cling to a belief that what we currently have is the most beneficial and is immutable. This is a federal system that has fostered dependence on revenues derived mainly from three states and is characterized by excessive -centralization and concentration of power and resources, intense political competition and political instability.

Today, regional gatherings are usually about grievances and how to get more from the central pool of resources but hardly

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about how to produce and contribute to increasing those resources. While there is no ideal federal system to which every federating country has to aspire, there are better working federal systems from which to draw lessons. Nigeria modelled her current federal system after the US but seems to have avoided the critical elements that make the American system function better: greater autonomy for federating states and individuals. America's federalism is a system that fosters individual freedom, productivity, competition, innovation and strong institutional checks on power wielders.

All the same, Nigeria has a unique opportunity now, with all the agitation and clamour of restructuring, to have a conversation that would lead to changes in the structure of her federation to make it stronger, enhance her unity and promote peace, security, better and more accountable governance. Nigeria's system should be a federal system that delegates to the federal government only powers and responsibilities for those matters that are better handled by a central government such as defence, foreign affairs, inter-governmental affairs, and setting overall national economic policy and standards. Other powers and responsibilities should reside with the states, which will include the power to create and fund local governments as they deem fit.

Peace-Building in Nigeria

Peace-building as a term was popularized in the early 1990s after the publication of the then United Nations (UN) secretary general, Boutros Ghali's report "An Agenda for Peace". In the report, Boutros Ghali (1995) defined peace-building as, "a

range of activities meant to identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace to avoid a relapse into conflict.” Before this publication peace-building was used in post-conflict signatures — to avoid relapse. On many occasions, it is worked out.

The concept was later strengthened with the report in 2004 of the then UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan’s “Agenda for Development.” For Kofi Annan (2004), “peace-building required a ‘sustained’ cooperative work on the underlying economic, social, cultural and humanitarian problems.” Peace-building requires a process that will frontally address the sanity and political realities on a grand as well as look at measures that will help to transform the personal, social and economic relationships of the nation.

According to Karbo quoted in Francis (2008), the ultimate goal of peace-building in Africa is the rebuilding of relationships, asserting communal responsibility and solidarity. In the African context, peace-building centres on building relationships. It is a collaborative effort. In general, peace-building sets to address the root causes and effects of conflict by restoring broken relationships, promoting reconciliation, institution building and political reform, as well as facilitating economic transformation. In other words, peace-building aims at promoting long-term stability, enthroning justice, promoting good governance, and rebuilding state infrastructures and security.

Political restructuring assures the people of their belongingness in society. It assures them of their security and their freedom,

Political restructuring like peace building, builds on and rebuilds relationship in such a deliberate way. It is based on the practical knowledge of our social life as a nation. Habermas believes that social knowledge is governed by binding consensual norms. The norms are defined through reciprocal expectations about the behaviours between individuals or communities. The individual or communal norms go through analytical propositions to achieve validity by subjecting the norms critically towards understanding their proper intention.

What this implies for us is to examine the political structures on the ground, and expunge any contradictions that create unwarranted tension for the people, no matter how marginal. Unfortunately, all the political mechanisms adopted to address the lingering relational problems such as federal character policy; ‘quota’ ‘zoning’ and ‘rotational’ political offices are like a drop of water in the ocean of problems. A political restructuring calls for strong collaborative political efforts toward a restructuring that is decisive and deliberative.

Restructuring and peacebuilding

Peacebuilding and political restructuring are concerned with relationships. It is a political relationship that goes beyond ‘federal character’ policy, zoning of offices or quota system. Political restructuring as a peace-building instrument is empowerment. According to Sandbrook (1993), empowerment “involves transforming the economy. Social. Psychological, political and legal circumstances of the currently powerless.” Ihonvbere (1993) affirms that empowerment is, “a form of socio-economic and political restructuring which removes the locus of power from the current custodians of state power, and

enables the currently disadvantaged to meet their basic needs, fully participate in decision-making, and provide opportunities to challenge internal and external (oppression).” This provides the *raison d’etre* for the adoption of the federal system of democracy in Nigeria. Unlike the 1954 Constitution which provided for greater regional autonomy and the removal of powers of intervention by the central government, thus creating a competitive federalism, it did not prevent the dominance of any group in Nigeria. Our problems are multiplied by such a federal system of government. A new form of federalism should solve the problem. This new form of federalism will account for the way the fabric of the society is constituted and how power is perceived (Osarhieme and Osabor, 2015). This new form of federalism should fulfil the aspirations of the people. A true federal system promotes co-existence and enhances the democratic process which gives it greater vitality. True federalism promotes justice and builds peace.

Recommendations

- There is a need to decentralize power and restructure the governance system. The starting point is a drastic reduction in the powers and responsibilities of the federal government. To achieve this, there must be decentralization which should be hinged on the constitution of the existing six geo-political zones into zonal governments to which a substantial quantum of the powers and resources currently held by the federal government would be devolved. The zonal governments, each of which must have its constitution, albeit deriving existence from the national constitution can then decide

how and through what structures to deliver governance at the local level.

- There can be no world peace without peace among religions and no dialogue between the religions; without accurate knowledge of one another. Every religious belief has a social responsibility to its adherent. There is therefore an urgent need for accurate knowledge of the teaching and beliefs of religions other than one's own. Ignorance accounts for much of the fear, suspicion and hatred that lead to violence and open confrontation between Christians and Muslims. Knowledge of the various religions will, therefore, dispel this fear and clear the misunderstanding that tends to divide us rather than strengthen us.
- In the restructuring, power should not only rotate among the major ethnic groups but opportunity should be given to minority groups. This will address the political, religious and other social-economic issues that are threatening the peaceful co-existence of Nigerian society and guarantee every religious group equality before the law and a sense of belonging.
- The issue of resource control should be redefined. The South feels neglected and marginalized as the golden goose that lays the golden eggs, they believe that since the country's wealth is from their area, preference should be given to them in terms of development, appointments and employment, thus, restructuring and redefining the issue of resource control could minimize militancy in the area.

- Nigeria's ethnic and religious diversity is a very big advantage in the African continent in its positive perception. This is in contradiction to those who think otherwise and those who think that restructuring is dismembering the country. Restructuring is not dismembering the country. It is the re-arrangement of the systems and structures of governance to enhance healthy competition, political balancing and the achievement of the wholeness of governance. Therefore, governance should be based on equality, fairness, competition and optimal utilization of the country's diversity. In the present federal system, Nigerians think more of their ethnic origin than they think of the nation. It is because of how Nigerians are treated as foreigners in their own country and where the winner takes it syndrome does not guarantee the security of life and peace. Nigeria's diversity and population should attract foreign markets since they are a big potential for industrial development. Nigeria's stability is therefore very necessary. This is the reason the country should adopt a constitution that ensures the durability of government and security and where no one person remains in power long enough to become so formidable to successfully engineer term elongation or perpetuate a dictatorship.
- A true federal constitution that should be adopted would enhance the powers of the federating states as engines of growth for a just, stable, egalitarian and progressive nation. It will encourage competition among the political units that contribute to the running of the government at the centre. "Arguably, such a structure would motivate each region to look inwards and develop its own God-given resources

optimally, rather than wait for monthly allocation from the centre. Thus, all regions would become actively engaged in putting their citizens to work to achieve additional wealth creation with commensurate improvement in social welfare (Boyo, 2018).

- The nomenclature of the restructuring should lie in the hands of those responsible for the exercise. Obi Nwakanma commenting on the issue in the Vanguard Newspaper of July 29, 2018, said that “it is not the responsibility of the President (in a democracy) restructure Nigeria but the parliament, since they are elected by the people to represent their interest.” He is correct. But that is not the only way of the argument. He suggested, on the other hand, a sovereign national conference can as well solve the problem. But Nigeria has had many national conferences. They have not solved the many political problems threatening the existence of the country. What the nation has not tried is the plebiscite of the electorate. A ‘yes’ or ‘no’ vote in a referendum solves the problem of restructuring. It minimizes the work of the parliament and solves the problem of party affiliation and bias in the parliamentary debates on the issue. What is needed in this case is parliamentary confirmation and execution.
- The National Assembly should muster the courage to quickly move in this direction of restructuring to solve the lingering political problems. The Assembly will by so doing will address the root causes of, and effects of conflict by restoring broken relationships, promoting reconciliation, institution building and political reform, as well as facilitating economic transformation. It will be

building on the peace of the nation. Peace-building requires a process that will frontally address the sanity and political realities on a grand as well as look at measures that will help to transform the personal, social and economic relationships of the nation. On the whole, the ultimate goal of peacebuilding is to enhance and promote human security, which includes democratic governance, human rights, the rule of law, sustainable development and equitable access to resources.

Conclusion

In the wake of widespread disappointment with the centralized state structure and as a part of the ongoing democratization process, the transfer of some power and resources from the central to local units' level of governments and organizations has met the desire of many Nigerians is why restructuring has been advocated by different groups to have a change in the way of running affairs of governance in Nigeria.

Restructuring is not just a political agitation; it is the foundational plan for Nigeria's future prosperity without oil. The contradictions of the old, oil-based economy vis-à-vis the population and geographical pressures are swirling and the challenge of a new institutional framework to lead the emergence of the new economy is urgent. We have a choice of pre-emptive, proactive action to orchestrate a new productive (rather than sharing/consumption) structure or wait until a change is forced upon us most chaotically. A wise man gets the umbrella ready before the rain starts. We are currently at a cul-de-sac and need a fundamental disruptive change to reverse the trend. One of the key messages, therefore, is that restructuring is not only progressive politics but excellent economics.

Although efforts have been made by the different administrations (military and Civilian) in addressing the problematic national question through the various Constitutional conferences, and decrees as seen in the creation of state and local governments, the federal democratic problems linger. These problems, (political, religious, ethnic, cultural, economic, etc), constitute a serious threat to relational cohesion as a nation. There is a need therefore to go back to the drawing board in another effort to enthrone a 'stable democratic socio-political order' (Abubakar, 1998).

It is the opinion of this paper that political restructuring will engender stable socio-economic cum political order in Nigeria. Finally, political restructuring will encourage peace, economic diversification for growth, industrial flourishing and employment generation. This paper thinks that political restructuring is necessary, urgent and timely for the collective progress of the nation and international trust, and peace of Nigeria of our time.

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