

RESTRUCTURING THE NIGERIAN NATION: A PANACEA FOR EVOLVING SUSTAINABLE PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT

Amunnadi, Chukwudi Ani Ph.D

General Studies Division

Enugu State University of Science and Technology, Enugu, Nigeria

08114107176; amuchuks@gmail.com

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Abstract

The call for restructuring of Nigerian nation has remained a recurring decimal over the years. However, the quality and quantity in terms of frequency and the caliber of the people and the cross section of ethnic nationality demanding for this restructuring in recent times is overwhelming. This is coming at a time in our national history when the country is adjudged to be on the verge of being classified as a failed state due to high rate of insecurity in the land. The recent statement by President Muhammad Buhari that Nigerians should look unto God in the wave of compounding level of insecurity across the underscores the utter helplessness and cluelessness of our political leadership in containing the high insecurity challenges in the country which many believes is at root cause of all forms of social, political, economic and educational decay in the nation. It is against this backdrop that this work seeks to examine restructuring as a panacea for evolving sustainable peace and development. The paper critically reviewed the existing literature both conceptually and thematically and relied on secondary source of data and official documents as its methodology.

Keywords: Restructuring, Nation, Peace, Economic, Development

Introduction

The increasing agitations for restructuring of the Nigerian state in recent times is an ill-wind that is waiting to disintegrate the country if not given the urgent attention it demands. This is even more worrisome when one considers that the quality and the quantity of the caliber of individuals and groups making the demands are increasing by the day. Egburuonu (2020) puts the view pointedly when he states that though the call for restructuring in Nigeria has remained a recurring decimal for decades the present agitations for the re-jigging of the political and economic structure of the nation has gained more impetus. According to him what makes the above development a very pertinent one is many known leaders and governors who were formerly not interested in the issue have now brought it up on the front burner as an urgent national challenge.

Furthermore, he submits that with the diversity of ethnic nationality groups, socio-political organizations, activists and some former leaders and political office holders, the current demand for restructuring marks a new dawn for the nation. This is more so when those involved have continued to warn that there is no alternative for restructuring if the nation is to move forward development wise. What this means is that the nation must accept the naked truth that she cannot continue to run on faulty structural foundation and hope to remain a strong, united and progressive country. Eghagha as cited by Egburuonu (2020) states that these agitations are fueled by raw injustices being meted out by the central government in resource control, allocation of political appointments amongst others among some sections of the polity. Besides this is an ugly situation being witnessed in our nation's history when the country has been adjudged by many as a failed state a rating which is predicated on the extremely high rate of insecurity in the land. Unfortunately the level of cluelessness and helplessness of our political class in addressing the root cause of this rising spate of agitations which is rooted in insecurity threats that are ravaging the length and breadth of the nation leaves much to be desired.

The above view is corroborated by Mohammed, & Sulaiman (2018) when they stated that agitations for restructuring in Nigeria polity has been a recurring one but which assumed greater thrust from 2015 through 2017. According to them it was an agitation for the enthronement of true federalism in Nigeria. Uzoigwe (1996), Elaigwu(1992), and Ake (2003) in their contribution posit that the above agitations are rooted in the economic and political problems bequeathed as legacies of colonialism of underdevelopment. Mohammed (2018) et al captures the above view vividly when they state that colonialism bequeathed a legacy of fragile political structure that has made frequent incidents of ethnic agitations undergirding tool fostering threats of instability and calls for restructuring. According to them African nations to which Nigeria is inclusive were founded on a faulty platform that made the task of national integration a problematic one which unfortunately has continued to fuel the agitations for restructuring.

Olewe (2020) in his contribution posits that the increasing agitation by the Church community for restructuring of the Nigerian nation no doubt is predicated on their desire for the enthronement of religious freedom driven polity where no single religious body or ethnic group lords it over the rest of the citizenry. According to him religious freedom is a fundamental condition for putting in place a secured and progressive society. The above submission becomes highly imperative in our nation today due to high spate of killings of

innocent citizens by Islamic fundamentalists masquerading as armed Fulani Herdsmen.

Theoretical Framework: Theory serves as a guide especially in intellectual discourse of this nature. This work adopts the ‘pluralist theory’ as it seeks to address issues with respect to the above subject matter. The above theory which submits that ‘without devolution of responsibilities among the federating units, dispute and conflicts would likely escalate to the extent of giving room for threats of disintegration as some units see the option to break among from the union as a viable. The above theory has been linked to the following scholars Nozick, Raverz, Thiebout and Asheroft among others. The thrust of theory is that decentralization is critical factor in state Administration on fostering unity among federating units. Mohammed (2018) captures the above view when he states that inter alia:

The theory see power dispenser among states of a federation as protection against dangerous aggregation and abuse of power at the federal level. Therefore, with decentralization, components units will not try to take advantage of one another and that the center will not also try to usurp power from the region (pp.4)

From the above context the idea of unity in diversity is emphasized as a cardinal feature of sustainable nation building.

Conceptual Definitions: This section would attempt to highlight an array of definitions with respect to some of the key operational words relevant to background understanding of the subject matter under study. This is because it has become a tradition in a scholarly work of this nature to identify variegated definitions of the key concepts relevant to a research to be introduced for guidance on appraising their current meanings in the literature of the intellectual community.

Development :It is a process of creating growth, progress, positive and or the addition of physical, economic, environmental, social and demographic compounds. Inmpey (2018:115) is in agreement to the above view when he states that “development is a process that embraces transformation in all aspects of human conditions”. From the point of African developmental needs the concept has been defined by Himmlstrain (1994:17) as a term that captures growth in the following areas : food sufficiency and general wellbeing, improvement in agriculture ,autonomy and sovereignty, binding instrument of social control, availability of indigenous entrepreneurs. Onuoha and Aloba (2014) as cited in Amunnadi (2016:136) in their own contribution defines

development as the concept which relates to the following ideas: reduction of poverty, inequality and unemployment. Furthermore the posit that it has to do with reduction of deprivation and the broadening of choice. According to them deprivation embraces a broad spectrum of ideas such as hunger, illiteracy, illness and poor health, powerlessness, voicelessness, insecurity, and lack of access to basic infrastructure. From the foregoing development can be defined as a term which integrates the increasing expansion of the following variables: economic, social, political, technological and cultural access of an individual or society with respect to the various indices that foster existence and good life.

Sustainable peace is defined by blogica.columbia.edu>2021/11/01 as existing in a state where the policy of using conflict, oppression and violence to solve problem is so low while the policy of using cooperation, and collaboration in problem-solving is emphasized as a tool of fostering social control and justice

According to able.nn.org the term relates to “a goal and a process to build a common user of a society that ensures that the needs of all segments of the people are taken into account. It encompasses action aimed at providing the analysis of the outbreak, escalation and impacts of conflict with a view of addressing root causes and ensuring national reconciliation. It is a developmental process that advocates that enthrone enduring peace in a society is a shared task and responsibility that needs to be fulfilled by the government and all other national stakeholders.

According to Cedric (2018) while citing UN Agenda 2030 states that there can be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development. Most importantly the above concept seeks to underscore the need to foster peaceful, just and inclusive societies within an environment freed from fear and violence. According to unwomen.org (2016) building and sustaining peace is basically “a goal and a process with activities aimed at the prevention of conflict grounded by a people centered approach of the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development through the creation of societies that sheds off ugly laws that promotes injustice and double standards. The above concept therefore refers to the building of synergy between the various levels of society with a view to enthrone and perpetuating harmonious and just relationships.

Restructuring: According to <https://www.definition.net> >restr... refers to a corporate management term which is concerned with reorganizing the legal, ownership, operational, or other structure of an institution or company with a

view to making it more productive and profitable. It defines same as the process of evolving better organization for the purpose of meeting present needs. The Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English online defines the word as the change effected in the way in which something such as government, business or a system is organized.

Restructuring has assumed a front burner position in today's national discourse. However while it has continued to attract variegated meanings and definitions among scholars from various disciplines some very prominent political actors in our national history have attempted to add their views on the meaning of the above concept. According to General Ibrahim Babangida, the former military head of state posits that it is a term that seeks to advocate for the devolution of powers to the states so as to make the central or federal government less overbearing and excessively overbearing. Besides he avers that it has to do with tinkering with our constitution to accommodate new thoughts that will make our unity and strength more fortified. The former Vice President, Atiku Abubakar, The word refers to the reconstruction or reconfiguration of the structural framework that gives direction to our national political, economic and cultural destiny and development. It is the evolution of a new roadmap that would help to usher in a truly united Nigeria where no tribe or group of the various nationalities that make up nation is made to assume a position of unusual advantage or dominion over others.

Political Restructuring: According to Nwafor-Orizu (2018) the major area of concern that Nigeria needs restructuring is in political domain. Their above submission was predicated on the fact that the philosophy that drives every state with regards to power configuration and the control of their national resources are rooted in their political structure. Furthermore they aver that there is an inevitable cog in the will of political development in Nigeria that has continued to derail all efforts to move our nation forward. Besides while the country is made up numerous ethno-tribal groups there has been increasing agitations for equality of access to political power from several of these groups as the nation currently appears to be run as a mono-tribal state at the grave expense of the marginalized ones. Unfortunately because political leadership has remained in the hands of Hausa-Fulani for years every effort to dialogue for a better Nigeria where justice, equity and fairness instead of religious and tribal sentiments should reign has always been seen by those holding majority of Nigerian in subjugation and slavery as a call for destroying the entity called Nigeria. The result has been to resort to use of military power either through government sponsored militia or federal might to crush those opposed to dictatorial and undemocratic style of leadership. It is against this backdrop that

our nation has not known peace even after more than fifty years of gaining her own independence. While it is true that the British bequeathed to us a faulty political arrangement after independence in 1960 that has made it impossible for us to operate as one nation with common destiny we cannot continue to blame our colonial masters for our present distress. Those who have power today especially the Fulani tribe in Nigeria should know that absolute power belongs to God Almighty and those who falsely assume that they will rule over their fellow men forever should know that they are living in fool's paradise as it is only God that can rule forever. Christological truth captured the above truth when it states in Mathew 6 :13 *inter alia* 'Thine is the kingdom forever and ever'. In the Book of Psalms 62:2 the Holy Scriptures corroborates the above view when it states that Power belongs to God. By this it implies that it is only God that has finality of rule over all.

Political restructuring has been defined by Nwafor-Orizu (2019) as the systemic reform and reorganization of the existing political structure on with emphasis on the nature of governance and resource control. Equally Ahmed, Norafidah & Knocks (2017) on the own states that it has to do with the reconfiguration of the country to ensure that there is devolution powers to the federating such that it reflects globally standards. The above concept in the context therefore to the re-engineering of political landscape of the to ensure there is balance of powers among the various nationalities both at the governmental and economic affairs of the nation. Awolowo(2011) and Ako(2011) puts this above view pointedly when they submit that it has to do with giving each federating unit in a nation the opportunity of taking charge over their human and material resources. What this means is that restructuring as it concerns politics in Nigeria must address the issue of resource control so as to evolve equity, fairness, accountability ,transparency and competitiveness in the running of government and the economy. It is in the light of gross abuse of governance that has no respect for equity, fairness ,accountability, transparency and competitiveness that has led to unending agitation for restructuring and resource control in Nigeria. Besides such political restructuring is the foundation that must be put in place to provide a level play ground for multi-cultural and multi- religious nation like Nigeria to allow a truly democratic society to thrive.

Democratic nation like USA, has remained both a political and economic world power because they run government whose political structure secures the rights of all in spite of being a highly multi-racial, multi-religious and multi-cultural nation. Such national outlook invariably becomes a formidable environment that allows intellectual, scientific, technological, economic and

religious development to thrive without being manipulated to satisfy the selfish political, religious or ethnic interests of political leadership at the expense of the majority of the citizenry. What this means is that nations begin to develop in the actual context of development when they get it right politically. Unfortunately in Nigeria the sets of crisis that have led to deaths of hundreds of thousands in recent times coupled with loss of billions of naira worth of property are highly avoidable but for the attitudes of sit-tight autocratic leaders who refuse to allow their citizenry enjoy true democracy. It is against this backdrop of unending oppressive form of governance that deny majority freedom of becoming participants in deciding their economic and political destiny that has made this country a war zone in peace time..This war is manifest by increasing agitations by different ethnic nationalities to break away and form their own nation such as Odua nation by the Yorubas, and Biafra by the Igbos.

Sustainable Development and Peace: To promote sustainable development nations must put in place relevant economic institutions that are grounded on free enterprise .However, Amunnadi (2016:148) posits that economic development cannot exist in vacuum. It must be situated in religious or ethical environment that is driven by core values of social harmony, mutual trust, love,, truth, and community consciousness. Bowyer (2013) corroborates the above view when he submits that there are certain social preconditions that promote economic development. According to him the way a society operates plays an important role in determining the level of her prosperity. Furthermore he states that such prosperity is largely dependent on the culture of the people which according to him is driven by religion in most parts of the world .Hence he submits that religion drives culture and culture drives social forms and social forms drives development. Unfortunately Nigeria has continued to be led by Islamic religious fundamentalist whose only stock in trade is religious fanaticism. An ideology that has turned the nation to the poverty capital of the world as well as the headquarter for Fulani Herdsmen and Boko Haram insurgents both of which have been recognized globally as occupying top rank among the most deadly terrorists organizations in the world. Omomia (2015) puts the above view pointedly when he avers that even though the country has witnessed myriads of socio political challenges since 1960 when it gained independence the most notable among these is religious fanaticism and security.. Besides Gwamna (2011) as cited in Omomia (2015) states that terrorism has become the only language being employed by the political class in Nigeria to further their selfish religious, political, and economic interests.

Restructuring for enthronement of sustainable development in Nigeria must therefore address the negative use of religion to destroy national cohesion, peace and justice. In other words the nation must be reconfigured to put in place socio political environment that fosters life capacities or moral values that birth healthy societies where existence, survival and freedom to exploits ones potential maximally is unfettered by sectional ,religious or tribal prejudice. This is most imperative as peace which is the foundation for national survival and development connotes the idea of cordiality, harmony, justice, wholeness and righteousness which unfortunately appears to be lacking in contemporary Nigerian society .There is the need of enthroning true peace in the nation as it is the ground norm on which highly developed nations of the world are built. Peace in the global context is not limited to the building of highly sophisticated military power . Rather it also involves the idea of dismantling of the structural framework or institutions that fosters injustice, oppression, and all kinds of subjugations. It relates to the overhauling of social, political, economic, religious and cultural institutions that only fosters cosmetic peace. What this means is that our society must not only exist in name as a nation it must also do so in character by aligning herself with global standards of running modern nation states. Abah (2000 :12) is in agreement to the above view when he submits that for developing nations to bring about greater development that align with the status of advanced nations they must learn to connect with their ways of doing things. Restructuring in this context should therefore be seen as a roadmap through which this country should embrace the modern template of evolving a sustainable and progressive nation state. This implies the re-engineering of our constitution to reflect true federalism and the will of all Nigerians as against that of the military boys who have bequeathed to the nation a charter that imposes the will of minority Hausa –Fulani to the rest of the nation consisting of more than 200 ethnic nationalities .It has to do with the rebranding of our nation so as to allow tribes, regions or ethnic nationalities both to have their say and their way in the running of the nation in all areas her political, economical, cultural and religious endeavours. Simply put it is a proposition for the emergence of a nation where everyone can call his nation because it is grounded on justice, equity and inclusiveness.

Conclusion: This paper has identified that though Nigeria has gained independent as a nation since 1960 it is still plagued by myriads of challenges that put her continued survival as a sovereign state under great test. However, the work submits that religious fanaticism and security challenges rank topmost among the above threats to the continued existence of the country. It submitted that religious fanaticism is being used as a cover to unleash great terror on the nation through Boko Haram and Fulani Herdsmen insurgents

with a view to promoting selfish interests. It observes that the above development has given birth to all kinds of agitations for the disintegration of the country into different nation states. It is against this backdrop that the study observes that political restructuring is the critical need of the nation if she must be connected to sustainable peace and development. Equally it identified that though national culture plays a significant role on whether a nation becomes developed or not such culture for most nations are often defined by religion. Political restructuring must therefore be grounded on positive aspects of religion so as to foster social harmony, mutual trust and community consciousness.

Recommendations: The following recommendations were made as possible ways of moving Nigeria forward with respect to the entrenching of sustainable peace and development through restructuring..

1) Political restructuring should involve the writing of a new constitution which should be acceptable to majority of Nigerians. This means total rejection of the 1999 military imposed constitution which should not make room for partial amendment of same.

2) Political restructuring must address wealth re-distribution that ensures that productivity ,honesty .and accountability are the roadmap for acquiring wealth as against the present trend whereby political office and political power is the passport for diverting the common wealth as personal wealth of minority political leadership. It should demonetize politics by ensuring that political offices and positions are held as part time jobs. This will help to release the outrageous amount of money paid to unproductive full-time politicians which often are in their trillions of naira into the hands of the citizenry for productive ventures that would drive investment and reduce poverty and youth restiveness.

3) Political restructuring must insist on the enthroning of a truly secular state where religion is separated from the state. For religion to serve as a positive force of moderating culture and fostering peace and development it must not be employed as a tool of divide and rule. No religion must be elevated above others as long as such religion promotes values that are in accord with universal ethics and morality. What this means is that when a religious group becomes a threat to the fundamental human rights of the citizenry the government must sanction it irrespective of whether those in political leadership belong to such body or not.

4) Restructuring must be grounded on resource control and that means that people, communities, states or regions on whose territory resources or wealth are generated must have a major stake in the appropriations of those wealth. The current trend where oil wealth is generated in southern Nigeria but is mostly used to develop northern Nigeria does not make for peace or sustainable development.

5) Restructuring must ensure that Nigeria is run as federation of nation states who relates to one another on equality before the law. A truly restructured Nigerian nation must put in place an independent judiciary that respects the equality of all before the law.

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