

MAXIMIZING THE POTENTIALS OF NIGERIA FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT: POLITICAL RESTRUCTURING AND RELIGIOUS PLURALISM AS KEY

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Abstract

Over five decades after Independence, Nigeria has failed to live up to her early promise of accelerated National Development, to 'soon' become a first world country and world economic power. The country has not lived up to her enormous potential – and that is put it mildly. More frankly, Nigeria is a failing enterprise. Many factors can be considered responsible for the underdeveloped state of the nation, but chief amongst them are identified in this paper: (i) the nation's dysfunctional 'federal' structure (a unitary system bequeathed to the country in federal garb – bequest from her many years of military incursion on civil governance); and (ii) mismanagement of the country's plural composition and diversity, especially on the Religious Plane. The paper traces a historical sketch of attempts at restructuring Nigeria, assessing level of impact/effect on National Development. In this regard, this study lends voice to the current discourse on political restructuring as needful to make Nigeria work again. Major factors that militate against the country's development are discussed with views put forward on how restructuring could suffice as panacea to them. Practical engagement of diversity through pluralism – religious pluralism – is also discussed as vital to developmental resuscitation of Nigeria. The Methodology adopted is historical and critical analysis. Data collection was from secondary sources and the analysis was descriptive and explanatory.

Key Words: Political Restructuring, National Development, Religious Pluralism, Federalism, Diversity

Introduction

A wide gulf exists between the vast potentials of Nigeria for development, and the nation's reality of crippling poverty and low quality of living, which are markers of debilitating underdevelopment. The diversity of the country which should ideally benefit her has unfortunately become a snare, puncturing its usefulness to national development. This paper aims to prove as credible the current agitations for a review of the federal structure of the country, in order to bring about fiscal federalism and work out a progressively functional federalism. This is necessary to engender development, because a lot of factors that ail the country and impede its development today are quite resolvable if the right structures are in place.

The study also extrapolates on the essentiality of religious pluralism to achieving a cohesively functioning society, that can grow together. Due to the nation's great heterogeneity, uniformity is of course not the pursuit. However, there is great need for unity in purpose and direction towards development, across all divides of interest. Analysing the framework of Nigeria reveals that, though a secular state, the country is really responsive to religious stimuli. In Nigeria, to pursue a truly plural society outside the ambits of religious expressions, would not be so fruitful. Thus, this paper sees religious pluralism as the starting point for effective development.

in the nation. This is based on the assumption that when a Christian (for instance) can agree with those of same faith, without respect to tribe or tongue, doctrine or creed, then inter-faith [and consequent societal] pluralism becomes less idealistic and more realizable.

Together with political restructuring, this study avers that pluralism pursued in and through religion is key to positively repositioning Nigeria on the path of development. The methodology employed for the study is historical and critical analysis, and data was gathered mainly from secondary sources and analysed descriptively and explanatorily.

Conceptual Clarification

For the purpose of this study, the following concepts are succinctly clarified below to provide meaning and offer perspective on their specific use in the ensuing discourse.

Pluralism

Drawing from the Encyclopaedia Britannica, pluralism constitutes “the view that in liberal democracies power is (or should be) dispersed among a variety of economic and ideological pressure groups and is not (or should not be) held by a single elite or group of elites. Pluralism assumes that diversity is beneficial to society and that autonomy should be enjoyed by disparate functional or cultural groups within a society, including religious groups, trade unions, professional organizations, and ethnic minorities.” Beyond tolerance, pluralism here refers to a belief in diversity and the energetic engagement of same (Eck, 2006). Religious pluralism, for the purpose of this study, is pluralism pursued in and through Religion.

Diversity

Diversity is simply difference and observable heterogeneity (Okonkwo, 2018) in all ways conceivable – ideological, philosophical, political, religious, ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and so on.

National Development

National development may be described as the holistic and collective growth and development of a country, socially, economically, politically, industrially, technologically, in infrastructure and other areas. There are many global indices for measuring a country's development, but Lawal and Oluwatoyin (2011) aver that a nation should basically be considered developed only when it is able to provide qualitative life for her citizenry. True national development must reflect on average societal standard of living, peace levels and so on. It must not end with just statistical evaluations.

Political Restructuring

The idea of political restructuring set forth in this study is that of reworking the structural set up of the Nigerian federation to make it more functional. Full discourse on the concept in context can be gleaned in text, along the lines of having a structure that practically reflect the ideals of a truly federal state – fiscal federalism, devolution of powers, local or regional resource control, amongst other things.

Federalism

Federalism ‘is a system of government in which state power is constitutionally divided between a central governing authority and constituent political units (Obidinma and Obidinma, 2015, p.147).’ Olu-Adeyemi (2017, p.40) defines it as a “mixed or compound mode of government, combining a general government (the central or 'federal' government) with sub regional governments in a single political system. Its distinctive feature...is a relationship of parity between the two levels of government established.”

The History of Restructuring in Nigeria and its Impact on National Development

The call for political restructuring of Nigeria, as a failing enterprise, has met with unfeigned criticism and opposition in some political and intellectual quarters. Those, such as Adeniran (2017) and Ikemitang (2017), against the idea have posited that Nigeria, since the First Republic, has made several attempts at restructuring with little or no progress recorded in terms of effect on the development of the country. It becomes imperative, so, to trace the historical precedents of restructuring in Nigeria and assess the level of its impact on national development so far.

The first major instance of structural change to the then geographical expression now known as Nigeria, is observed in the 1914 amalgamation of the Protectorate of Northern Nigeria with the Colony and Protectorate of Southern Nigeria, by the British Colonialists. *This was preceded by the merging of the Colony of Lagos with the Protectorate of Southern Nigeria on May 1, 1906 (Anyaele, 2003).* What happened in 1914 was a sociological blunder to say the least; an uneven and potholed contraption that was never in 'Nigeria's' interest and has, down the years, proven to be the starting point of the country's misery. Trying to assess what impact this particular effort had on the development of Nigeria would be a fruitless pursuit. From the plotting table, it was only aimed at achieving exploitative ease and administrative convenience for Britain; and so any [if at all] side-effect on Nigeria's development is just that – a side effect.

After 1914 came the pre-colonial attempts at constitutional re-arrangements of Nigeria [amongst other things]. Hugh Clifford in 1922 served the earliest stencils of official polarization of Nigeria into North and South; Arthur Richards in 1946 did well to bring North and South back together, laying foundations for Nationalism which was important for the country's drive towards self-government, and Unity which is vital for National development. Macpherson in 1951 gave the first template of regionalism, while Oliver Lyttleton in 1954 introduced federalism by granting the regions true legislative powers, though it did not allay the fears of smaller regions concerning the large North's geographical and population advantage (Anyaele, 2003). The Independence Constitution of 1960 was but a minor improvement on the Lyttleton constitution, but from then onwards, at least, the country's developmental destiny was in her own hands.

After the creation of the Mid-Western region in 1962, nearly every other change to Nigeria's structure and organization before 1999 was a Military initiation. During the military regimes, efforts at restructuring largely mirrored mere state creation, with ulterior motives. Omatseye (2017, para. 7) points out that:

...during the civil war, General Gowon also broke Nigeria into 12 states. Some say the real reason was to immolate Biafra for the greater good of one Nigeria. With Rivers State created, two things were accomplished. Gowon ossified Biafra as a landlocked state without access to water and protein, which made it vulnerable to mass starvation. Two, it could lay no legitimate claim to oil as a resource base to prosecute the war. Again, restructuring happened out of the force of circumstance. Shall we not say it was restructuring as opportunism? If we wanted such other excuse, we did not have them for Murtala Muhammed's step in breaking us into 19 states or Babangida into the present structure. But to say that restructuring is about creation of states is an error.

The abolishment of regional governments, multiplicity of states creation, 'constitutional' accrual of nearly all state functions, powers and control of resources to the centre, amongst other evidences, are legacies from the years of military involvement in Nigeria's governance. Today, the federal structure of Nigeria is, in practise, not far from a Unitary set up. Tinubu (2011, para.22), sums it up thus:

After the civil war, the military sought to re-fashion Nigeria in its own centralist image. They thought the way to manage the country's diversity was to bury it under the suffocating control of an all-powerful centre. By imposing a unitary state on a naturally federal society, the military sought to substitute a chaotic diversity with imposed uniformity, which they thought was necessary to promote order and development. Unfortunately, all the supposedly democratic dispensations since the civil war have substantially mirrored the over-centralized and unduly bureaucratic military political cultures. The consequence of this rigid model retards pluralism rather than advancing it...

The argument of those against political restructuring are largely hinged on the failure of historical antecedents, but they are missing the point. Attempts have not been as impactful on national development as one would expect. True. But the reasons for this are equally obvious: they were restructuring efforts engineered for the wrong reasons (exploitative, selfish, economic and military interests – explicating why the present unitary colour of the Nigerian federation); and they were mostly restructuring efforts handled by the wrong people (the colonialists and the military).

Efforts at restructuring Nigeria in the spirit of true federalism from 1954 until the end of the first republic (1967) did yield great developmental dividends for the country's Regions. During the first republic, Nigeria operated a true federalist system with three regions – Western, Eastern and Northern, with a fourth added in 1962: Mid-Western region. These regions served as federating units with each being quite semi-autonomous, and the giant stride achievements recorded by these regions during the period are worthy of note. The fabled groundnut pyramids of the Northern Region speak volumes about a people who knew the path to sustainable development and self-sustenance through agriculture and hard work, thus, leading to massive infrastructural development in the region with a cumulative effect on the nation's well-being (Akinade, 1978). In the Western region, Cocoa production was a major foreign exchange earner for Nigeria in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. The country was the second largest producer of cocoa in the world (Ikemitang, 2017). Notably, the result of a functional federal structure was not different in the Eastern Region where palm produce and other cash crops served as the spine of its economy and a major source of forex earnings for the country (Lawal and Oluwatoyin, 2011). There is no logical reason why Nigeria should not give structural modification a shot now, the right way and for the right reasons – reworking Nigeria to develop to her fullest potential.

The Emphasis: Political Restructuring for National Development

It is a gnawing and imminent inevitability that Nigeria needs 'change', structure-wise, for development. Governor Okezie Ikpeazu of Abia rightly avers that 'Nigeria is at the brink and we must make or break; we must restructure to enable us begin the reconstruction of a completely deconstructed nation' Ikpeazu (2018, para. 6). A federal republic wherein the component units suck up to the centre every month end for upkeep duly requires re-examination. Okonkwo (2018), Olu-Adeyemi (2017), Farabiyi (2017) and Okafor (2018) put forward much needed questions as to why the citizenry must look to or take orders from a detached central government for such basic things as policing, business incorporation, vehicle and driving license, power, rail transport, legislation on workers' minimum wage, mining and exploitation of natural resources, and even roads. The dysfunctional system of Revenue control and resource sharing demands mention, as it remains the primal reason for the snail-paced development of many states in the federation and low-level effectiveness of governance at the grassroots (Okonkwo, 2018).

The blaring din and calls for structural reworking of Nigeria did not begin yesterday and even though it now constitutes a vital factor in the approaching general elections, it cannot be dismissed as merely a tool in the hands of desperate politicians to put themselves in

a position of improved relevance ahead of the polls (Adeniran, 2017; and Ogundipe, 2018). Even as the presidency reiterated the enormous promise and vast possibilities of Nigeria during the recent 58th independence commemoration anniversary, one truth that stands out is that the country has yet to be liberated from the shackles of structural fetters that impede development. The extant emphasis is here reiterated: unbundle Nigeria and she stands on the sail of remarkable growth, streaming upwards from the units to the centre.

Rather than query the necessity of restructuring, therefore, the question that arises in response at this point is – like biblical Mary would put it – “how shall this thing be?” The answer would be ‘restructuring’ for Nigeria? What shape would it take? Streams of discourse on the subject have flown in from multifarious tangents of opinion. As many sentiments as objections have erupted. Intellectuals of the economic extraction, like Soludo (2018, p. 11), are mostly of the view that *what Nigeria needs is economic restructuring, not political restructuring*. As Kale (2016) put it: *“...the overarching case for restructuring Nigeria is economic: restructuring should provide the necessary foundational meta-level socio-political governance architecture for the emergence and sustainability of a secured and prosperous post-oil economy.”* Kale (2016) and Ikemitang (2017) concur with the above point. The recent clamour for a restructured Nigeria has largely taken the approach of negotiating a new Constitution, with sufficient regional/state autonomy within the federation (Amadi, Eke, Nwoko and Inyikalum, 2017); others, however, envisage a reversion to the regional system of the first Republic (Adeniran, 2017). This underlines the shared understanding amongst all interest groups that for Nigeria, the basic implication of restructuring is to rework the present federal structure to practically reflect the ideals of a truly federal state – *first federalism*, devolution of powers, local or regional resource control, amongst other things.

For a holistic breakdown of the expected ideals of a modified federal structure for Nigeria, perspective will be taken from the recently released report of findings and recommendations on restructuring, by the true federalism committee of the ruling Progressive Congress (APC). The committee on true federalism was constituted by the ruling party ‘...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”.’ (APC True Federalism Committee, 2018, p.4).

The recommendations of the APC committee are closely similar to those of the National Confab in 2014, thus mirroring the expectations of Nigerians on restructuring. They include, *inter alia*: (i). Fiscal federalism; (ii). Control of natural resources by host states (including crude oil and solid minerals, except when offshore) with taxes or royalties to be paid to the federal tier; (iii). Devolution of powers and unbundling of the exclusive legislative list to make for more items on the concurrent, including policing, prisons, Incorporation of businesses, railways, stamp duties, Labour, public holidays etc.; (iv). Upward review of the current revenue sharing formula to favour the states, as against the inimical ratio of 52 percent, 26.72 percent, and 20.60 percent for federal, state and local governments respectively, a formula which the National Assembly decried earlier this year as illegal and unconstitutional (Ogundipe, 2018); (v). Upward review of the existing derivation formula from the current 13 percent to at least a 15 percent benchmark; (vi). Abolishment of the Local Governments as a third tier of Government, which is not applicable in ideal federal structure. Every state or region should be free to devise its own system of local administration suited to its unique peculiarities; (vii). Amendment of the compulsive injunction in Section 147 of the constitution mandating the President to appoint federal ministers from every state to promote merit and competence above mediocrity; (viii). Amendment of the constitution to allow for general referendum on critical issues of national or state concern, as is applicable in modern democracy; and so forth (APC True Federalism Committee, 2018).

While it cannot be denied that the report and recommendations of the ruling party's committee on true federalism are quite altruistic and closely mirrors the Nigerian case for restructuring, they must be taken with cautious optimism as doubts persist over the party's political will to pursue the cause to its conclusive end. Pessimism is understandable, considering the publicly aired stance of many of the party's chieftains on the subject. It seems that President Muhammadu Buhari shunned the idea of restructuring in his 2018 New Year address to the nation, in which he declared "when all the aggregates of nationwide opinions are considered, my firm view is that our problems are more to do with process than structure." The Kaduna state governor, Nasir El-Rufai who chaired the APC committee had in an interview described Nigerians who are clamouring for restructuring as "political opportunists and irresponsible people" (Nwaneri, 2018). Minister of Information and Culture, Alhaji Lai Mohammed on June 29, 2017 granted an interview to Radio Nigeria on June 9, 2017, stating that restructuring is not a priority of the President Buhari; while the Borno State Governor, Kashim Shettima is quoted to have said "to hell with restructuring" (Ogundipe, 2018). Interestingly, Senator Shehu Sani of the APC (Kaduna Central), has dismissed the report as a political gimmick, a campaign document for the 2019 elections not worthy of the paper it was written on (Nwaneri, 2018).

The sincerity of the ruling party in its restructuring drive is questionable, non the least in its timing; but the committee's report closely reflects Nigerians expectations, which must be considered a critical factor ahead of the 2019 polls. Whereas the incumbent President is clearly not for it, his main opponent in the upcoming polls – Atiku Abubakar of the Peoples' Democratic Party – has articulated restructuring as one of his cardinal emphases. It must be said that no government can suppress this reverberation from every corner in Nigeria for much longer. Okonkwo (2018) describes it as trying to press down a spring, a vociferously rushing one for that matter. Those who oppose restructuring are inadvertently and unwittingly brewing and championing revolution; or perhaps another bloody secessionist war – the agitation for self-determination by various groups in the country is still rife.

Resistance to modifying Nigeria's structure has largely been on two grounds. The first is discussed in the preceding section, the second is 'the fear of the unknown.' To that, echoing the words of Gbadegesin (2017, para.10) is necessary - "restructuring is not an irrational pursuit of danger... a demand for the return to a principle of governance that worked well in the past cannot be considered irrational. Besides, the only danger is to continue the path that has not worked for the good of the people."

Potentials for National Development

It will take more than a few words on ink to detail the enormous potentials and possibilities imbued in Nigeria that, if harnessed, would launch her unto developing into a global destination point. The fact that the nation's agricultural capacity alone can sustain the her (if tapped into) is well known. Recent history evidences that. In terms of human resources, few countries in the world match Nigerians' raw giftedness, but an underwhelming education system and non-enabling environment has resulted in continued human capital flight. Also, nature bestows on Nigeria a beautiful landscape and features that could make for a thriving tourist hub. Moreover, natural resources are not in want. Beyond oil lies the country's unreached solid mineral deposits. Nweze (2016) and Omoh (2015) bespeak the nation's great potential in the mining sector, emphasising the need to focus on how to deepen the sector, which can create needed jobs and social infrastructure for national development. "Nigeria has the capacity to generate at least N5 trillion yearly from the mining sector and export of its vast solid mineral deposits" (Nweze, 2016, para.1).

Crucially, the diversity and plural composition of the country represents her greatest potential for development, even more than the palpable blessings. Nigeria is heterogeneously

composed, culturally, religiously, historically and otherwise. The actual component units of the federation are not the arbitrarily framed 36 states, but the over 371 ethnic groups and interests that seek prominence and possible control of the centre, in the current malfunctioning structure. This has given rise to multi conflicts of interest, sometimes violent. The nation's diversity need not be occasion for conflict; it rather should be her greatest resource for development because 371 ethnic groups imply 371 options to choose from (Okonkwo, 2018); it represents 371 unique traits and specialties that can be accessed for development.

Diversity is not the problem; mismanagement of the diversity is. "In the urge to create political unity the tendency has been to negate ethnic, regional and cultural diversities rather than recognize them as building blocks in the construction of a civil society. The result has been often a façade of seeming unity at the cost of many unsettled wounds and denied identities." (Mustapha in Momoh, 2003, p.168). The main focus here is to x-ray how an effective engagement of Nigeria's diversity through pluralism (especially religious) can help the nation reap the dividends of diversity towards development.

Major Hindrances vis-à-vis Restructuring

One could easily observe that the limitations and hindrances to Nigeria's socio-economic development are ominously deep, nearly cancelling out every possibility of progress. Ethnic loyalty; mediocre leadership; corruption; federal feet-dragging; lack of diversification; political apathy and distrust of the political system; low-level technological education; and epileptic power supply constitute the hindrances, challenges and difficulties militating against the country's socio-economic development. Others include weak infrastructure; high crime rate; terrorism and insecurity; Youth restiveness due to joblessness and unemployment; religious conflicts and ethnic clashes; etc. The above are factors that have derailed the nation's drive toward development. The structural deficiency of the federation can be called into question for at least many, if not all of these observed problems.

Nigeria has grown to become a hugely import dependent economy, due to the narrow economic base of the country. At the detriment of other resources, the nation presently relies on oil for close to 90% of her foreign exchange earnings (Ekpendu, Daudu and Ekpendu, 2016). Agriculture and the industrial sector have over the years been relegated in view of the booming (though now reclining) crude. Successive federal governments, since the oil boom, have not shown the needed political will and readiness to diversify the nation's economy on outside paper, and have been unyielding to calls to cede control of resources to states which would be more proactive in maximizing local resources available to them, besides oil.

Presently, the nation is under the siege of terror in the North-East (Boko-Haram) as well as the Middle-belt in form of inhumane killings by terrorists masquerading as herdsmen. Militancy in the Niger – Delta region, meanwhile, is yet to abate. Nowadays, one would almost expect daily news on one form of religious conflict, violence or the other. Terrorism and insecurity in the land have in no small way scared away Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) which are vital for the economic development of third-world countries like Nigeria. So, effective policing would go a long way to promote effectiveness of security measures, reason being that no one can police an Igbo man, for instance, better than an Igbo man. No one understands the tendencies of a Northerner better than a fellow Northerner. To have a Commissioner of Police from Adamawa state in charge of Enugu state or a Divisional Police Officer from Kaduna manning the Nsukka division is to jettison effectiveness in protection of lives and properties. Why? Non-natives simply do not comprehend or have a firm grasp on the physical, psychological and even ideological terrain of the people and locale to be policed, their worldviews, beliefs and perceptions and tendencies that explain certain patterns of behaviour, and their vulnerabilities as well as. Even under the current policing architecture

component units of the governments mostly rely on local security networks such as neighbourhood watch for effective intelligence gathering and grassroots security.

On leadership, Chinua Achebe in his book 'The trouble with Nigeria' rightly diagnoses that Nigeria's chief problem is simply and squarely leadership, or rather the lack of leadership. For him, nothing else is wrong with Nigeria save leadership. Nigeria languishes below every conceivable index of measuring poverty today, despite her great wealth. Poor and senseless leadership that is scarcely accountable to the people is culpable for this. In a diverse set up like Nigeria's, distinct ethnic and other interest groups have their unique expectations from an all-controlling federal government (Adetoye, 2016 and Okonkwo, 2018), which even sincere leadership would find difficult to meet. Devolution of powers and essential functions to states would make leadership focus more objective and governance impactful at the grassroots, improve political participation of the citizenry from the ranks and thereby enhance accountability and probity of elected leaders by the electorate.

The myriad of challenges standing in the nation's path to socio-economic development demand that at this time the country be unbundled and the power of diversity unleashed to drive holistic development. Taking cue from the United States, every part of Nigeria can have something unique it thrives on and is known for. "For instance, if you are talking of the automobile industry in the United states, you look towards Michigan. If you are talking aircraft manufacture, you look towards Florida..." (Okonkwo, 2018, p.29). A restructured Nigeria would provide for self-sufficient industrial economies at state/regional scales, thriving on established as well as inherent but untapped areas of strength. Lagos is already the hub of showbiz and entertainment for all of Africa, coupled with its industrial density. The South Eastern states can finally drive their industrial development with concentrated industries in the Anambra area, Abia and Imo with lighter industries and the Ebonyi and Enugu regions on an Agro-based Industry, and so on (Okonkwo, 2018).

It is admissible that political restructuring and devolution of powers do not resolve all of Nigeria's developmental challenges "but it will help to reposition our mindsets as we generate new ideas and initiatives that would make our union worthwhile" (Tinubu, 2011, para.12). Other factors like visionary and sincere leadership, competent and skilled labour, education, technological interest and development, etc. remain needed to drive national development. Basically, however, the fervent discourse on the need to rework the nation's existing structure illuminates Nigerians' agreement on unity in diversity. But the need to revamp and strengthen structures subsists, so that the union can be more functional on comparative advantages, by maximizing the gains of diversity through its active engagement, while other factors that should make development possible and sustainable are engaged.

Religious Pluralism, Restructuring and National Development

The thrust here is on how pluralism can refocus religion in Nigeria to play its much needed role in nation building. Ideas on how restructuring could suffice as beneficial to repositioning religion towards impacting on socio-economic development at regional levels are also proffered.

The non-uniform mix of Nigeria necessitates a position from which the diversity of the nation can be coordinated, synchronised and harmonised for development. Pluralism, which is active engagement of diversity (Eck, 2006), presents such. The nation's professed pluralism is presently sardonic; it at best reflects diversity in ways which do not make her plural. To be plural is to be cohesively integrated, though with diverse parts. Nigeria has diverse parts but is far from being integrated.

Straight to the point, religion presents the best platform to engage diversity in the Nigerian story, and it is not just because religious pluralism is what readily comes to mind

which the axiom that 'religion is the soul of society' is unquestionably acceptable. It also be the sole of the country's society. The official status of being a secular state does all belly the inherent religiosity of the nation – government sponsors citizens on pilgrimage from public purse. *Ipsa facto*, religious undertones, premeditations and sus becloud nearly everything in the world's most populous black nation – politics, law, ec (heard of Islamic banking?), agitation, violence, terrorism, and even under-develop certain ultra-conservative parts of the country as illuminated by Ituma, Nche and Ig (2013).

Indeed, every other pluralistic expression in Nigeria can and should find direct receive perspective from her organised faiths, if effectuality is envisaged. Ethnic, political, ideological and other areas of diversity can be best synchronized for a fun blend of society that makes development possible, through the churches and mosques as the basic roles of development for nation building and development as well-articulated. (Ibenwa (2014), Sampson (2014), Sulaimon (2012) and Ojoajagwu (2014) sub relevance, the need abides for practical pluralism on the religious plane to drive develop especially in a society where religious influence is high. Religious pluralism begin tolerance, thrives on dialogue and active seeking of understanding across lines of diff (Eck, 2006), and produces a working cohesion for collective development. It can be on in Nigeria via the channels of intra, inter and extra – religious pluralism.

Intra-religious pluralism is needful to the extent of intra-religious schism religions in Nigeria, especially the foremost two. The differences between religions are over pronounced in negligence of the dicey situation within them. The rate of tribal pre doctrinal and philosophical differences, factionalism, leadership tussles and splits church today, for instance, is alarming to say the least. More active seeking of underst across lines of difference is needed within. Inter-religious pluralism, on the second ha the crux. There is freedom of worship in Nigeria and a constitutional air of tolerance, does not make the nation religiously plural, factoring the above historical analys definitions into context. Dialogue, at the least, is the starting point for pluralism, and just dialogue for peace or peaceful coexistence – that is tolerance at its very best dialogue to find those common grounds and planes on which diverse religious expre (and ethno-cultural diversities consequently) will not just co-exist but co-thrive; n survive together as components of a country, but succeed, improve, develop, and ma potential together as one country, with diverse but complementary parts. Towards economic development, the willingness of public and private sector leaders to empl work with the most competent hands without bias to religious cum ethnic-cultural back will serve as a marker of pluralism being effectual. This will inject the skilled man needed in the Nigerian economy and arrest human capital flight.

On extra-religious pluralism, a mere acknowledgement and documentation nation's ethno-cultural diversity is not pluralism. Granted, uniformity is not realistic unity in purpose and direction toward development must not remain idealistic Dialogue, shared understanding and consciously de-emphasising the polarising factors union should make it possible. Historically, culture is progressive and evolves; while re has historically proven to be a central purveyor of said cultural evolvment of a s (Ogunrinade and Ogbole, 2013). The Nigerian cultures can go forward cohesively religion is crucial to that.

Finally, to pursue pluralism, it is needful to advocate restructuring, to bring or best in each part for the good of the whole. Drawing on the Encyclopaedia Britan pluralism constitutes "the view that in liberal democracies power is (or should be) disp among a variety of economic and ideological pressure groups and is not (or should n held by a single elite or group of elites. Pluralism assumes that diversity is benefic

society and that autonomy should be enjoyed by disparate functional or cultural groups within a society, including religious groups, trade unions, professional organizations, and ethnic minorities." In a restructured country of the positivists' dreams, it is rational to expect that operating from a position of great autonomy, component units of the federation can finally work towards a 'one Nigeria', with focus shifted from the ugly suspicions that bedevil the jostle for control of the centre. True spirits of nationalism and patriotism can be rapidly developed to fill the void of nationhood, but that will only come about when the only mutual asset of value to the 36 states is no longer [merely] the monthly congregation for uneven allotment of centripetal state resources.

Recommendations

In keeping with the discussions engaged above and the goal of this research paper, the following recommendations are given to provide a pinpoint emphasis on what needs to be done:

1. The federal government of Nigeria needs to begin every necessary legislative and executive process that is required to effectively restructure the country politically, into a truly federal state, on the foundations of fiscal federalism. This is key to socio-economic development.
2. More discourse and dialogue is needed across all boards of diversity interests in Nigeria to find and solidify those grounds upon which the nation's plural composition can be maximized for development.
3. There is need to take more seriously the strategic role and positioning of religion in our national story, and make the most of the opportunity it presents us to truly integrate the country through our active engagement of diversity, driven through intra, inter and extra faith pluralism.

Conclusion

Having evaluated the undermined potentials and possibilities of the nation for socio-economic and other areas of development, it has been established in the course of discourse, through historical and contemporary analysis, that what Nigeria needs at this point is political modification of the presently dud federal structure of the nation. This is in order to unbundle the nation's components and unleash the capacities inherent in her diverse make up, for National Development. Although not sufficient [on their own] to propel Nigeria's holistic development, restructuring and pluralism, especially religious, are explored as key to the nation's development and building. Intra, Inter and extra religious pluralism are advanced as feasible media of energetically engaging diversity, to bring about a working cohesion of the nation's plural components, beginning from the religious and flowing out to ethnic, cultural, economic and other aspects of society.

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