


Religious Pluralism and Political Restructuring: A Way Out of Socio-Political Quagmire in Nigeria

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Abstract

This study advocates for religious pluralism and political restructuring as a necessary condition to resolve unnecessary tension that spells doom for Nigeria. This advocacy is necessitated by the fact that at Independence in 1960, Nigeria was established on the pillar of quasi-federalism, which allowed for regional self-reliance and freedom of worship. However, six years later, it drifted into unitary governance. Since then, there has been a remarkable backwardness in all spheres of Nigeria's national life and an abundant increase in corruption. Moreover, its secularity was compromised by the trickery engraftation of Sharia legal order in the 1999 Constitution. This development ignited distrust and sectarian violence, in the country. Hence, the agitations by groups and individuals for Nigeria's restructuring. A Historical approach was adopted, basically depending on secondary data. It observed that Nigeria's system of governance falls short of true federalism. It recommends devolution of power from the centre to the states.

Keywords: Economic, Political Restructuring, religious Pluralism, Quagmire, Nigeria

Introduction

Nigeria has suffered multifarious problems that threaten the foundation of its co-operate existence. The core issue hinges on its multivariant nature as it is a conglomeration of different kingdoms and nations, with multicultural and multi-religious groups. Each government that comes to power tries to resolve the issue but to no avail. The inability of the leaders to harness these diversities is the bane of Nigeria's unity. The failure of the government to address the issue of religious segregation and political marginalization has increased the agitation for separation. Ethno-religious crises have ravaged the country with grave consequences on the economy and governance. Various institutions are on the verge of collapse and therefore, needs urgent attention. Although ethnicity and religion contribute to the problem that contradicts Nigeria's fundamental premise, religion bears the brunt of the blame. Evidences of religio-cultural prejudice abide in the country. This claim is substantiated by the fact that ethnicity and religion is used as instruments for identification of citizens.

Since ethnicity and religion remain the instruments for the identification of citizens, there has always been a slight bias in favour of the ethnic and religious groups that are in control of power. Their youths are given preference in both job employments and school admittance. The government's nepotism, which is demonstrated by the lopsided appointment in the security services, ministries and parastatals under President Buhari's administration attests to this fact. The disparity in JAMB and Unity Schools' cut-off marks is clear evidence of inequality, inequity, unfairness, and injustices in the Nigeria polity. While challenging the disparity in cut-off marks in the court, Barrister Agbakoba argued that admission inequality in Federal Government Colleges, violates Section 42 of the constitution which prohibits administrative or executive actions by the government that discriminate between Nigerians on grounds of ethnicity, gender, religion and place of origin (Madukwe, 2014).

Consequent upon this nepotistic attitude, Nigeria is suffering a brain drain because of the mass exodus of its citizens from Nigeria to abroad, especially the youths both students and professionals, who are affected by the injustice. As a result of numerous institutions being run by incompetent fellows whose qualifications among other things were majorly their tribe and religion, some of the government's commercial establishments collapsed. Brookings Institute (2019) report, shows Nigeria as “the poverty capital of the world” and therefore, advised Nigerians to change its current trajectory to avoid worst situation where over half of its population will be living in abject poverty by the year 2030. Moreover, Nigeria's unity might hit the rock should things continue like this. The Catholic Archbishop of Kaduna, Peter Jatau cited religion, ethnicity, and politics as the fundamental causes of Nigeria's issues (Today's Challenge Magazine 1992: 3). But the underlying issue remains the enduring religious prejudice that has kept Nigeria divided permanently, which Herbert Macaulay regrettably acknowledged thus, “As Africans, we have been split almost into smithereens by what we call religion in West Africa” (Ody 2000: 7).

Certainly, the two alien religions, Islam and Christianity brought confusion and division. Amalgamating the north and southern protectorates into a single political unit called Nigeria with two rival religions at that time was really asking for trouble as such a structure was not feasible in the developed nations of the Middle East, Europe, and America at the time. No sooner had the nations started amalgamating than they started having sectarian crises because of the superiority mentality reflected in religious doctrines (Asadu 2015). The rejection of self-government by Sardauna-led Northern delegates in 1953, when Nigerians were given the opportunity to determine their fate and future, was therefore not entirely unexpected. The northern Emirs had cautioned the UK based West African Student Union who canvassed for help against colonial rule that “Holding this country together is not possible except by means of the religion of the Prophet. If they want political unity, let them follow our religion” (in Awolowo 1947: 51). The adoption of Sharia legal code in some northern states in 2000, contrary to the Constitution of the Federal republic of Nigeria is a continued struggle of religious supremacy.

This research sets out to: (1) examine the procedure through which Nigeria nation was formed; (2) identify the problems of enduring ethnic and religious prejudice in Nigeria's polity; (3) examine the effects of such problems on the citizens' economy, life, and security; and (4) establish that religious pluralism and political restructuring can resolve the unnecessary tension that spells doom for Nigeria. To achieve these aims, a historical method has been adopted, which draws critically on primary and secondary sources, supplemented with oral materials gathered from some of the laity, priests and bishops in the missionary dioceses.

Clarification of terms

Religious pluralism

Religious pluralism concept does not favour any one religion over another because religious individuality or uniqueness is not a concern. Instead, it argues that since virtue can be found in all religions, they are all good and equally valuable. The issue is not that this theory asserts that all religions are legitimate, but that it rejects the exclusivity of any religion as a means of reaching God. Consequently, it promotes religious tolerance and permits the coexistence of several religions in a particular society. The flexibility of pluralism, despite its propensity to foster syncretism, is what makes religious practice a voluntary act and religious conversion a choice rather than a force (Asadu 2020).

Political Restructuring into Federalism

Political restructuring refers to a reorganization of the nation's political system to enhance its operational advantage and make it more effectively productive. In such an arrangement, governance is embedded in the principles of democracy and is committed to human rights, which encourages religious and cultural pluralism. The study advocates for restructuring with a special interest in *Federalism*, in which political and constitutional arraignment of government powers and responsibilities are shared or exercised by the centre and other federating units or a number of regions with delimited self-governing authority. In view of the clarification made above the author converses for religious pluralism and political restructuring to get Nigeria out its quagmires. Nigeria fared better under Federalism after all.

Formation of Nigerian; an Overview

Driven by the spirit of expansionism, European nations invaded Africa, and Britain successfully annexed Lagos in

1861. The 1884/5 Berlin Conference granted Britain the right to occupy the Niger Basin. By 1900, Britain had established its political influence in its new political territory and named it Nigeria. On the first day of January 1914, the North and Southern Protectorates were amalgamated at the discretion of the British Crown, with little or no regard for the indigenous peoples' aspirations. Lugard's Constitution of 1914 was developed with a Legislative Council, purely an advisory and deliberative body to guide the newly united country. Nigerians had little real influence on the constitution's creation, much like in the amalgamation of the North and South. The colonial masters merely put them together (Ugwummadu (2022)). The 1914 Council was replaced by the 1922 Sir Clifford Constitution, which established a 46-member Legislative Council, which members were elected to make law. That was a turning point in the political life of Nigeria; as it was the first time the indigenes were granted the franchise to elective members of the legislative councils in the whole of British West Africa (Obiezuofu-Ezeigbo, 2007).

Nevertheless, it was the Sir Arthur Richard Constitution that certainly defined Nigeria, for the first time, in terms of regions. It effectively divided Nigeria into three main regions in 1946: - the Northern, Western and Eastern. But it was Bernard Bourdillon the third Governor General, who conceived the idea of moving Nigeria into federalism in 1939; it was his political concept that Arthur Richard developed, and it became operational in 1946. The exercise "turned Nigeria from a unitary system of government to a three regional federal state" (Obiezuofu-Ezeigbo 2007: 8). The introduction of Regionalism into Nigerian politics was the best aspect of the Richards Constitution, particularly as it made the regions self-governing and self-supporting.

However, the North's continued resentment against its inclusion in the Nigeria project warranted the 1950 general conference in Ibadan, where they pressed home their demand for fifty per cent of the seats in the central Legislature. Interestingly, the issue was not resolved, because "it had not succeeded as its author had hoped" (Obsanjo, 1980: 2). Not even Sir John Macpherson's Constitution of 1951, which increased Nigerians' involvement in their own affairs through a tiered constitutional framework and included regional bicameral legislatures following an unprecedented

consultation with the Nigerian people, could create the kind of country that was desired. The uproar that broke out in the house in 1953, over a personal motion seeking Nigeria's independence in 1956, concludes that in a worst-case scenario there might be war in the country. The subsequent northern onslaught on the southern delegation who went to the north to negotiate the Nigeria project in the city of Kano in 1953, attests to this fact (Nwanze, 2018).

The Nigeria project ought to have been forestalled at that point, but the then British Secretary of State for the Colonies Oliver Lyttleton made one more attempt to patch the ripped groups together. The outcome of his efforts was the 1954 Lyttleton Constitution, which made regional governments independent of the central government with respect to subjects and legislative powers allocated to them. It also established a unicameral legislature for the federal government and each of the 3 regional governments (TopMax African politic 2011). Based on this political arrangement enshrined in the constitution, Nigeria was granted political independence on the 1st of October 1960.

Nigeria under Federalism

From 1954 when the Colonial Master relinquished the grip of regional governments to the indigenous people through independence in 1960 into the first republic, each region began to achieve meaningful development through self-government, and by 1966 each have become self-reliant, and innovative. Agriculture provided most of the government revenue and this allowed for grassroots development and encouraged native participation. East was known for its palm produce, the West made a fortune out of coco and rubber, while the North has millet, sorghum, and cowpea as its main crops; groundnut and sesame are significant minor crops. The exportation of these farm produce accelerated the speed of the regions' economic cum social development (Akandu, 2014).

Beyond the agricultural development was the industrialisation of the regions, which was achieved by the quality leadership provided by their respective regional leaders. The Communiqué of the Yoruba Summit Group 2020 recalls with nostalgia, the great strides made by the Yoruba nation in the years of self-government up until the abrogation of the federal constitution in 1966, evident in mass literacy, novel infrastructural structure strides and giant leaps in all spheres of human development (Babalola and Olajide 2020). Within that

period, the Northern region also established several industries including Kaduna Textiles Ltd (KTL), which began production in 1957. In the following decade, several textile mills were built, including Nortex in 1962, United Nigerian Textiles Ltd (UNTL) in 1964 and Arewa Textiles in 1965, among others (Maiwda and Elisha 2013).

In the East, some of the industries established by the regional administration were, Nkalagu Cement Company, Calabar Cement Company (CALCEMCO); the Niger-gas plant and the Niger-steel industry, both in Emene near Enugu. The development of Agric Farm in Adani, which gave rise to agricultural produce, "Ada Rice"; the establishment of the Oji River power plant, the Pepsi Cola plant in Onitsha and the completion of the Onitsha International Market, Golden Guinea Breweries established in Umuahia in 1961, Ceramic and Metallic Industry, Shoe Industry at Owerri and the Aba Textile Mill (Akandu, 2014). The Eastern Nigeria Development Corporation (ENDC) played a vital role in the accomplishment of these projects without crude oil. A Glass Factory was established in Port Harcourt. A boatyard was established for the manufacturing of power-fired engine passenger boats, which were used in the delta, such as places between Ikot Abasi, and the ancient kingdom of Opobo. Also attracted to the region was the Michelin Tyre Factory. These industries boosted the economy of the Eastern region; it provided employment for young school leavers who upon their graduation were immediately offered jobs in any of these industries. In fact, by 1964, a research study conducted by the World Bank and Harvard University in the US had already identified the Eastern region as the quickest-growing economy in the world (Akandu, 2014). The regional government also fostered a thriving private sector. Missionaries established various institutions that aided in the development of the citizens.

Another area where the regional Governments were able to exert their influence was in the education sector. However, the impact of Western education was more in the South, where the expatriate missionaries had established so many schools before independence; particularly in the South West where Awolowo upon becoming the Premier of the Western Region declared free education. In the East, church politics hindered regional government from taking total control of the school

system. However, Zik's commitment to education stands tall as he established the first university in Nigeria, at Nsukka in 1960. This was followed by the establishment of the University of Ibadan in 1962, and ABU Zaria in 1964. It is quite interesting that within four years of Nigeria's independence each region was able to establish a full-fledged university, which they adequately funded. These universities offered opportunities to some brilliant but indigent students who ordinarily would not have travelled abroad to study. Sad to say that since the Federal Military Government's forceful takeover of the management of schools, the quality of education in Nigeria schools was lost. Nowadays almost every issue including funding of universities and remuneration of university staff is settled through industrial action. It was not so under the regional government.

Furthermore, the regional civil service was made of competent and dutiful people who valued performing their duty over accumulating wealth, unlike in modern Nigeria. They were apolitical and morally strong enough to be cajoled into corruption. The regional civil service was exceptional because the brightest minds from Nigerian colleges were employed based only on merit rather than on considerations of ethnicity or religion. Besides, the civil service was based on the fundamental principle that funds should be internally generated and equitably distributed with a high sense of financial prudence. Thus, there was enough money to fund its budgets and execute development projects. It never had to wait for federal funding allocations or rely on the federal government's bailout funds in any other way. Instead, each regional administration remitted 20% of its revenue to the central government. Moreover, there was organised and collaborative security architecture, which made life and property better secured. The police showed preparedness for duty and thus, collaborated with other security outfits organized in cities, towns and villages. Therefore, nobody kept aloof from the security business, and crimes were punished. Unfortunately, the civil war had a negative effect on the security architecture, which weakened its collaborative capabilities. The resultant effect is the security challenges and the heinous crimes being committed against citizens with impunity.

Political Dysfunction in the First Republic

Democracy is participatory and representative in nature, it promotes access to a wide range of ideas and depends on the overwhelming participation of people. It thrives inequitable governance, suggesting that relative influence is a matter of justice. However, the fragility of democratic institutions makes it difficult to predict and assess every potential instance of corruption, therefore, its laws are frequently tainted by men's passions (Erik Jones and Matthias Matthijs 2016). The competition for regional hegemony, propelled by ethno-religious bigotry, did not allow for national integration. Rather, it bred regional politicians whose natural affinity for their aborigine grew wildly, and they merely cared for the centre. The action of such politicians makes it look as if Nigeria is actually two different countries loped together. Gambari (2008) blamed this behaviour on the adopting of the Richards Constitution in 1950, which formed three regions and gave citizens a regional mindset. Most of the political class who piloted the affairs of the country after independence had only their regional worldview with little or no understanding of their neighbouring regions. In that circumstance, political leaders could only ascend to prominence on the wave of tribalism and populist ignorance (Aremu 2016). Therefore, some of the political leaders simultaneously stoked the odious embers of tribalism and sectionalism into a lethal flame, which undermined the central government (Obasanjo 1980).

Out of the eleven political parties formed only three, National Convention of Nigerian Citizens NCNC, NPC and Action Group AG could attain the status of national parties, while others were tribal parties with regional base. Therefore, none of the parties could win many electoral offices outside their region. Nnamdi Azikiwe's victory in the West was truncated by tribal sentiment. Elucidating this fact Achebe (1983: 5) writes, I was an eye witness to that momentous occasion when Chief Awolowo 'stole' the leadership of the Western Nigeria from Dr Azikiwe in broad daylight on the floor of the Western House of Assembly and sent the great Zik scampering back to the Niger 'whence he came'. The division was late exacerbated by some parties' ties to certain religions, like Islam and Christianity. Dudley (1973) corroborated these facts when he stated that election-related fraud, marked by the intimidation of electoral rivals and the polarising forces of ethnicity and regionalism exacerbated the already tense nation.

The absence of true national parties and the dearth of sincere patriots account for Nigerians' inability to elect the most qualified candidates to administer its affairs at different levels (Akaayar Ayua and Dakas C.J. Dakas). Unfortunately, the political leader's failure to manage the country's socio-cultural and ethnic-religious diversities has been a major set-back in the life of the nation. The mutual distrust among the various groups gave rise to socio-political upheavals that culminated in military interference.

De-defederalization of Nigeria State

The first military interference in Nigerian politics was interventional, although undemocratic. It had serious damaging effect on the country's political life; the principle of democracy was truncated; Nigeria Constitution was suspended and the tripod, upon which Nigeria was mounted, was destroyed by the military junta in 1966. Thenceforth the military began to meddle with Nigeria politics/governance, an act which affects the failures being experienced today in all the country's spheres of life. General Ironsi came into power when the country was in turmoil. He immediately employed some interventionist political policies to restore unity. His quick intervention was grossly misconstrued, particularly his ablation of the federal system in favour of a unitary system. It was certainly an impromptu act which he was condemned for. For instance, Adesanya (2017) observed that Ironsi was in a hurry to make impression. However, Nwabueze (2005) averred that "It was naive of him (Ironsi) to have thought that unity could be secured through a unitary system imposed by military fiat". Thus, Ironsi became a victim of Nigeria's political crisis, and his ethnic group approximately 30, 000 were massacred in most northern cities by the northerners who staged a protest against decree 34 (Olomola and Ola 1979).

Interestingly, the death of Ironsi did not repel the unitary system of governance; instead, the nation continued to be governed through it. This fact was corroborated by Obasanjo (1980:11), that the fourth recommendation of the ad hoc Conference of Representatives of the Regions, held in Lagos on August 9, 1966, to rescind decree 34 by abolishing the provisions of the decree that presupposed extreme centralization, was not fully implemented. Rather, only the first proposal, which requested the Head of State to deploy military personnel to barracks in their home regions was fully

implemented. Therefore, the country's core political structure was jettisoned. Had Gowon restored the country's federalism, the original political structure, which allowed the three regions to exist independent of the centre and to appoint ambassadors to London would have been restored.

Odimegwu-Ojukwu never believed in unitary governance and opposed it with vigour. It was his conviction that federalism was the best system for Nigeria, and he clamoured for it. His insistency on Federalism begat the slang "On Aburi We stand". On a radio interview in 1969 Ojukwu explained that at Aburi they agreed to establish area command for armed forces, and to decentralised the police force. Agreement was also reached on certain revenue formula, but nobody ever talked about confederation. But alas Gowon was ill advised in Lagos to reject the agreement; and he began to deny everything. If the Federal Military Government had listened to Ojukwu perhaps no one should be calling for restructuring now.

Recently, Obasanjo (2020) admitted that the issue with Nigeria is that in the past, when he and his colleagues had the chance to discuss, they merely dialogue enough due to selfishness and the unwillingness to put aside outdated prejudices and biases. The bias Obasanjo alluded to is evident in Nigerian leaders' intense opposition to Ojukwu's persuasive case for true federalism. General Gowon maintained the Decree 34 in a worse shape than General Ironsi did while in office" (Obiezuofu-Ezeigbo 2007: 34). Nnadi (2021) lends credence to this fact that the Federation structure was not altered by Ironsi's unification Decree No. 34 of 1966, instead it was altered by Gowon's Decree No. 4, enacted on 27 May 1967. Through decree No. 14 of 1967, Gowon's Federal Military Government restructured the country into States and took over the assets of the regions. The centralisation and unification of power was perfected by the establishment of the supremacy and enforcement of power through Decree No. 28 of 1970 (see Y. Gowon 1970). The Decree gave the Federal Military Government power over and above the court. In any conflict between a Decree and an edict on any matter whatsoever, the decree prevails. The twelve states created by Gowon were financially dependent on federal allocation, because the assets of the region from where these states were created which, the military junta had taken control of were not dispersed to the states but were instead retained by the federal government. His

predecessors followed suit in the subsequent creation of more states. The unitary political system disallowed state resource control and ever since then the country has gone so bad; the decadence in the polity is clear evidence, which has birthed self-agitation.

Nigeria in the State of Quagmire

Nigeria, home to an estimated 200 million people, offers a sizable labour pool, including both qualified and unskilled workers. However, sixty years after gaining its independence, Nigeria is still not operating at its full potential. The sustainable economic progress it has achieved is insufficient to offset its oil business earnings. Rather, it has become the world poverty capital. (Sheriff Folarin 2020). A quick glance at a few facts makes the issue clear. The country produces 2.4 million barrels of crude oil per day and has the tenth-largest proven oil reserves in the world, ranking second in Africa behind Libya (Oil & Gas Journal, 2014 and OPEC (2015). Nonetheless, Nigeria is among the world's poorest nations, ranking 158th out of 177 in the UN's 2007 Human Development Index (HDI) (Ogwumike, and Ogunleye, 2008). Hence, Karl Maier (2002) described Nigeria as Africa's most populous, potentially richest, and most dangerously dysfunctional nation. It is sad that Nigeria is often cited in literature as the archetypal of the resource curse despite being the largest oil producer in Africa and the sixth-largest exporter worldwide/globally (Ali Elwerfelli, James Benhin 2018).

Consider the amount of development obtained by oil producing nations like Kuwait, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and even Libya in North Africa, Nigeria, has no better financial disposition in comparison. These countries have superb foreign exchange and reserves, and have since diversified their economy from oil to agriculture, tourism, etc. While their currencies are strong in the global market, the wellbeing of their citizens is of paramount importance to their governments in the grassroots. Contrarily, the majority of Nigerians live in poverty. Despite the fact that a dollar is currently worth 447.13 naira, the Federal Government's approval of a minimum wage of 30,000 naira for them as of 2019 is still under contemplations. According Udi (2023) a new report from BudGIT reveals that no less than 15 states across the country as of 2022 are yet to implement the N30, 000 minimum wage signed into law in 2019. While members of the national assembly are receiving jumbo salary.

Shehu Sani, a former member of the Nigerian Senate, had in March 2018, revealed that each senator received the sum of N13.5 million monthly as running cost, in addition to N750,000 monthly consolidated salary and allowances, despite widespread poverty and unemployment in the country. (Ameah Ejekwonyilo 2021). Moreover, the manner in which money was carted away from the State treasury by the public office holder impoverishment the nation's economy. Worried about the height of corruption in Nigeria former British prime minister David Cameron averred "If the amount of money stolen from Nigeria in the last 30 years was stolen from the UK, the UK would cease to exist" (cited in Africa check by Lee Mwititi 22 August 2017).

Some politicians are under trial while others including six ex-governors, James Bala Ngilari, Joshua Dariye, Jolly Nyame, James Ibori, Orji Uzor Kalu have been convicted over misappropriation of state funds (**Abiola 2019**). On 22/6/2021 Farouk former member of the National Assembly was found guilty of fraud; he was jailed for seven years (Okakwo 2018). Certainly, there is dishonest behaviour and rumours of corruption in every department. The fear that Nigeria's economy would implode if things continued as they were, Obasanjo's administration privatized most of the nation's companies including the power sector, NITEL, and Aviation industry etc, (Subhan, 2017) but, alas, there has been retrogression instead.

Buhari (2020) laments Nigeria's awful moral deterioration brought on by an uncontrolled desire for political power, though he is a culprit. He truncated the nation's democracy in December 1983, when he toppled a democratically elected president, and suspended the country's constitution while his reign of dictatorship lasted. His action terminated the glorious days and paved the way for gloomy days, which plunged the country into an abyss. The military juntas were fascinated by the enormous wealth found in the State treasury but failed to grow the economy instead they mismanaged it. The military squandering of the economy from 1983 to 1999 was made easy with the connivance of ignoble politicians; a sordid act that internalised corruption in the polity. According to Oluwaseun and Oluwaseun (2018) even with some of their early economic deals, most notably during Muritala/Obasanjo, which

ultimately proved beneficial to the country, the economic implications of military rule were disastrous.

Insecurity

Insecurity has been a great challenge to Nigeria but under Buhari's administration it got worse even with the great investments in the procurement of military wares. For instance, Buhari revealed in a US interview that those terrorizing Nigerians are Libyan militias (Ogundipe, 2018). Yet his government never arrested or prosecuted anyone. Rather, the terrorists who were arrested by Jonathan's administration were released by President Buhari (Shaibu (2020). This prompted Obasanjo's profiling of Nigeria as a failed state (Iroanusi 2020). The terrorist attacks which started as Boko Haram insurgency in the North East have spread across the country with different nomenclatures, such as banditry, Fulani headsmen, kidnapers, Fulani hoodlums, unknown gunmen etc. Lamenting the about worsening insecurity in Nigeria, the Sultan of Sokoto, Muhammadu Sa'ad Abubakar said that North is the worst place to live as the bandits prowl the communities with their AK-47s in plain view, they make purchases in the market, pay, and collect change (Junnamike, 2020; and Ejikeme 2020).

In less than one month after his lamentation, 333 students of Kankara Government School were abducted on December 11 2020, without any resistance from the security (Ahmadu, 2020). This makes it the third time Nigerian school pupils were abducted in their schools. Implying that Nigeria's security architecture has failed woefully in its responsibility. The failure was acknowledged by President Buhari (2020) when he said that institutions including the military, judicial, police, and civil service all experienced a general downturn. He concluded that a meaningful national healing process needs to start, and this anniversary offers a real chance to do so by eradicating outdated ideas that are constantly challenged by the falsehoods they are.

Indeed, there are declines in all the institutions Buhari mentioned because his government has refused to heed the advice of well-meaning Nigerians to restructure the country (Nwachukwu, 2021). Over concentration of power in the centre is the chief contributor to the decline. State Governors exonerate themselves from all responsibility for insecurity within their domain and blame it on the federal government's

refusal to create state police for effective policing of the states. They publicly decline their positions as the chief security officers of their states, because according to them, the police do not take orders from them but only from the President.

Competition for ethnic hegemony

A heterogeneous society like Nigeria needs a system of government that will recognize all its diversities. Unfortunately, the competition for ethnic hegemony has not allowed it. Corroborating this fact, Archbishop Jatau blamed the issue on the marginalization of minority groups. Using Southern Kaduna as an example, Jatau highlighted that the various tribes in the area have long been subject to the emirs, and all attempts to achieve independence from the Fulani oligarchy/hegemony have been rebuffed, even with imprisonment. Of all the tribes agitating for self-determination and chiefdoms, only Kagoro, Jaba, and Maro have been successful. Ironically, while Nigeria busied itself with denouncing colonialism, neo-colonialism, and apartheid in other countries, the mass of its population is still colonized by the Fulani emirs (See Today's Challenge Magazine 1992: 3).

What is regrettable, irritating and depressing about Nigerian politics is their exclusivity. The regretful thing about Nigerian politics is that it is exclusiveness; it is bad that they are so exclusive. The inclusion of any one group is only on the basis of their religious affiliation/identification and tribe allegiance, not because of any inherent right. This fact was corroborated by the Vice President of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) Rev. Yusufu Turaki that the Christian ethnic groups in Kaduna have experienced persecution and frequent clashes with the Muslim Fulani-Hausa ethnic group, who the latter has branded as Kabilu, meaning "minority groups or those who have no right" (see Today's Challenge Magazine 1992: 3). Turaki elucidated that Christians are routinely subjected to the stringent Islamic laws, governmental policies, and attitude, which results in the loss of their human and religious rights (see Yusufu in Today's Challenge 1992: 2). This might continue until uniformity is achieved in politics, culture and religion; whether by ballot or by the sword.

Inequity distribution of recourses

Nigeria's federal system gives the federal government a disproportionate amount of power over the nation's financial resources. These resources are distributed through state and local governments. The North has more state, local

governments councils and federal constituencies. Natufe, (2006) described it as arbitrarily established Local government across the country. The north has 19 states, whereas the south has 17 states. Only the south east region has fewer states—5—than the other five zones, while the north west has the most—7. This is replicated in local government councils and in federal constituencies. Thus, south east is marginalized in the distribution of national wealth

Thus, few Northern elites have shown little interest in restructuring project, insisting that it is not the priority. The hazy argument for restructuring and devolution of power particularly from the North-West portrays their government as lethargic and unimaginative (Maduekwe 2017).

The ancient eastern region, which produces the bulk of the country's financial resources—crude oil—but has fewer states and local governments, feels marginalized and are pushing for the establishment of true federalism (Ejitu N. Ota). In fact, majority of Nigerians feel excluded, marginalised and isolated from the mainstream of the nation's political space and economic sector. Their resentments to such undeserved treatment meted out to them are obvious demonstrated in their agitation for equity. Different ethnic groups have been calling for restructuring, including the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), Oduduwa, AREWA, the Middle Belt Forum, and the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOP). They are demanding justice, equity and fairness. Interestingly, Buhari's administration has given restructuring in Nigeria less attention than any other. Instead, his leadership has repeatedly harped on the country's problems being caused by artificially fabricated fault lines, which Nigerians have harboured and foolishly allowed to grow (see 60th Presidential Independent Speech, October 1, 2020). Federal Government's insensitivity to these noble agitations from well-meaning Nigeria has led to secession secessionist agitation by both IPBOB and Oduwa groups.

However, Atiku Abubakar, the PDP presidential candidate for the 2023 general election, has recognized Nigeria's problem to be over-centralization of power and has promised to restructure the government and devolve more authority to the geopolitical zones if he is elected the president. Atiku believes that this will save Nigeria from going through civil war a second time (Nweje and Orji, 2022). The South and Middle-

Belt have found a common forum, the from opine that restructuring is imperative for keeping Nigeria one.

Compelling Reasons to Reject Imposed Constitutions

Every bit of Nigeria life reflects the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Therefore, to achieve religious plurality and political restructuring, Nigeria would need to establish a new constitution that takes into account its whole diversities and not an amended constitution. The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria has gone through series of alterations under the military regimes without due process for constitutional amendment. For instance, from 1967-70 Ironsi and Gowon military junta suspended and modified it to suit them. Obasanjo administration came up with the 1979 Constitution, in which Nigeria's cabinet-style of government was replaced with a US-style presidential system, in a bid to hold the country together. The constitution was again altered in 1996 during Abacha's regime, with the aim to translate Abacha from a military head of state to a civilian president. When Abdulsalam Abubakar was about to retire in 1999 he appointed people of his choice, about fifteen of them in a country of about 180 million to amend the Constitution (Akaayar Ayua and Dakas).

The former president of the Ohaneze Ndigbo Chief Nnia Nwodo's position as was reported by Elomba Daniel of the Nigerian Voice (2001) is that Nigerians never drafted a constitution for Nigeria. It was provided by the Armed Forces Ruling Council of the Military Government, which was not elected and whose legislative body was not chosen according to any known criteria. Yet the preamble of that constitution paradoxically reads "we the people of Nigeria" whereas Nigerians were not consulted.

Since the constitution was not created with the authority, consent, or endorsement of the Nigerians for whom it was intended, it is incorrect if Nigeria continues to operate under it in 2021. Such infamous constitution, drafted and occasional amended by the Supreme Military Council cannot replace the 1963 Constitution, which was widely consulted and approved by all Nigerians. The use of such distorted constitution has been the major source of Nigeria's problem, which is inhibiting national development. Therefore, it must be discarded because it lacks constitutional legitimacy and integrity (Ugwummadu, 2022). This advocacy is necessitated by the fact that Nigeria fared better under Federalism.

Recently the Yoruba Summit Group 2020 has argued that, "The totality of the 1999 Constitution must be jettisoned and a fresh document produced, which will truly reflect the wishes of "we the people" (Adeyemi, 2020). Indeed, Nigeria can be rejuvenated by restructuring its polity through people's-oriented constitution and not by the military decree.

Recommendation

The above analysis of Nigeria polity prompts the following recommendations:

- 1 Nigeria's federal system is ineffective in its current form; a restructuring is required.
- 2 The APC led Federal Government should therefore, set machinery in motion for the restructuring of the country. There should be no fear about restructuring as it does not amount to a breakup of Nigeria.
- 3 There should be strict observance of separation of powers, and state constitution running side by side with the national constitution.
- 4 The ingredients of federalism which include state police, financial autonomy, preferred education system by the federating states should be allowed.
- 5 States should be allowed to control the resources within their state,
- 6 Nigerians need to make fundamental changes to the way they treat people of other faiths because diversity is of fundamental importance to all ecosystems and all economies.
- 7 No religion should use force to convert people, rather, it should try to appeal to its targeted audience.

Conclusion

The matter with Nigeria's polity is foundational, its cure requires a fundamental treatment. Currently, things are not working due to the type of federalism Nigeria practices. The military who introduced unitary governance and subsequently modified it to quasi-federalism thought it was the best form of government, but Nigerians now have proof to the contrary. Hence the agitation for restructuring. Although the Government has shown some commitments to the political restructuring of the country by increasing the regions from three to four in 1963, creation twelve state in 1967, increasing the number of states at different times, and also promulgated decrees at different times, and such decrees have been

amended occasionally to address one issue or the other. However, not much has been done to harmonize its religious divergences. Therefore, the problem which stems from religious bigotry should be treated urgently since the task to keep Nigeria one is claimed to be sacrosanct. Government repression and high-handedness in dealing with people with different viewpoints is undemocratic. Nigeria may, regrettably, continue to suffer unless a federal system of government is implemented.

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