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THE AGITATION FOR RESTRUCTURING THE NIGERIAN POLITY: A REAL OR IMAGINED PANACEA TO NATIONAL INTEGRATION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

Less than a decade as an independent political entity (precisely in 1967) Nigeria witnessed a 30 months civil war (that ended in 1970) in which over 5 million lives were lost. Since then not much has changed in terms of defective political system and the lopsided power structure of Nigeria. The situation has worsened in the last decade as Nigeria is faced with more challenges than ever before. Cognizant of the above, this paper focused on the Agitation for Restructuring the Nigerian Polity: a Real or Imagined Panacea to National Integration and Sustainable development, the paper addressed three objectives.: to review Nigeria's journey to nationhood, identifying the dysfunctional elements; to appraise the arguments of Nigerians with respect to restructuring the Nigeria polity; and to ascertain whether restructuring Nigeria will promote national integration and development or otherwise. The design was both descriptive and analytical. The paper observed that besides the period between independence and the collapse of the first republic when Nigeria was close to the practice of true federalism; the Nigeria polity has largely been unitarist in nature courtesy of long military incursion. This scenario and the distortions that accompanied it justified the current clamour for restructuring the polity. The needfulness and imperative of restructuring in actuating national integration and development was highlighted despite inherent challenges. The following recommendations were made: need for the present administration to take a studied look at the report of the various national conferences and in particular that of 2014, to identify areas of concurrence; need for the Government of the day to consider for implementation some of the core recommendations of the National Conference as way forward for national integration in Nigeria if the peace needed for national development is to be achieved. Lastly, need for a peoples constitution in place of the unitarist military constitution currently in use in Nigeria.

Keywords: Agitation, Restructuring, Nigeria Polity, True Federalism, National Integration, Development.

Introduction

Nigeria as presently constituted is a product of the 1914 amalgamation orchestrated by way of British colonial proclamation under the tutelage of Sir Frederick Lord Lugard, who consequently became the first Governor General of British colonial Nigeria. As a colonial bequeathal, Nigeria is a multi-ethnic nation with cultural differences among its component ethnic groups. From Futa Jalon in the North to the coast of the Atlantic Ocean in the South,

the range in types of social system, dress, diet and languages far exceeds that to be found elsewhere in the world. This diversity has resulted in two major problems namely: problems arising between the larger ethnic groups and the hostility that derives from competition between peoples for wealth and power.

The above problems have created a scenario of acrimony among the various ethnic groups, which has degenerated to such problems as herdsmen killing, armed banditry, kidnapping, secessionists agitations and many more; thereby hampering the pace of development in Nigeria compared to some other countries that have made **astronomical progress, developed** relatively stable political and economic systems. David Kemp compared Nigeria to Brazil in the 1960s; others spoke of Malaysia, Indonesia, and India etc. One of Nigeria's fault lines was for a long time attributed to leadership failures, others suggested defective political and economic structures, and yet others spoke of the Nigerian national character or the "Nigerian factor". Well, whatever or whichever, the reality is that in comparison to her other contemporaries, Nigeria was an abysmal disappointment in both expectations and achievements considering its enormous natural resources. This is obvious when one realizes the position of India, Brazil, and Indonesia etc. within the present international political and economic system, in comparison to Nigeria (Anugwom and Oji, 2004).

Nigerian history is both fascinating and an object lesson in "politics of precarious balancing" in a society of irrepressible pluralism and hostile sub-cultures. It is actually a country of outrageous paradox in the sense that it is a nation constantly threatened not by those who have nothing to lose, but ironically, by the incoherent national political elites who have everything to lose. Consequently, although Nigeria is assessed as uniquely powerful in its African and global scope, at the domestic level the country is assessed as equally uniquely insecure and unstable. It is therefore imperative for us to recognize and accept, no matter how uncomfortable that the tensions and crises constantly present in Nigeria arise not from imaginary but real issues which the national leadership no matter how much and how long it pretends, must address urgently (Lukman, 2011).

Throughout Nigeria's history, sub-national or ethnic nationalism has dominated and sabotaged all meaningful discussions and debates about national integration and nation-building. In fact**, no generation of leaders, military or civilian, has been able to create an atmosphere of credibility to ensure Nigeria's claim to a political future as a nation. None was able to evolve a unifying national ideology that was embraced either by fellow political elites or by the entire Nigerian populace.** Recently, some Nigerian political leaders have said that "Nigerian unity is not negotiable". This is an irony because these leaders have forgotten, or have failed to learn, the lessons of history. **Nigerian unity is definitely negotiable and must be re-negotiated for it to stand or survive the test of time. The reality over the years remains that in spite of the best efforts of all our leaders past or present, Nigerian unity is not guaranteed. It is simply, at best, an aspiration and not yet an achievement. Hence, the statement that Nigerian unity is "not negotiable" is simply a historical fallacy.**

It must therefore be stated as a matter of fact that among the forces that threaten the political stability and development of Nigeria, three are more outstanding, namely ethnicism, religion and leadership struggle, which is viewed under the binocular of ethnicism and religion.

Ethnicism in Nigeria is so vivid that there is no definition of a Nigerian beyond that of someone who lives within the borders of the country. The boundaries of the formerly English colony were drawn to serve British commercial interests, largely without regard for the territorial claims of the indigenous people. As a result, about two hundred and fifty ethnic groups comprise the population of what is today called Nigeria, and the country's unity has been consistently under ethnic, religious and political siege as eight attempts at secession threatened Nigeria's unity between 1914 and 1977. The Biafran War was the last of the secessionist movements within this period (Makinde, 2004). Yet till date there still persist pockets of ethnic cum religious uprisings and agitations here and there.

This paper in an attempt to examining the political implication of this diversity and the problems created by it for the survival of Nigeria takes recourse to restructuring and the Nigeria polity and its potentiality or otherwise in actuating integration and sustainable development in Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Nigeria is a nation born in optimism in 1960 at independence but has in her over 60 years lived in a state of doubt and uncertainty. Within those years too, all kinds of analysis and conclusions have been assembled on critical issues responsible for what has become a Nigerian dilemma over nation building and national development. There has been a broad consensus amongst Nigerians, in the past and now, that our federation has been dysfunctional, more unitary than federal, and not delivering public goods to the generality of our people. Despite possessing significant natural and human resource endowments, being Africa's leading economy and most populous nation, Nigerians are neither happy nor content with the current political structure, from the 1999 Constitution, and virtually all the institutions of governance at the federal, state and local council levels. While this may be largely attributable to our political culture and weird leadership selection process rather than institutions and the constitution, many see the latter as the cause and effect of our national discontent.

This state of dissatisfaction across the board for a variety of reasons and motives has led to strident calls from virtually all segments of Nigerian society for political, constitutional, and fiscal reform using various words and phrases - restructuring, true federalism, devolution, resource control, regionalism, self-determination, and so on. How do we separate the real from the imagined? How much of the debate is propelled by a desire for national integration, development and how much are mere politicking, opportunism and search for sectional entitlement? Is the restructuring debate mostly driven by our fractious politics and competing interests, or are there real grievances whose resolution will create a critical juncture and opportunity for national rebirth. This paper will attempt to explore these issues.

Objectives of the Study

This paper sought to review the agitations for restructuring the Nigeria polity as a real or imagined panacea to national integration and development in Nigeria. Consequently, the following specifics shall be pursued:

1) To evaluate Nigeria's journey in nation building, identifying the dysfunctional elements;

2) To interrogate the arguments of Nigerians with respect to restructuring the Nigeria polity;
3) To determine whether restructuring Nigeria polity will promote national integration and development or otherwise.

Methodology

This paper appraises restructuring and the Nigeria polity as a real or imagined panacea to national integration and development. The design is both descriptive and analytical as data is largely drawn from secondary sources and analysis was by content analysis of documented evidences. The objectives served as relevant guide to the study.

Nigeria's Journey in Nation Building, Identifying the Dysfunctional Elements

It is indeed a historical fact that Nigeria was founded by British fiat in 1914, in a marriage of convenience bringing together the diverse peoples and cultures of a vast land under one polity. As the winds of change unleashed by the outcome of the Second World War and the independence of India spurred agitations for self-government, Nigerians debated, under British tutelage, the political structure of a future, free Nigeria. Those who wanted federalism won the argument, at the cost of being derided as "Pakistanis" by a vocal minority that wanted a unitary Nigeria (El Rufai, 2017).

The 1940s and 50s saw the emergence of three regions, Northern, Eastern and Western, with elected Nigerian leaders with limited powers of self-rule. In the pre-independence debates, the leaders of the Western and Northern regions were especially insistent on a loose federation with strong regions. This ultimately prevailed at independence in1960 and was reaffirmed by the Republican Constitution of 1963. Historical records in extant literature indicate that the peoples of the smaller ethnic groups in the North, West, and East, largely accepted and supported the federalist consensus, and they expected its logic to extend to the creation of new regions for them, or special arrangements to accommodate their interests (Jackson, 2012).

A political alliance between the parties controlling the Northern (Northern Peoples Congress) and Eastern (National Convention of Nigerian Citizens) regions produced the governing coalition at independence in 1960, with Alhaji Sir Tafawa Balewa as the prime minister and Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe as the President. In 1963, the fourth region Mid-West was carved out of the Western region. **Each of these regions had a written constitution, emblem and an official representation in London. They had significant powers and were authorized to raise the revenues needed to fund themselves and contribute to the central government** (Osadolor, 1998).

The political giants that led the old regions competed to do their best for their respective peoples: the Western region launched the first public television service in Africa, a few years after adopting a free education policy that consolidated its head start in Western education by extending universal access to the masses. Each of the three original regions founded its own university, built industrial estates, and developed hospitality businesses; and they tried to build the physical infrastructure needed for a modern economy. Some of the most enduring institutions in Nigeria were built by these regional governments, hence the understandable nostalgia in some quarters for the currently-dysfunctional quasi federal structure of Nigeria to revert to the regions of old.

However, following the January 15th 1966 coup by the "Five Majors" leading to the assassination of virtually all the elected political leaders of the Northern and Western Regions, a unitarist tendency gained influence in General Thomas Johnson Aguiyi Ironsi's military government, and a unification decree was enacted in May 1966, unifying the public service across the country, too much opposition, especially from the Northern Region was expressed. Although a counter-coup six months later, in July 1966 sounded the death knell for the unification decree, the remnants of unitarism remained, enabled without doubt by the centralized structure of the military command, which inexorably further distorted the post-independence true federalism in praxis. The counter-coup was followed by widespread violence in the North, the creation of 12 states out of the four defunct regions, threats of secession that consummated in a civil war (James, 2011).

To raise the resources for prosecuting the civil war, which started in 1967, the taxation powers of the former regions were changed in favour of the central government, further strengthening it at the expense of the twelve states. The military remained in power for 13 years in their first coming. They ensured that the Federal Republic of Nigeria, headed by a Supreme Military Commander, and ruled by the Federal Military Government, became mainly and most regrettably a unitary state (Cohen, 1974).

The four years of civilian democratic rule between 1979 and 1983 saw some resurgence and reassertion of the federalist spirit, which was rather short-lived. The second coming of the military lasted until May 29, 1999. In those sixteen years, the unitarist emasculation by the military was completely consummated. A new generation of citizens grew up knowing only the command-and-control system of the soldiers. A psychological distortion made political deformation even worse. More powers had been concentrated at the centre, the federal bureaucracy had ballooned and there were now many states (from 12 in 1967 to 19 in 1976 to 21 in 1987 to 30 in 1990 and finally to 36 in 1996) whose evident limitations proved insufficient to discourage the demand for yet more states. As states became many, smaller and less fiscally-independent, a powerful centre, manifested in a federal government that assumed ever more powers and responsibilities, took the lion share of national revenues (now about 53%) but did very little to justify the too much money in its control. This is a brief on our national journey to dysfunctional state structures.

Our national psyche has since then been focused on the distribution of easy oil rents from the central government to the states and local councils. Thus, after 60 years of independence, it is not unusual to see official government forms that ask for one's state of origin, ethnicity, and religion, rather than the state of residence, and what taxes one paid last year. These unitarist and distributive impulses did not accelerate the evolution of national unity and productive endeavor. Rather it created a rentier economic structure and preserved the prebendal colonial stratagem of divide and rule using ethnic, religious and geographic identities.

By the late military era, coinciding with the democratic wave unleashed by the end of the Cold War, political groups and civic organizations, mainly in the south, were agitating for a sovereign national conference to renegotiate the terms upon which the component parts of Nigeria will continue to stay together. The military ruler of the time, President Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida resisted the call, but his successor, General Abacha, convened a national

conference that neither restored true federalism nor produced real democracy until he died in 1998.

Democratic rule was restored on May 29, 1999, following the emergence of former General Olusegun Obasanjo as president in the general elections. In 1976, General Obasanjo became the second military officer from the south to become Head of State. In 1999, he became the first from the south to take office as an executive president. The calls for a sovereign national conference became slightly muted in the period leading to the 2003 elections, but came alive again in 2005, as Obasanjo's tenure was coming to an end. Indeed, suffice to say that the central agitation of the various ethnic nationalities was a restructured federation in addition to other demands.

There have been two national conferences in the Fourth Republic, convened by sitting presidents, but both were trailed by suspicions that they were arranged to advance some kind of personal or sectional political agenda. The conferences instituted by Presidents Obasanjo (2005) and Goodluck Jonathan (2014) did not lead to the restoration of true federalism or advance democratic consolidation.

Interrogating the Arguments of Nigerians with Respect to Restructuring the Nigeria Polity

From the Nigerian historical antecedents, the call for restructuring has been persistent. Fifty-four years ago, Nigeria fought a civil war over the issue of restructuring (widely misunderstood at the time). A former Deputy Senate President Ike Ekweremadu at the World Igbo Congress (WIC) held in Enugu, insisted that "the minimum Ndigbo demand of Nigeria is a restructure of the federation so that every component part of it can substantially harness its resources, cut its coat according to its cloth, and develop at its own speed" (Ekweremadu, 2017). He wants the Igbo "peaceful struggle for a better deal within the Nigerian commonwealth sustained." His demand is not different from that of Niger Delta militants that want a restructured Nigeria where they will control their resources or even Boko Haram that believes the solution to the poverty and neglect of the north eastern part of the Country is theocracy.

Sagay (2017) opines that there are basically three revolutionary movements in Nigeria today and each of them has a different perspective on how to solve the Nigerian problem. The first group he called the Unitarians; who believe that there is nothing wrong with the present unitary system of Nigeria, that what is wrong with Nigeria is Nigerians. For instance, that there is a moral decadence that must be tackled; there is need for reorientation and values. Nigerians have become corrupt and have equally corrupted the political system. In summary, according to Sagay, the unitarians believe that it is Nigerians that needs to be restructured and not Nigeria's political system.

The second movement; Sagay called the secessionists. This group of Nigerians he asserts believes that Nigeria is in fact a lie (contraption) and that a lie cannot be restructured! They admit that Nigeria is badly structured and they doubt that it can ever be restructured. So far, he submits that people in this group have opted for a complete dismemberment of the union as the only way to save themselves, their tribe, communities and region. They want Nigeria dissolved because they fear Nigeria has never worked and will never work (marriage of strange bed fellows).

Sagay (2027) continues, the last group is where we belong here; the Federalists. The federalist movement believes that something is obviously and fundamentally wrong with Nigeria. After an interesting research, the federalist has reached the conclusion that what is wrong with Nigeria is the structure of its defective federal system and that the solution will be to restructure the country and entrench true federalism.

The unitarians, secessionists and the federalists are now in a battle towards shaping the future of Nigeria. The future of Nigeria will be greatly determined by the success of one or more of these revolutionary movements. In truth, in Nigeria today the people who oppose restructuring is mainly the core Hausa-Fulani northerners. This implies that restructuring is consistently gaining wider acceptance even though the government of the day is opposed to it making look like a minority call. To restructure Nigeria and entrench true federalism, this pattern must change. Those who are opposed to it need to be properly educated.
To achieve this certain steps must be taken. These steps are in fact what make up the federalist philosophy. The steps are summarized in three cardinal objectives towards restructuring Nigeria which are as follows;

a) Need to begin to sensitize and educate Nigerians on the defects of the present system and the urgent need for them to support the campaign for a restructured system.
b) Need to mobilize the now enlightened Nigerians (the political elites who see themselves as the primary beneficiaries of the national cake and who are skeptical of changing the status quo) to get involved in the demand for a restructured system. This demand will include persuading the legislature and executives through overwhelming grassroots mobilizations and advocacy.
c) More importantly, we must participate in the restructuring process. The masses must not allow the restructuring process to be hijacked by the same marauding political class who has held the country hostage for the past decades. The ordinary people must participate in the restructuring process (Sagay, 2017).

In legal terms, it is the duty of the legislature to begin the restructuring process. Unfortunately, the legislature has become one of the biggest beneficiaries of the present skewed quasi federal structure; they will therefore be opposed to any structural change which will likely threaten their existence. It is on this ground that Nigerians must unite to overwhelm the legislature with their demand for true federalism. We cannot depend on and expect the beneficiaries of the present system to change the system, certainly, not without a fight! The kind of restructuring Nigeria needs is not cosmetic. For a fact, restructuring is not just about a constitutional amendment (as the National Assembly is purportedly embarking on currently) but an entirely new constitution. At the end of the day, what it will require is a Sovereign National Conference (SNC) (Sagay, 2017).

Restructuring Nigeria Polity as Panacea to National Integration and Sustainable Development

Experientially, in the present day Nigeria the term federal is a mere 'paper tiger' conspicuously derogatorily miniaturized in its praxis. No wonder a great deal of agitations for restructuring are built on issues like true and fiscal federalism, resource control, decentralization and devolution. A restructured Nigeria polity cannot be disconnected from true federalism and true federalism is built on the foundation of fiscal federalism. Therefore, the linkage between true federalism and sustainable economic development can best be found

in the country's larger political economy. Fiscal federalism is a function of the national political economy, as it highlights the fundamental features of a federation (Burgess, 2006). Thus, a thorough examination of a federation's fiscal system must accord its political economy a special place. A major explanation for Nigeria's divisiveness and poor economic performance in particular may be found in the state's flawed domestic political economy, which encourages over-dependency on oil and by implication federal allocation. Nigeria's post-colonial economy inherited an economy that was reliant on agricultural products for its foreign exchange earnings, but the discovery of oil changed the narrative, and by 1973 the Nigerian economy had been transformed into an oil rentier economy, as the state became heavily dependent on oil rents for its sustenance.

Nigeria's neglect of the agricultural sector has been well documented and needs no extensive discussion here (Bangura et al., 1986; Khan, 1994). One major reason for the decline in agricultural production was that the unprecedented flow of oil rents had caused agricultural products to become unprofitable, energy sapping and time waster. Another reason is that the booming oil sector witnessed a surge of capital and labour, because the returns are higher than in either agriculture or manufacturing. Consequently, Nigeria, a food exporter at independence, became a food importer.

The Nigerian state now operates an oil-dependent mono economy in which all other sectors, and by extension, governments at all levels, consequently depend on the oil sector. There is ample evidence to suggest that resource-rich countries, especially those that are heavily dependent on oil rents, perform poorly both politically and economically when compared with those not so endowed. In Nigeria, this problem is further complicated by the country's lopsided federal system, which is loaded with myriads of centrifugal forces, including ethnic diversity and economic disparity among the federating units. Nigeria is one of the oil-rich countries in the world, yet the country's oil wealth has not provided the needed stimulus for national cohesion and sustainable growth, nor has it spurred political stability, and this represents a paradox. And who says such a situation as this does not require urgency at restructuring?

Nigeria's economic record since the oil boom of the 1970s has been characterized by systemic corruption, a lack of growth and increasing poverty, a phenomenon Terry Lynn Karl (1997) describes as oil's "paradox of plenty". Karl's study uses a combination of approaches, including dependency theory, class analysis and, principally, the rentier thesis to explain why the 1973–4 and 1978–9 oil booms resulted in economic stagnation and political instability in many oil-exporting states, including Nigeria. Karl's claim, based on her research of the five petro-states of Algeria, Indonesia, Iran, Nigeria and Venezuela, is that countries that are dependent on petroleum revenues (with the exception of Norway) are among the most economically troubled, the most authoritarian and the most conflict-ridden in the world. The central argument of Karl's thesis is that a society's dependence on a particular export commodity, such as oil, shapes that society's social relations, structures and institutions of the state and the decision calculus of policymakers (Karl, 1997).

At this juncture, there is need to note that the oil boom of 1973 particularly coincided with the era of military rule in Nigeria, which also increased the economic centrality of the federal government and in turn led to states' dependence on the centre. During the military era, the

central government played a dominant role in the authoritative allocation of resources, allowing it to become excessively powerful and dominant over the states. The military era experienced significant political and economic developments, which affected Nigeria's quest for true federalism, and the main economic development during this period was the oil boom, while some of the political developments include the three-year civil war, the creation of twelve states from the previous four Regions in 1967, and the subsequent sub-division of the country into what has now finally become a federation of thirty-six states. All of these developments combined to give rise to fiscal centralization. The over-centralization of the country's federal system is one legacy of military rule that cannot easily be dismissed in the analysis of Nigerian federalism; a situation which no doubt justifies the agitations for a restructured polity as a tool for national integration and sustainable development.

The centrality of oil in revenue distribution in Nigeria's oil-centric political economy cannot be over emphasized in the sense that the emergence of oil rents gave rise to a politically and economically strong federal centre, resulting in a highly centralized federal system. As oil rents continue to flow into the national revenue pot, the government at the centre continues to be centralized, and consequently, the constituent units continue to be financially dependent on, and subordinate to, the Federal Government (this is highly counter productive in a true federal system). Recall that at inception, Nigeria's federal system allowed the federating units to enjoy enormous political and financial autonomy, which explains why it was referred to as regional federalism (Nolte, 2002). But by 1999, when the country returned to civilian rule after years of military dictatorship, the character of Nigerian federalism had significantly changed from what it used to be to one in which political and economic powers have become exclusively concentrated at the centre. Surely, the supremacy of the central government is a negation of a federal principle, which stresses the independence of government at all levels (this is the very defect restructuring seeks to redress).

The federalist proponent, Wheare (1963) puts this more succinctly when he argued that "the federal principle requires that the general and regional governments of a country shall be independent each of the other within its sphere, shall be not subordinate one to another but co-ordinate with each other". Now if this principle is to operate not merely as a matter of strict law but also in practice, it follows that, both general and regional governments must each have under its own independent control financial resources sufficient to perform its exclusive functions. Each must be financially co-ordinate with the other.

There is also some other basic features of true federalism that needs to be properly addressed given the dysfunctionality of the Nigerian system. These which can only be realized through a restructured polity are as follows;

a) The federating units (states and community governments) maintain autonomy over the most basic issues that affect their people. From security to education, resource control, taxes, infrastructural developments, elections, judiciary, health care, etc.
b) Powers are shared between the various tiers of government in a manner that unnecessary interference becomes impossible.
c) The government (tier) closest to the people is more empowered to meet up with the needs of the local people.
d) The federal national government is usually a creation of the sub-national (state) governments.

e) The federal government responsibility is usually limited to just foreign affairs, monetary policy, immigration, customs, and defense. All powers not expressly given to the federal government by the federal constitution is reserved for the state government.
f) Governance is run in a bottom-up approach.
g) There is a federal and state constitution (Wheare, 1963).

In the light of the above, one begins to wonder where Nigeria borrowed its pattern of federalism from as Nigeria today is apparently far from been a federation. There is therefore real justification for restructuring the polity if we as Nigerians must face the reality of our corporate existence as a true federal polity and are ready to advance the course of unity in diversity, economic growth and development. From historical evidence of federalism in Nigeria, we can agree that the only period when Nigeria witnessed sustainable economic growth was during the short period of regional government based on true federalism (1960 to 1966). Federalism no doubt brings competition, competition drives productivity, productivity inspires innovation, innovations drives development. This is exactly what Nigeria lacks today; competition, productivity, innovation, efficient and sustainable development.

The unitary system has not only distorted the necessary ingredients for growth but it has also entrenched an entitlement mentality in the populace and among the federating units, making them less aggressive towards self-sufficiency. Recent statistics has shown that over 95% of the federating units (states and LGAs) are not sustainable without federal allocations. What this basically implies is that if the federal government suffers a major economic sabotage in its revenue generating base, the entire country will likely run into crisis. In summary, Nigeria is in crisis because it was built on a faulty foundation whose existence is now threatened.

Federalism comes with certain principles that guarantee sustainability of economic and political inclusive institutions. Nigeria does not have stable electricity today is not because she does not have the resources to have stable electricity, it is simply because of the centralization policy by law, which forbids the federating units from competing, generating and distributing their own electricity without federal interference; and many others.

More so, there are basic frameworks that come with true federalism and that is necessary for the establishment of inclusive institutions that a restructured Nigeria polity currently needs to attain national integration and sustainable development.
These frameworks are as follows;

a) A restructured Nigerian federalism will guarantees the autonomy of the federating units thereby making the centre (central authority) undesirable for local development issues. Under true federalism, marginalization will become unnecessary (so also secessionists' agitations) as every state and community will be solely responsible for their own development or underdevelopment (it's their choice to make).
b) A restructured Nigeria polity will eliminate over-centralization of political and economic powers thereby empowering the local people and their communities to take charge of their own development. States will no longer have to go cap in hands to Abuja every month to collect federal allocations to survive.
c) A restructured Nigeria polity will have an in-built mechanism that promotes transparency and accountability. One reason why there is massive corruption in today's Nigeria is simply because the people are not necessarily involved in the

revenue generating process thereby making them less concerned about how the revenue is spent. The federal government simply 'steals' crude oil money from the people, collect customs taxes and goes about to spend it as it pleases. There is no real tax based revenue system where the people are expected to fund the government. As long as the crude oil keeps flowing, there is revenue for the government. This is the root cause of corruption in Nigeria. True Federalism ensures that no tier of government has access to free natural resources without first going through the people who would then demand for accountability afterward. Under true federalism, there is a bottom-up approach towards people's relationship with the government. The local communities and their people control their resources and pays taxes to the various tiers of government. The communities and towns fund the state government and the state government funds the federal government. Each would naturally demand for transparency and accountability. In a nutshell, a restructured polity or true federalism will fix corruption in Nigeria! (Sagay, 2017).

Recommendations

In the light of the above review, the following recommendations are considered relevant:

1. The current administration should shelve its antagonism on restructuring, put non partisan machinery in motion to review various ideas being promoted in the current public agitation for political cum economic restructuring in Nigeria.
2. The government of the day should take a studied look at the report of the various national conferences and in particular that of 2014, to identify areas of concurrence for implementation.
3. There is need for the Government of Mohammadu Buhari to be open to dialogue and negotiation as a way forward for national integration in Nigeria if the peace and security needed for national development is to be achieved.
4. The various States Houses of Assemblies should liaise with the National Assembly to deliberate and recommend a legislative strategy for addressing the demand for political restructuring without prejudice to the continued unity and shared prosperity of the nation.

Conclusion

This paper on: Restructuring the Nigeria polity as a panacea to national integration and sustainable development addressed three objectives. All said and done, it must be inferred that our experience at nation building ought to point to the fact that in spite of our pretenses of unity, the Nigerian society actually remains sharply divided by mutually reinforcing cleavages with each segment of the population living in its own separate world. The consequences have been that all along the dangers of a breakdown of the system have been clear to any reasonably interested observer of Nigeria politics, locally as well as internationally.

We must therefore reform – and if you prefer, transform – and restructure the political system in a way that will leverage or devolve power to the states and local government councils and compels the allegiance of the various peoples as well as comply with their national or group aspirations. We need a restructured system in Nigeria that can effectively contain or reduce the level of the disintegrative tendencies across various ethnicities. **The leadership must also necessarily recognize that any new system for the country must take cognizance of the**

present national reality that today no single group or bloc, no matter their pretenses to power, can again dominate the Nigerian political system. We need a system that commands the respect of our people and is seen as fair, just and equitable to all.

For many, 'restructure' and 'true federalism' have become a suspicious phrase. This is due to the misconceptions, misinterpretations, misunderstanding, and ignorant understanding of the concept. For some, restructuring or true federalism means resource control and therefore should not be accepted. For others, restructuring means creating an opportunity for secession and must therefore not be heard of. These two major misinterpretations have greatly hindered the general acceptance of the concepts and have made it difficult for a section of Nigerians who are currently in power to accept it as a pragmatic solution that it is.

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