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CHRISTIANITY, RESOURCE CONTROL AND RESTRUCTURING IN NIGERIA: THE WAY FORWARD

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Abstract

The bid to restructure Nigeria has been attempted by various administrations that governed the country. Presently there is a raging debate from various concerned persons on the need to restructure the country and make it a federal entity in which the various federating units control their own resources, generate their own revenue, manage their own expenditure and make some contributions to the federal government. The paper using historical and analytical method of research insist that in the documents agreed upon and signed prior to the independence of the nation, the new nation was to be a truly federal State, with independent federal and regional governments. That arrangement worked at the beginning and ensured much productivity from the

various regions until the military took over and foisted a unitary system on the nation because of their desire for absolute power and control of resources. With the discovery of crude oil in the Niger Delta, every other region and subsequently the States created by the military abandoned their previous efforts in agriculture and industrial ventures. Presently, concerned persons seeing the ominous danger sign that the present arrangement pose on the nation are making urgent calls for the restructuring of the nation to save it from the looming danger. The work recommends that the religious sector especially the Church should not keep mute on such critical issues that touch on the survival of the nation and the welfare of the citizenry. This necessitates this investigation on the current raging and nagging issue of restructuring and resource control in Nigeria and the opinion of the Christian sector.

Key Words: Christianity, Resources, Restructuring, Church

INTRODUCTION

There is a raging debate from various concerned persons and sections of the nation Nigeria, which is centred on the need to restructure the country and make it a truly federal entity in which the various federating units control their own resources, generate their own revenue, manage their own expenditure and make some contributions to the federal government. Proponents of this call for restructuring and resource control insist that this call is not out of place since the nation came into being and was granted independence on such terms of the various regional and federating units of the country relating and associating with each other on

such true fiscal federating conditions. Proponents also insist that in the documents agreed upon and signed prior to the independence of the nation, the new nation was to be a truly federal State, with independent federal and regional governments. The regional governments could control their resources while making appropriate contributions to the centre. The arrangement worked for the nation at the beginning and ensured much productivity from the various regions until the military took over and foisted a unitary system on the nation because of their desire for absolute power and control of resources.

THE GENESIS OF THE NIGERIA PROBLEM

The origin of the Nigerian problem could be traced to the merging together of the Northern and Southern protectorates by the British colonial administration in what was termed the amalgamation in 1914. In that amalgamation, people of different ethnic, linguistic, religious and cultural backgrounds were lumped together to become one nation purely for British colonial administrative convenience at the period. According to Okafor (1989:8), “Nigeria is a country of many ethnic nations that have lived as sovereign empires, kingdoms or republics before colonial rule.” Thus while tracing the Nigerian problem and the need to restructure the nation, The Nation newspaper of Monday, October 8, 2018, in an article pointed out that:

The failure of the Nigerian state to attain her potentials is neither strange nor unwarranted, but it needs to be better understood. Nigeria

didn't exist as a genuine nation until 1960, at independence. Before then, the country was, in strict terms, under British subjugation and enslavement. The people who came to be known as Nigerians were as varied and different as there can be. Intertribal conflicts were the order of the day - even amidst seemingly similar cultures before British conquest.

As a result of such obvious differences, problems were sure to arise unless proper arrangements were made regarding the terms of relationship and living together as a nation. Moreover in terms of religion, the Northern region had earlier been taken over by the Islamic religion and constituted into an Islamic Caliphate through the jihad executed by Usman Dan Fodio in the early nineteenth century, while the Southern protectorate had been mostly Christianized by the Western Christian missionaries who came at almost the same time with the colonizers in the mid 19th century. The religious differences therefore created a further gulf between the North and the South, although both sides were nursing the idea of making inroads into each other's territories. While the Northern Islamic Caliphate was nursing the idea of dipping the Koran into the Atlantic Ocean, the Southern Christian missionaries as well nursed the idea of carrying the Christian Bible into the very heart of the Islamic Caliphate in the North or at least to the pockets of animist tribes scattered in various parts of the north. Both recorded some success to some extent.

However, the Northerners, due to their fear of having their subjects being influenced by the Western culture and religion which is

Christianity, vehemently resisted the introduction of western education into their territory. The British colonizers allowed them by implementing a system of indirect rule in their territory and even actively preventing Christian missionaries from entering their territory except in agreement with the Emirs and also prevented the introduction of western education to the northern territory and citizens of those areas until quite lately while allowing them to continue with their Islamic education. Thus according to Babalola (1988: 135):

Evidence is plentiful to show that after 1906, the administration of Northern Nigeria became decidedly anti-missionary. Under Lugard's successor, Percy Girouard, indirect rule became a sort of natural law against which it would be dangerous to behave... Education along western lines was frowned upon as a disintegrating and demoralizing agency.

This resulted to the northern region being designated as educationally disadvantaged even till date as they accepted western education quite lately.

Thus the dividing lines and differences which have marked the Nigerian landscape have been obvious and evident from the beginning. Even politically, economically, agriculturally, the differences between the various segments and regions of the area now known as Nigeria have been quite glaring. Although these differences, if well harnessed would have brought strength, colour and diversity to the nation, however, lamentably, it had not been so. The Nigerian nation seem ever sliding into sectarianism, ethno-

religious conflicts, injustices, insecurity, criminality, oppression and suppression of the weak by the strong and powerful and unjust deprivation of divinely-endowed natural resources from certain sections by the others. This is thus the genesis of the Nigerian problem.

ORIGINAL MASTER-PLAN OF TRUE FISCAL FEDERALISM IN NIGERIA PRIOR TO AND IMMEDIATELY AFTER INDEPENDENCE

Historical investigation show that due to the obvious differences and diverse composition of Nigeria, the founding fathers, prior to independence saw the need to discuss and agree on the terms of their relationship with each other and on the type of government to be put in place to ensure justice for all. Through such discussions, the report says, it was agreed that the new nation was to be a truly federal state, with independent federal and regional governments. The Nation newspaper article cited earlier went ahead to highlight the content of such talks and agreements. According to the article by Adeyoose (2018:16):

When talks about independence became intense, there was equally the need to negotiate the terms of engagement of a nation whose existence had hitherto been forced on the different ethnic nationalities. Understanding that imperative, the political elite at the time constituted series of what will pass as a national conferences with its composition spanning all relevant groups to the Nigerian project. In the document that emanated from that conference, the new nation was to be a

truly federal state, with independent federal and regional governments. That document was the independent Constitution. Another revision was done in 1963.

Referring to such discussions before independence an elder statesman from the north, Paul Unongo who was once the chairman of the Northern Elders Forum, in a SUNDAYSUN newspaper interview of August 20, 2017, pointed to such discussions prior to the independence of the nation and to the different stands of the founding fathers of the nation then, namely, Chief Obafemi Awolowo and Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe. According to the elder statesman, “At the London Constitutional Conference, Awolowo insisted on federalism. I supported Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe. Zik insisted on unitary form of government.”

Adeyooso in the Nation newspaper cited earlier, having said that the agreement reached in those constitutional conferences was that the new nation was to be a truly federal state, with independent federal and regional governments, went ahead to explain how the system operated at that period and how it set the nation on the path of growth and development. He pointed out that the arrangement resulted to each region and government making optimal contribution to their own development as well as that of the entire nation.. Thus according to Adeyooso:

Therein, the regional governments could control their resources while making minimal contribution to the centre. As such, key drivers of development like basic education and health care were responsibilities of the regional governments and could be better

managed. Only some issues pertaining to international relations, monetary policy, and defense were the exclusive preserve of the central government

It was also pointed out that the system ensured that the regions were self-sustaining federating units who could explore their comparative advantages. The economy of the country was assorted and there was a healthy rivalry between the regions. Furthermore, competition among the regions drove productivity which in turn led to development. Adeyoose cited above asserted that:

It was indeed an era of unprecedented progress. The economic indices of the nation were similar to that of nations like India and Brazil. Such was the rate of advancement that the late sage – Chief Obafemi Awolowo is credited to have boasted at some point that the Western Region would in a few years be on the same pedestal as European economies like Spain and Portugal.

But that was not to be at least to the present moment due to certain reversals. However, the analysis above shows a great gain, development and advancement which the adoption of true fiscal federalism brought to the nation from the independence period until the arrangement was thwarted. This also shows that the present call and clamour for a return to true fiscal federalism through the restructuring of the nation is not unfounded and is not borne out of ill-will for the nation nor for its break-up. It is rather a call for a return to the original master-plan on which the nation was founded and inaugurated.

WHEN THE WORKABLE STRUCTURE WAS DISMANTLED AND THWARTED

There is a general consensus that the original workable structure on which the independent nation of Nigeria was inaugurated and established was thwarted by the foray of the military into the politics and government of the country from the year 1966. According to Adeyoose in the Nation newspaper article of Monday, October 8, 2018:

But that season of progress was soon to be thwarted by the foray of the military into politics. The jackboots desired absolute power. The regional governments which were autonomous and even had separate constitutions were made subservient to an aberration called the Supreme Military Council. And the country was from then run like a unitary state with federal camouflage, against the wishes and aspirations of her people. But not enough temerity could be mustered to challenge or resist that violation of civilian space by the military. Regime after regime, the reign of impunity continued until the country was plundered into oblivion.

The elder statesman, Paul Unongo cited earlier in the SUNDAYSUN newspaper interview of August 20, 2017, corroborated the above scenario, observing that, “When the military came, because of their structure, they surreptitiously pushed backwards to almost a unitary system making the federal centre so powerful that we are all feeling the pains.”

Although the pioneer civilian leaders of the nation had their

weaknesses and failed to perform optimally to keep the military at bay from the corridors of power, it was the same military that purported to have come on a rescue mission, that finally hammered the nail of retrogression into the body politic of the Nigerian nation through their obnoxious policies. It was thus noted that with the situation brought about by the military, then, crude oil from the Niger Delta became the sole commodity of the nation. But the increased revenue from oil did not bring commensurate growth. There was widespread corruption as Ndubuisi (1991) also corroborated and there was no longer innovation in the regions since the country was jointly run on oil. Thus Adeyoose (2018:16) further lamented that:

In what was a calculated attempt to further lay hold to power, the military government broke the regions into states that are incapable of independence existence. That is the origin of the Nigerian structure of an all-powerful federal government with subordinate states. Agriculture and other industries that were previously explored were abandoned and the general systemic neglect led to the rot that is visible in the country today.

Even with the return to democracy in 1999 notwithstanding, the Nigerian aberration continued despite agitations to restore normalcy. Though the military transferred power to civilians, the terms of engagement were as defined in the 1999 Constitution which was a document that was designed by the military to still further their pseudo-federalist agenda and unjustly allocate resources to their regions. Thus it continued to be a matter of

robbing Peter to pay Paul, draining resources from one part of the country to service the favoured part while abandoning the chick that lays the golden egg to suffer and wallow in poverty and deprivation while also bearing the consequences of polluted environment from the oil excavation.

THE COMPELLING NEED TO RESTRUCTURE NIGERIA (FROM THE GENERAL POINT OF VIEW)

With the situation of things in the Nigerian, many voices are calling for and clamouring for the restructuring of the nation while a few who are in power and feel favoured by the present situation of things are either resisting the idea or are afraid of such an undertaking for their own selfish reasons. For instance, the former Senate President of the country, Ken Nnamani, in an interview with The Nation newspaper of July 16, 2019, while barring his mind on the need to restructure Nigeria, allayed the fears of those who are afraid about the issue of restructuring the nation. In the interview, Nnamani was quoted as quoted as saying thus:

I Have Noticed That Some People Are Afraid Of Restructuring, But That Is Inevitable, If We Must Make Appreciable Progress As A Nation. We Have To Make Certain Adjustments Because The Federal Government Is Overburdened By Things That Ought To Be The Responsibilities Of The States.

There is also the fear that restructuring which will mean a return to true federalism will also mean that the federal government will be weaker and governance will be closer to the people. That is why

whoever occupies the presidency will be unwilling to devolve power or jettison the fraudulent system that has enriched the political elite over the years (Adeyoose 2018).

Similarly, while stating the imperative for restructuring Nigeria, Azuka Onwuka in a Punch newspaper article of Tuesday, February 27, 2018, pointed out that:

With restructuring comes fiscal federalism. The states will stop receiving monthly federal allocations from crude oil, which make them lazy and lack initiative. They will start different projects unique to their states. They will create different social, religious and political laws that will be peculiar to their states. Those who breach such laws will have the state police to contend with.

Furthermore, Adeyoose in The Nation newspaper article of Monday, October 8, 2018 then marshaled out more points which make imperative regarding restructuring Nigeria. According to him:

Thus, the issue of restructuring is not just about positioning the country for sustainable development. Rather, it is about delivering Nigerian people from slavish bondage as orchestrated by the nation's military. It is about letting the ordinary people determine the conditions under which they are governed. It is about letting ordinary Nigerians have a say in government. It is about allowing the Nigerian people take charge of their destinies... If there is fiscal federalism, the federating units will be forced to look inwards and tap previously unexplored options for revenue. The struggle for survival will be initially painful but it will in the long run,

increase productivity. Because of the struggle for survival, fiscal federalism will help diversify the economy, and provide the necessary jobs for the youths.

However, it is obvious from these and other cogent views and reasons that the restructuring of the nation is the key and the way forward to achieve a secure future for the nation and its diverse people. It will help to diversify the economy and make the people more innovative and hard-working instead of relying solely on revenue from crude oil which will one day be used up, even as the price continues to fluctuate and is unstable and has not been prudently managed and re-invested.

THE NEED TO RESTRUCTURE NIGERIA FROM CHRISTIAN POINT OF VIEW

The need and imperative to restructure Nigeria from the Christian point of view is supported by the biblical emphasis on the issues of justice, equity, fairness and encouragement of hard-work, creativity, innovativeness and resourcefulness, as well as the condemnation of laziness, un-productivity, oppression, suppression and dominations among other evils. Suffice it to say that the present Nigerian structure supports the negative attitudes outlined above on the parts of the states and the federal government itself. The states are left to rest on their oars and always waiting to receive their monthly meager allocations from the federal government from the sale of crude oil from the Niger Delta, which is the main stay of the nation's economy. In that allocation, some

states and zones which contribute little or nothing to the national economy may receive jumbo allocations due to their size or number of local government districts, while the ones from which the wealth are produced and who bear the brunt of environment degradation from the oil exploitation may receive paltry sums and little or no federal presence at all. This is the present occurrence and situation in Nigeria.

The Federal Government on its part is holding tightly on everything and with the federal might is suppressing every dissenting voice and paying deaf ears to every suggestion to address or redress the situation. Nepotism and promotion of sectional interests are rife and the greater majority and suffering masses are excluded from the scheme of things.

Restructuring and resource control will help to promote justice, hard work and fairness to all as supported by the following Biblical texts:

Amos 5: 24, “But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream,” (NIV).

Psalm 12: 5, “Because of the oppression of the weak and the groaning of the needy, I will now arise,” says the LORD. “I will protect them from those who malign them,” (NIV).

Proverbs 10: 4, “Lazy hands make a man poor, but diligent hands bring wealth,” (NIV).

2 Thessalonians 3: 10, “For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: 'If a man will not work, he shall not eat,'" (NIV).

Proverbs 29: 2, “When the righteous are in authority, the people

rejoice; but when the wicked rule, the people groan,” (NIV). The above stated Scriptures emphasize the entrenchment of justice, righteousness, hard work, equity, diligence and fairness to all in the leadership of the nation to ensure peace, progress and prosperity. It also emphasizes the abhorrence of oppression, tyranny, wickedness, laziness and injustice in any nation as these ultimately lead to retrogression and fall of the nation. Restructuring of the nation which is being presently proposed in Nigeria is expected to bring about the positive outcomes.

A pastor and Christian devotional writer, Chris Kwakpovwe, who is also a University trained Pharmacist, gave what could be termed a classical example of what true fiscal federalism means in the life of a nation and its constituent states and the benefits derivable from such arrangements with an example of the state of California in the United States of America. Kwakpovwe (2019:62-63) in his piece entitled “California: Look within yourself,” pointed out that California is the 6th largest economy in the world; that its economy is larger than that of France or Brazil. The little problem is that California is not a country but only a State in the United States of America. It has little offshore oil, yet its economy is larger than states in the US that are famous for their oil reserves like Texas.

According to Kwakpovwe:

California generates much of its revenue from non-oil products. It found a way to absorb and domesticate much of the intellectual output from its premier university – Stanford University, into saleable products within its economy. As a matter of fact, much of California's economy is built

around Stanford University. So with this, Silicon Valley developed... Now with Silicon Valley came companies like Apple, eBay, Cisco, Lockheed, Hewlett Packard (HP), Google, Netflix, Facebook, Oracle, Tesla... and the list goes on and on ad infinitum. These are multi-billion dollar companies. The yearly budget of any one of these companies might be larger than the entire yearly budget of, for example, a state in Africa; that means California contains companies that are richer than countries. They are all in California. But that is just in the technology industry where the technologies and inventions spewing out of Stanford are caught midair and converted into money spinning enterprises.

Now this is exhilarating and should serve as an eye opener to Nigeria and the states in it and also to other countries in the African continent. Every state in Nigeria has their own universities and then the Federal Universities and the privately owned ones scattered all over the nation. Each year these universities turn out graduates and postgraduates who carry out research in various fields of endeavour. The question is, what do Nigerians do with all these research outputs? Only one university in California, Stanford, among others, is making waves and its research outputs have made the state very prosperous and wealthy. Yet the research outputs in the Nigerian universities are dumped in the archives and libraries and the country continues to wallow in poverty and struggle for the fleeting funds from crude oil. Nigerians and the government in place should wake.

Kwakpovwe was not yet done with the example of California. He

went on to point out that:

There is also the entertainment industry in California. Yes, Hollywood is in California. The US movie industry contributes about \$504 billion to USA's GDP. Hollywood, as you know, contributes over 70% of that figure. Most iconic movie studios are in Hollywood. As a matter of fact, the "Big Eight" consisting of 20th Century Fox, Columbia Pictures, MGM (Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer), Paramount Pictures, RKO Radio Pictures, United Artists, Universal Studios and Warner Bros are, or were, all in Hollywood. These again are multi-billion dollar companies generating revenue for California. Despite the above, California also thrives on Agriculture. As at 2014, California had nothing less than 77,000 farms and ranches raking about \$55 billion in revenue yearly. It produces over 400 agricultural commodities, a large chunk of which it exports. It is the leader in producing exotic fruits in America. Its wine industry is unique. California wine is drunk all over the world. This is just one state in America. You see California actually had a choice of sitting back and striving to get a piece of revenue generated from Texan oil. It could have depended solely on Federal allocation to survive so that at the end of every month, it would send its Commissioner of Finance to Washington DC to receive monthly allocation so that it can barely pay salaries of its workers and more. Then San Francisco would resemble a rejected slum in Mexico or Africa. And there certainly would not be those beautiful sights and sounds that make California what it is today. But no, not California. Not America. California gives to the center and because of its wealth, despises the

idea of depending on it for survival. The Federal Government actually needs California to survive, not the other way round.

The above detailed presentation of the strides of California, a state in the USA is instructive for the present task of addressing the present issue of restructuring, resource control and true fiscal federalism in Nigeria and the need to make it happen. It is a classical example of where it is working and how it should work and the modalities to make it work. It is a big lesson for Nigeria and it came from a Christian devotional writer who is also an academic and who is addressing and educating Christians and the generality of Nigerians who are opportune to read his work. So Christianity is for justice, equity, diligence, hard-work, resourcefulness, creativity and ingenuity which restructuring is hoped to represent. Christianity is however against all forms of oppression, indolence, suppression, domination and deprivation which the present arrangement represents.

THE TYPE OF RESTRUCTURING BEING ADVOCATED AND NEEDED IN NIGERIA

As vast and varied as the Nigerian nation, landscape and people are, so are the advocacy for the proposed restructuring. However, one of the major issues at stake presently is to bring the powers that be to agree to the need for the task to restructure the nation; then the details will be worked out by experts.

Adeyoose in the Nation newspaper article of October 8, 2018 agrees that there is a general consensus on the need for some

tinkering with the Nigerian structure, to attain meaningful development. However, what is often debated is what form such re-engineering should take. According to the article referred above, on the types of restructuring being advocated, it stated that:

The popular propositions are mainly three: For a group, Nigerians are the problem of Nigeria. What the country needs is a change in mindset, a sort of reorientation of her citizens. Another group advocates for a truly federal state where federating units will be autonomous with resource control, while the more radical group thinks the entity Nigeria cannot work – so agitate for secession.

The second of the proposals which call for a truly federal state where the federating units will be autonomous with resource control is the more popular option especially for those with huge resources but suffering deprivation and marginalization. The utterly marginalized ones are calling for outright breakup of the country and secession from it. Secession however, is the last and probably the least of the options and also the fear of those fighting against restructuring though it is getting more popular due to increasing ugly events and developments in the nation. A former chairman of the Northern Elders Forum, Paul W. Unongo, in a SUNDAYSUN newspaper interview of August 20, 2017 summed up the position and fear of the North at the time regarding restructuring. According to Unongo:

The North is not afraid of restructuring. The North is afraid for Nigeria. The North does not want people to surreptitiously send us back again to the frontlines in the jungle that we are going to fight a civil war. Most countries and most civilized people

don't indulge in fighting civil war twice. If we had got things, we should go and sit down and picture a federation that would give us no pain and that would work and ensure economic development faster. How can the North be against that? We are against behind the scene attempts to re-introduce secession and civil war as an act of politics.

Another Northern elder statesman and former Military President, Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida (IBB) also spoke in support of restructuring in a newspaper interview. Referring to Babangida, the SUNDAY SUN newspaper of August 20, 2017 stated as follows:

He (Babangida) also pointed out the need to devolve more Federal Government powers to the states. He said the Federal Government should be left with foreign policy, defence and economic portfolios. He believes states should have more powers in controlling agriculture, education, health, housing, etc. We cannot afford to cling to an outdated module and expect positive results. It does not work that way.

Even the Governors of the 36 states of the country recently called for the creation of state police as a result of the lingering insecurity problems around the nation. The PUNCH newspaper article bearing the Governors' position notes that the governors realized that contrary to the empty title of "chief security officer of the state" given to them, in practical terms, they have no control over the security of their states. When there is security issue in their states, they cannot even direct a Police Constable to take any action without the policeman first getting clearance from the

Commissioner of Police in the state. In the PUNCH newspaper article of Tuesday, February 27, 2018 titled, “Why State Police without restructuring is dangerous,” it was pointed out that:

However, in spite of the need to create state police, there are some issues that need to be taken care of first. The restructuring of Nigeria is a necessary condition that needs to be in place before state police should be created.

However, in all the clamouring and clearly marshaled out points on the need for restructuring, the ruling APC government are accused of foot-dragging and lack of commitment to the issue of which they had earlier used to campaign for votes. According to the PUNCH newspaper of September 17, 2017:

They betrayed their real intention when the Party and its members were campaigning against restructuring. They said it was never in their manifesto. The APC national chairman and one of their governors granted media interviews to say that restructuring was not in their manifesto... The APC is employing delay tactics to kill the issue of restructuring and it is a shame on them.

Reacting to this development of foot-dragging and lack of commitment to the clamoured issue of restructuring, the church in Nigeria raised its voice again. In a statement credited to the Bishops in Nigeria, and received through WhatsApp on August 6, 2019, the Bishops were quoted as issuing the following statements which was read by one of the Bishops:

This is what Bishops in Nigeria has to say about Nigeria now. The summary of it is that we cannot run away from this stark reality that Nigeria has to be restructured. Whether it is the restructuring that

gives more powers to states or a return to the regional arrangement of the past, or the restructuring that allows parts of the country that want to go and stand as independent nations; whatever that restructuring means, we must not run away from it. And our position as bishops is that as we continue to pretend that all is well, we will keep bleeding, profusely and very soon there might be nothing called Nigeria. Instead of our killing ourselves under the pretence of remaining one indivisible nation, some people say Nigeria's unity is non-negotiable. I want to say here that it is negotiable. This thing is like marriage; you don't force two people to get married. We have been forced into a marriage that is hurting us. And every day we are dying and pretending to be one. Please instead of our killing ourselves, and there will be no Nigeria left, let us come to a round table like this, bring Nigeria as a cake, bring one big knife and share the cake.

Thus the bishops were quite revolutionary in their statement here, but their stand can be understandable. This is because the champions of the campaign and insistence for a one Nigeria are also the same people who are championing the killings of their fellow Nigerians, and that is the Northern Muslims. How could they be championing the unity of the country and at the same time working against that unity through gruesome murder and endless blood-letting of their fellow Nigerians? That is a contradiction and that also means they have hidden and sinister motives and agenda apart from the professed surface advocacy and desire of a one and united nation.

Thus the debate and call for restructuring is still raging and ongoing and far from being quenched. It will surely continue for a long time without abating until a listening and willing ear is drawn.

THE MODALITIES FOR RESTRUCTURING

One of the reasons that the APC government is giving for not going ahead with the issue of restructuring the country is that it is the responsibility of the National Assembly and not directly that of the Presidency, according to their statement in a SUNDAY PUNCH newspaper publication. This position seems to be supported by The Nation newspaper article of Tuesday, July 16, 2019 on “Restructuring: What role for National Assembly?” It pointed out that restructuring was a major campaign issue during the last general election. According to that publication:

Some presidential candidates promised to restructure the country within six months if elected. Observers say it was an empty promise because no president can single-handedly restructure Nigeria. The only institution that can create a fundamental legal framework that could alter the government structure of the country is the National Assembly, working with interested parties. Experts say where a parliament exists, in whatever form, it has the mandate of a Constituent Assembly and can cause a new act of Parliament to come into being. To them, it is wrong to blame President Muhammadu Buhari for not restructuring Nigeria as promised by his Party, the All Progressives Congress (APC), when it was canvassing for votes. As a civilian president,

he does not have power to decree Nigeria into a new existence.

So, it is the National Assembly that has the power to restructure the country by fashioning out the relevant bill and passing the bill into law for good governance of the country. While the Parliament is in existence, experts are of the opinion that it may not necessary to summon a sovereign national conference as some had been calling for. Some are also of the opinion that there is no need for another national conference because there already exist reports of constitutional conferences set up by the regimes of former Presidents Olusegun Obasanjo and Goodluck Jonathan. Such reports are still in the archives because there are no enabling acts to back them up. Such constitutional conference reports and decisions cannot be enforced because they do not have laws backing them up. This was because there was lack of political will on the part of those who initiated the conferences to implement the outcomes, the articles said.

Citing a former Deputy Senate Minority Leader, Senator Olorunniber Manora, he was quoted in the Nation newspaper article cited above as saying that:

Ideally, what should be done after the submission of the report by the conference is that some of the recommendations should be backed up in the form of executive bill and be forwarded to the National Assembly for debate and approval by two-thirds majority before sending it back to the President for his assent. The National Assembly can act on the reports of conferences seeking restructuring only if it is backed up by law.

There was further suggestion that there should be constitutional amendment to make provision for referendum. There is no such provision in the current constitution of the nation. After the President must have assented to the report of the Constituent Assembly as approved by the National Assembly, the people must also express their approval or disapproval through referendum. “All this explains the role of the National Assembly in the process of restructuring,” concluded the Senator cited above.

All this also show the inadequacy of the 1999 Constitution which was the making of the Military regime that drafted it. That Constitution is also accused of having a slant towards the Islamic Sharia Law in certain sections of it in a country which is supposed to be a secular state with equal constitutional provision and freedom for the exercise of all religions. Therefore the National Assembly should rise up to its duties and give purposeful leadership and representation to the Nigerian people that elected them by pushing the President to act even when he lacked the political will to do so. How can a nation's constitution not have provision for referendum and other glaring inadequacies and loopholes, yet nothing is being done about it? The British people recently voted in a referendum in a very dicey issue of exiting from the European Union. As delicate as the issue was, the generality of the British people approved of it in their referendum and the government is presently engaged in negotiating the terms of the exit which will be concluded soon. Nigeria boasts of modeling her constitution and government after that of the United States of

America. But the Nigerian Constitution and practices is nowhere near or similar to that of the United States both in terms of nature and practice. For instance, the United States practices true fiscal federalism as exemplified in the case of California cited earlier, while Nigeria is still a unitary state. The United States constitution has provision for referendum and other requirements of true democracy, but the Nigerian constitution has none of such provisions. That means that Nigeria through the National Assembly, the Presidency, the Electoral Commission and the Judiciary should all start taking steps to make our democracy a true and participatory one which will place the country on the path of meaningful and sustainable development.

FINDINGS

This investigation has ventured into the current vexed issue of restructuring as being proposed for the Nigerian nation and came out with the following findings:

- That the Nigerian problem emanated from the amalgamation or lumping together of people of sharply differing ethnic nationalities, linguistic, religious and cultural backgrounds that have lived as sovereign empires, kingdoms or republics before the colonial rule.
- That before the attainment of independence in 1960, the founding fathers and political elites of the period saw the need to negotiate and agree on terms of engagement of a nation whose existence had hitherto been forced on the

different ethnic nationalities. Through such negotiations, it was agreed that the new nation was to be a truly federal state, with independent federal and regional governments. That arrangement truly set the young nation on the path of growth and development until the workable structure was thwarted by the foray of the military into the political life of the nation from the year 1966. The country was from then run like a unitary state with federal camouflage against the wishes and aspirations of her people.

- With the situation brought by the Military then, crude oil from the Niger Delta became the sole commodity of the nation. But the increased revenue from oil did not bring commensurate growth. There was widespread corruption and there was no longer innovation in the regions since the country was jointly run on oil. Agriculture and other industries that were previously explored were abandoned and the general systemic neglect led to the rot that is visible in the country today.
- Even with the return to democracy in 1999 notwithstanding, the Nigerian aberration continued despite agitations to restore normalcy. The military transferred power to civilians and the terms of engagement were as defined in the 1999 Constitution which was a document that was designed by the military to still further their pseudo-federalist agenda and unjustly allocate resources to their regions.

- All these resulted to the current agitating and calls to restructure the country and make it a truly federal entity with resource control by the federating units. In that arrangement, the states will stop receiving monthly federal allocations from crude oil, which make them lazy and lack initiative. They will start different projects unique to their states. They will also create different social, religious and political laws that will be peculiar to their states and that will also place them on the path of increased productivity and attaining sustainable development. It will thus help to diversify the economy and make the people more innovative and hard-working. Christianity supports these ideals of innovativeness, creativity, diligence, fairness, equity, justice, hard-work and resourcefulness which are being anticipated from the proposed restructuring exercise. On the other hand, Christianity abhors and condemns laziness, oppression, suppression and domination which the current arrangement promotes.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

- The government of the day, both the Executive, the Legislative and the Judicial arms should have listening ears and accede to the yearnings and aspirations of the generality of Nigerians by setting appropriate machineries in motion to implement the proposed task of restructuring the nation for the benefit of all and to secure the future of

the nation both politically, economically and otherwise.

- The 1999 Constitution which has been correctly described as the creation of the military to further their pseudo-federalist agenda, should be thoroughly reviewed and amended to reflect and embrace the true needs and aspirations of the nation and also bring justice and equity to all Nigerians. The Constitutional review should be all-encompassing, touching all the gray areas and also making provision for referendum to accommodate the aspirations of the masses
- The unfounded fears from certain quarters of what true fiscal federalism portends for the nation should be allayed by engaging with all segments of the nation with sincerity and justice for all instead of acting in deceit, nepotism and clannish interests.
- Constitutional experts should be engaged in every stage of the restructuring exercise so as not to fall into avoidable errors.
- The religious sector should not be ignored or left behind in the re-engineering process for the future of the nation since it is a very important sector of the nation and her existence.

In conclusion, for Nigeria to join the league of developed, industrialized and technologically-driven nations and economies of the world, something urgent ought to be done regarding the nature and structure of the nation as it exists today.

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