

CONUNDRUM OF RESTRUCTURING NIGERIA FEDERATION: A HISTORICAL DISCOURSE.

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Abstract

The problem of restructuring Nigeria is not that the government of the day especially at the federal level does not understand the meaning and its advantages, but the issue is who is it going to favour or who it would disfavour. A situation where those who feel that the status quo is to their detriment are calling on the federal government to restructure the country so as to bring about equity, equality and equitable distribution of appointments, opportunities and infrastructural development. The other group who see nothing wrong about the present arrangement are strongly opposing the idea. However, the fact remains that every system or institution established by human being is always subject to amendment, change or rearrangement. Restructuring of Nigeria political system is a necessity if the stakeholders (executive, legislatives and judicial arms) in the country are sincere and have the interest of this nation at heart. For the sake of this paper, I will define some concepts, why restructuring is necessary, where or area to restructure and finally recommendations.

keywords: Restructure, Federalism and Nigeria

Conceptual Discourse

Federalism (federal system of government): according to Okpata (2000:36), a federal state is an association of states formed voluntarily (example America) or expediently (example Nigeria) for certain purposes in which the federating units are ideally independent but co-ordinate with one another. From the above definition we can say that federalism is a system of government that shares the constitutional power between the government at the centre and federating units in such a manner that there will be neither superiority nor inferiority in their mode of operation, cooperation and relationship.

Restructure: to restructure an organization or system means to change

the way it is organized. In line with the above idea, restructure means to change the basic organization or structure of something or system. Restructuring is synonymous with the following words:- reorient, overhaul, rearrange, reorganized etc.

Historically, Nigeria is a British creation, amalgamating different ethnic groups of northern and southern protectorates together who knew little or nothing about each others tradition, culture or religion. Bringing 'strange bed follows' together would always result in clash of interest politically, culturally and religiously. The so called Nigeria constitution today was initiated and tailored by military men (Muslims) and not majority of Nigerians. From the first sentence in the constitution that reads- 'we the people of the Federal Republic of Nigeria', the

question is who and who were present at the scene? The military officers majority of them from one ethnic group talk to themselves and said we the people of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The constituent elements representing the interest of each ethnic group were not involved and accommodated. There continued by saying HAVING firmly and solemnly resolved. Again, who and who actually made the resolutions? So the history of Nigerian problem is not corruption as some people say, but Nigerian constitution. It was actually patterned in such a way that it will serve the interest of one ethnic group and their religion. For example a critical look at what is regarded as Nigerian constitution today will discover that Sharia was mentioned seventy-three (73) times, Islam twenty-eight (28) times, Grand Kadi fifty-four (54) times, Muslim ten (10) times. No single mention of Christ, Christian, Christianity or church. What can we say, can we say that Nigeria is an Islamic, Christian or secular state? Constitutionally, Nigeria is an Islamic state. It is because of the above reason that the constitutional conference of 2014 organized by former president Goodluck Jonathan was swept under the carpet notwithstanding the huge resources spent for it.

For Nigeria to work and reduce agitations for marginalization to the barest minimum, there must be constitutional reform in order to correct the imbalances in it. We need a constitution made by the people themselves and not by the military men that can guide democracy if it is truly the government of the people, by the people and for the people.

Another area in Nigeria system that needs to be restructured is the electoral system. Election involving over one

hundred and forty million (140m) people should not be conducted one day if we want the process to be corrupt-free. Nigeria should consider electronic voting just like the America where we claim we are copying democracy. Voting machines should be stationed in strategic places where people can go and vote the party and candidates of their choices, and the duration for the voting should be up to at least a week so as to allow each voter to vote at his or her convenient. In such arrangement there will be nothing like victimization of voters. If we compare the cost of election in Nigeria as it has always been done to what the voting machines would cost, we will realize that the machine will cost less. Not only that, incidence of political killings will naturally reduce. Cost of governance should also be reduced so as to make political position and appointments less attractive and competitive.

Another aspect that needs to be restructured is the nation's police force. In this sense there should 'be regional police, with a constitutional provision for overriding powers for the centre, through the armed forces (on a national sovereignty bases) should there be conflict between regional and federal forces of law and other'

Conclusion

Since the amalgamation of the northern and southern protectorate in 1914 by Lord Lugard, there has been always agitations from different groups in the country requesting for the restructuring of the political system. Democracy must be sustained through democratic principles, because democracy is predicated on the principles of separation of powers, checks and balances and rule of law. Restructuring is the demand if the country is to continue to remain indivisible one Nigeria. I therefore

conclude that restructuring of Nigeria is sine qua non for success, progress and equity.

playing ground to all contestant.

Recommendations

Following the need to have united and peaceful nation, the following recommendations may be beneficial:

- The present arrangement must be altered or changed with a view to enhancing its overall performance and efficiency.
- The organic nature of Nigeria and its fundamentals should not be replaced but be preserved.
- Restructuring is necessary so as to cope with historical dilemmas like not accommodating the religions of all the constituents units and erasing completely from the minds of some people the born-to-rule mentality.
- Restructuring will also help to cope with some emerging realities like economic challenges of mono-economy and population explosion
- Democracy must not be allowed to die prematurely by allowing an incumbent power (candidate) to contest another post or the same post he/she is occupying while in office, but rather resign according to the law ninety (90) days before the election so as to make for a level

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