

RESTRUCTURING THE NIGERIAN NATION: A PATHWAY FOR BUILDING NIGERIA AS A NATION

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Abstract

Nigeria is a heterogeneous society of over 250 ethnic nationalities with diverse history, culture and religion. These plural nations were brought together by Lord Lugard amalgamation of 1914 as one nation. Nigeria as a plural state has faced the challenges of nation building which includes lack of trust among the various nationalities, leadership crisis, religious problems, slow development, insecurity, bad image abroad, low foreign investment and low standard of living among others. This has led to agitations for restructuring of Nigerian nation. This paper therefore examines restructuring the Nigerian nation as a pathway to nation building. It is a qualitative work that relied on secondary source of data and anchored on pluralism theory which helps to explain the heterogeneous nature of Nigeria. The paper argued that restructuring Nigeria will create an enabling environment to achieve the goal of nation building in Nigeria. The paper believes that if the agitation for restructuring Nigeria is not attended to, the corporate existence of Nigeria as a nation remains under serious threat. It is the opinion of the paper that restructuring the Nigerian political and economic sector will bring the needed trust and the spirit of nationalism for nation building. The paper therefore recommends among others the restructuring of the political, economic and social structures of Nigeria backed with quality legislation from the parliament, good leadership and strong political will that will bring good results for nation building.

Key words; restructuring, agitation, nationalities, heterogeneous, amalgamation, nations

Introduction

Nigeria has over 250 nations which are politically, linguistically, religiously and culturally heterogeneous. The 1914 Lord Lugard policy of amalgamation brought these different nations to live together as one. Over the years, Nigeria as a plural nation has been saddled with the challenges of nation building which includes leadership crises, religious issues, insecurity, and bad image abroad among others. The task of making the various nations in Nigeria to live in one homeland with one government has topped her agenda over the years. The various constitutions that Nigeria have had tried to address the above problems of nation building, but none has actually stem it down to a reasonable level. The unity of the nation had been threatened, corruption, nepotism, communal clashes, insecurity, electoral malpractices has heightened because the citizens do not see themselves as homogenous.

There have been agitations from various geographical zones of Nigeria calling for outright disintegration or balkanization of the nation and even complete extinction of the Nigeria nation. Some other persons had also agitated for the amendment of the constitution while others called for the restructuring of the nation as the only way to achieve the goals of nation building. The task of building the nation is very paramount to the corporate existence of the Nigerian nation. This paper therefore seeks to know how the goals of nation building could be achieved so as to maintain the unity of Nigeria.

This paper therefore examines restructuring the Nigerians nation as a pathway for building Nigeria as a nation. The paper is a qualitative one that relied on secondary source of information and adopted pluralism theory which helps to explain the heterogeneous nature of the Nigerian nation. The paper is topical and timely. It is hoped that policy makers in Nigeria will find it useful to help in proffering solution to the problems of restructuring and nation building in Nigeria.

Restructuring

Restructuring has taken a centre state in Nigerian political discourse and gained currency since the fourth democratic dispensation of 1999. It has attracted discussions from various levels of citizens in Nigeria and different scholars had also been drawn to the discourse in several ways. As a result, many scholars had given the concept of restructuring different definitions from different perspectives. In a literal form, to restructure means to change, reorganizes or rearrange an existing status quo. Restructuring could therefore mean reorganizing or rearranging what have been in existing which could be either in an organization, or political sector. However, the restructuring that has gained currency in Nigeria recently is more of political restructuring. It is believed that when the political structure in Nigeria is rearranged, every other structure will be affected or rearranged.

Obiora (2018) defined restructuring as a change of the existing system or status quo in order to make it more functional. Abbas and Wakili (2018) stated that restructuring in the context of Nigeria is regarded as a persistent campaign and agitation for the political reorganization of Nigeria's government as well as other aspects desired for a constitutional amendment. Adeogun (2019) noted that restructuring is the restoration of federalism with independent self-sustaining federal units able to develop infrastructure, critical amenities undertake other projects, education and health without a central body interfering. Bello (2017) opined that restructuring is the process of increasing or decreasing the number of component parts that makes up a system and redefining the inter-relationship between them to ensure efficiency of the entire system. This is a very appropriate definition of restructuring because it defined the scope and working process of the concept of restructuring. The definition also did not limit its scope to political affairs rather, it extends to other systems. Agidigbi (2019) noted that restructuring is all about reconstruction of everything that makes up Nigeria politics. This definition only refers to Nigerian political system, leaving other system out of restructuring. This definition may not be able to explain restructuring as its scope is glaringly limited to Nigerian politics. Agidi (2020) noted

that restructuring could be economic restructuring, social restructuring, cultural restructuring, political restructuring among others. It is important to note that restructuring demands in Nigeria which has gained overwhelming currency is mainly political restructuring. The agitation for restructuring is a call for total review of the 1999 constitution of Nigeria as amended. This will involve the devolution of powers from the federal to the state and also devolution of power from the states to the local government.

The call for restructuring in Nigeria connotes the rearrangement, repositioning or reconstituting the entire Nigeria nation and her various sectors. Restructuring Nigeria as a nation will bring to bear the practice of true federalism where the federating units will have the authority to handle certain constitutional functions.

Nation Building

The concept of Nation Building has been defined severally by difficult scholars at different times. Dobbins (2003) defined nation building as the use of armed forces in the aftermath of a conflict to underpin democratization since the end of the 2nd world war. He looked at the experience from Germany, Japan, Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia, Kosovo and Afghanistan. His definition of nation building focused more on democratization processes of a nation which sometimes involves the use of military. Elaigwu (1965) defined nation building as the congruity of cultural and political identities. Eregha (2004) noted that nation building is a process whereby local loyalties become weaker as loyalty to the central government develops and the majority of the citizens think of themselves primarily as nationals instead of their particular nations. Eregha's definition gave a better understanding of a heterogeneous society like Nigeria. Almond (1962) defined nation building as the cultivation by people overtime of political attitudes, beliefs and values as well as development of political culture.

Agidi & Ugbeyavwighren (2013) remarked that nation building is a socio-political and institutional frameworks in the exploitation of developmental impulses towards the attainment of self-sustained development in a geographically bounded area. He simplified it to mean concerted effort at effective management of cultural plurality, social disorganization and political uncertainties into a united and stable society and maximally exploit available human and natural resources towards the attainment of an ever growing autarky development. Nation building could be seen as a process whereby the boundaries of the state and those of the national community become congruent. It is the constructing or structuring of national identity using the power of the state.

Karl, W.D & William J.F. (1966) Nation Building targets at mitigation of the people within the state so that it remain politically stable and viable in the long run. According to Mylonas (2021) legitimate authority in modern national states is connected to popular rule, to majorities. Nation building is the process through which these majorities are constructed. The above definition may look different from each other as they appeared from different perspective but there is a central line of similarity that runs across them. That is the fact that they all involve the bringing of resources or materials together in order to move forward from a previous standpoint. Nation building can simply be seen as a situation whereby citizens transfer their respect, loyalty, commitment

and regard from their immediate smaller clans, villages, ethnic groups and tribes to their larger central nation which possesses one political system.

Agidi (2013) opined that nation building refers to the beckoning of members of smaller nations to accept and legitimize the powers and controls of the central government as the unifying point of the constituting nations. According to Eregha (2004) the acceptance of other members of the civic body as equal fellow members of corporate nations is recognition of the rights of other members to a share of common history, resources values and other aspects of the state, buttressed by a sense of belonging to one political community. Nigeria is a nation with over 250 nations. The willingness and ability for these various nations to recognize and accept the central government as the overriding and superintending institutions or organ for all, will make a good nation building of Nigeria. This connotes that nation building in Nigeria is the process whereby everyone will be submissive to the central government and be proud to say that he or she is a Nigerian rather than his immediate tribe or ethnic group. This demands that the central government should create conducive atmosphere that will give people the opportunity to express themselves as Nigerians rather than as tribal or ethnic representative.

Benefits of Restructuring and Building Nigeria as a Nation

The agitation for restructuring the Nigerian nation has come from various voices across Nigeria for many benefits. Restructuring Nigeria will enhance trust and rekindle the spirit of nationalism among the citizens. This will create enabling environment for the achievement of the goals of nation building

1. **Education:** The bulk of responsibilities for education in Nigeria is entrusted to the federal government. The other arms of governments are constitutionally not involved with some crucial responsibilities to enhance the educational system in Nigeria. This has caused a lot of problems in the educational sector in Nigeria. Restructuring will improve the educational sector because responsibilities and revenue will be rearranged to apportion responsibilities accordingly. This will enhance the quality of education in Nigeria. A quality educational system in Nigeria will enhance the achievement of the goals of Nation building.
2. **Security:** The security issues in Nigeria have become very pronounced and it has equally overwhelmed the government. Every part of Nigeria is presently experiencing one form of security problem or the other. The Boko Haram in the north east, the Herdsmen and farmers crisis in the middle belt, the IPOB in the south east, the kidnapping for ransom in other parts of the country is a serious problem to the federal government. The problem of security has been one of the reasons for the agitations of restructuring. If Nigeria is restructured, the security functions will be shared among the different levels of government and efficiency will be achieved. State policing could enhance maximum security in Nigeria. Other security apparatus will be encouraged by law across the nations. This will make a pathway for achieving the goals of Nation building in Nigeria.

3. **Power Sector/Electricity:** Presently the federal government controls the generation and distribution of power and electricity in Nigeria through the national grid. This function has not yielded the required result as the power output to the public has been very much below requirement. This has affected every aspect of production, manufacturing and distribution of goods and services. Restructuring will authorize other levels of government apart from the federal government to build and generate their own power. This will bring healthy competition among different levels of government which will further bring efficiency and increase in production. The standard of living will improve and the goals of Nation building will be greatly realized.
4. **Quality leadership:** Restructuring the Nigerian nation will enhance quality leadership at all levels of government. Good leaders will be encouraged to show interest in politics and leadership. Political participation, quality followership and interest will increase. This will help in achieving the goals of Nation Building in Nigeria.
5. **Encouragement of meritocracy:** Restructuring the Nigeria nation will encourage meritocracy and undermined mediocrity in public and private sectors across Nigeria. People with good character and sound track, records will be given the opportunity to occupy places where they are supposed to be. This will enable them to put in their best for the development of the country and make a pathway for nation building.
6. **Corruption:** Nigeria has been globally noted as one of the most corrupt countries in the world. Controlling corruption in Nigeria has been very difficult because the authority to handle and execute some policies that will help to reduce corruption rests mainly on the federal government alone. Restructuring the Nigeria nation will devolve power from the centre and give authority to other levels of government who will take charge of controlling corruption within their scope of operations. This will facilitate the achievement of the goal of nation building.
7. **Allocations of funds:** Others levels of governments in Nigeria depends on allocations of funds from the federal government. This has made them not to be innovative and productive. Restructuring the Nigerian nation will put a halt to the usual monthly expectation of funds from federal allocation and develop ways of generating fund for the development of their areas. When every part of the country experiences development in one way or the other, the pathway to nation building will be made.
8. **Fast development:** Nigeria is a nation with over 250 other nations in one. Most of these nations have been agitating to be on their own to fast track development in their immediate nation. This is because the federal government is not benefiting them. Restructuring Nigeria will stop the various agitations for self-government and separations. Restructuring will rearrange Nigeria nation to the benefit of every part of Nigeria. The cries for marginalization will be highly reduced to the barest minimum and the

expression of dissatisfaction will not be popular any more. This will bring the achievement of the goals of nation building.

9. **Allay the fears of minority groups:** Restructuring Nigeria will allay the fears of minority groups and enhance the spirit of nationalism among the citizens. This will further enhance the goals of nation building.
10. **Devolution of power:** Restructuring will devolve the power of the centre and give more authority to the federating states. This will erode the threat to the corporate existence of Nigeria as a nation. By this the goal of nation building will be achieved.

Challenges to restructuring and Building Nigeria as a Nation

The need to achieve an appreciable level of togetherness as a nation that is well built cannot be overemphasized. The Nigerian nation has made several efforts at nation building and the problems are still noticeable but, it cannot be argued that no success has been recorded. The establishments of unity schools, National Youth Service Corp (NYSC), creation of states, adoption of secularism among others are the efforts Nigeria has made towards nation building over the years. However, the problems of nation building in Nigeria are still very visible. The national questions bordering Nigeria now could be traced to the effects of not building Nigerian nation properly. One of such effects is the agitation for the restructuring of Nigeria. The protagonist of restructuring believed that building Nigeria nations could be achieved through restructuring of the Nigerian nation. Several challenges stand on the way of building Nigeria as a nation and restructuring the Nigeria nation.

1. One of the problems of restructuring Nigeria and achieving the goals of Nation Building Nigeria is the various constitutions that Nigeria have had and especially the present 1999 constitution as amended. The 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria as amended is inherently strict and rigid with cumbersome processes of change. Restructuring and building Nigeria as a nation requires making some changes in some parts of the constitution. The difficult processes inherent in Nigeria constitution is a hindrance to restructuring and nation building in Nigeria.
2. Another problem of restructuring and nation building in Nigeria is ethnicity. The Nigerian citizens believe in supports for ethnic cleavages. They are rather very proud of their ethnic affinities than seeing themselves as Nigerians. This manifests very much in their pattern of voting and discharge of their duties in their official capacities. Solving the problems of ethnicity has been an uphill task to various leaders in Nigeria.
3. Lack of proper understanding of the meaning of restructuring and nation building has been a major hindrance to the call for nation building and restructuring it. People misunderstand and misinterpret the meanings of restructuring and nation building. As a result, they do not appreciate the need to restructure

Nigeria and have a proper nation building roadmap. Even the proponents and crusaders of restructuring do not understand what it means and cannot explain it to the ordinary citizens.

4. Ignorance is another challenge to the idea of restructuring and nation building in Nigeria. The agitation is not receiving enough support from the citizens because of ignorance of the people. Rather, the citizens do not see the need to restructure because they are ignorant of the benefits restructure will attract to the nation.
5. There is the fear of disintegration of Nigeria nation into several republics. The majority and minorities has the fear that restructuring could lead to breaking Nigeria into several autonomous units which will mean losing their identity. In their thinking, this could lead to several crises that will affect the corporate existence of Nigeria.
6. Corruption is another big challenge to the agitation for restructuring and nation building. Citizens who are benefiting from corruption do not support restructuring of Nigeria as it will affect their illicit and selfish activities. This in no small measure hampers the achievement of the goals of nation building in Nigeria.
7. Communal clashes in Nigeria, is a hindrance to the call for restructuring and also nation building in Nigeria. Communal crisis in Nigeria is very prevalent especially in areas that are blessed with natural resources. The claims to lands and natural resources in those areas are very common in Nigeria. This has been a problem to nation building and also hinders the calls for restructuring. The contending community will not agree to be on the part of unity with each other because they see themselves as enemies.
8. Most advocates for restructuring do not have clear explanation to the people. Their reasons which are mostly on imbalances of the federal structure and distribution of resources are not clearly explained to the people. This is the reason why they seem to lack supporters.
9. Electoral malpractice is yet another challenge to restructuring and nation building in Nigeria. Almost all the elections that Nigeria has had are characterized by electoral fraud which paves way for bad leaders to occupy the corridor of power. These leaders block all avenues to initiate policies that will help to build Nigeria nation and restructure the imbalances inherent in the Nigerian polity. Election that is devoid of credibility, transparency and fairness will produce selfish leaders who are only interested in elongating their stay in politics.
10. The call for restructuring of the Nigerian nation by some citizens who are feeling marginalized seems an indirect promotion of sectionalism and secession tendency. The agitations of restructuring had been seen as agents of separatism. This suspicion has rather reduced the light that shines on the call for restructuring and nation building. Other challenges to restructuring and nation building includes leadership crisis, religious problems, slow development, insecurity, bad image abroad, low standard of living and low investment.

Conclusion

The paper examined restructuring the Nigerian nation as a pathway for building Nigeria as a nation. The paper looked at the meaning of restructuring and nation building as well as the benefits of restructuring to nation building. The paper adopted and relied on secondary source of information. The paper identified ethnicity, corruption, lack of proper understanding of the concepts of restructuring, electoral malpractices, ignorance of the people, fear of disintegration, communal clashes among others as the challenges to restructuring and nation building. The paper is of the opinion that the problems of nation building have persisted because the nation needs to be restructured. The paper further opined that the restructuring of the nation is a pathway to nation building if the following is taken into serious considerations.

1. The government should look critically into the benefits of restructuring the nation which will help to sustain the unity of this country. It is advisable to restructure the nation so as to achieve the goals of nation building.
2. Free and fair elections should be conducted at all time. This will enhance quality leaders come on board to the corridor of powers. Good leaders will restructure the nation in many sectors so that the goals of nation building will be realized.
3. Advocates of restructuring should enlighten the populace on the actual meaning of restructuring so that their understanding will give legitimacy to the call for restructuring.
4. Corruption and nepotism should be eradicated to enhance the restructuring of the nation and eventually achieve the goal of nation building in Nigeria.
5. Restructuring should be embraced by Nigerians so as to achieve the goals of nation building in Nigeria.
6. Restructuring Nigeria is another form of constitutional amendments, it is therefore important for all stakeholders to be involved in the task of restructuring so that it will receive the legitimacy it requires. This will ease the task of nation building.
7. The restructuring of Nigeria should be all inclusive to involve all sectors of Nigeria including economic, security and political sector. This is a good means that will be a pathway to nation building in Nigeria.

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