

**NATIONAL SECURITY AND THE CHALLENGES OF
RESTRUCTURING: ENSURING THE POLITICAL, SOCIAL AND
ECONOMIC INTEGRATION OF NIGERIA**

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I INTRODUCTION

We are now living witnesses to the collapse of despotic and unpopular regimes the world over, including those on the African continent. Subordinate groups, classes and other social cleavages have sprung up with agitations for participation in the affairs of their nations and societies (Ake, 1996; Meredith, 2006; Young, 2012; Mou, 2016, 2017). This has, no doubt, confirmed Almond and Verba's declaration that: "If there is a political revolution going on throughout the world; it is what might be called the participation revolution" (Almond and Verba, 1963, p.17).

There is no doubting the fact that this "participation revolution", has engulfed African societies, including Nigeria as well (Ake, 1996; Meredith, 2006; Young, 2012; Mou, 2016, 2017). What still remains in doubt, and this paper hopes to clarify, is the particular forms this "participation revolution" has assumed within the different African societies". Particularly limited, it seems, is our knowledge of how this "participation revolution" has come to affect and is affecting national security, good governance and nation building, in short, the political, social and economic integration in the African nations. Besides, these developments have brought about several calls for restructuring with its attendant challenges on the polity, to these African nations, governments and their citizens, that need to be properly investigated. Here, we examine in particular, the Nigerian situation. There are now great signs and anxieties at home and abroad, that if Nigeria fails to undertake restructuring, in a manner that will comprehensively address meticulously the issues of national security and the contemporary challenges of political, social

and economic integration, Nigeria would soon be overwhelmed by them to the extent where it may become a “failed State” or even cease to exist in her current structure and form.

What has been the impact of the varieties of national security architectures in operation on good governance and nation building in Nigeria? What other consequences and challenges have arisen within Nigeria with respect to ensuring the political, social and economic integration of the country? What are the issues and conditions in Nigeria that have prompted the various social cleavages in the country to be calling for restructuring and even dismemberment of the country? What measures can be taken to address all these challenges in the way that will suit all the social cleavages therein and promote more political, social and economic integration of Nigeria?

By social cleavages here, we mean those divisions in the Nigerian society that are based on ethnicity, classes, region, religion, gender, language, race and even caste (Parkins, 1971; Mou, 2015). Is Nigeria too in the process of joining the league of Nations who have become “failed States”? What lessons can African Nations learn from the Nigerian experience? What are the policy recommendations that can be put up and implemented to address all of these issues and prevent Nigeria from becoming a “failed State”? These are the questions that this paper attempts to answer.

Managing the State apparatus to bring about good governance, nation building and development, or exercising political power in a way that will promote political, social and economic integration becomes always striking a favourable balance between the imperatives of national security, and the various concerns of the different social cleavages existing in the Nation. In all societies, when national security and good governance go up, these are favourable conditions for nation building and national integration. However, when the reverse is the case, it also affects negatively nation building and national integration as well. This is indeed, the situation in Nigeria at the moment!

II. NATIONAL SECURITY AND THE CHALLENGES OF RESTRUCTURING: CONCEPTUAL ISSUES

It is certainly not our intention to bore you here, with too much theoretical issues surrounding the question of national security, restructuring, nation building and national integration in Nigeria. However, some of the theoretical debate is absolutely necessary for a clear conceptualization and understanding of the issues at stake. Their brief discussion, therefore, will ensure that we are all on the same page as you listen or read this paper. It must be noted right from the start, that poor national security systems and bad and unjust governance tend to promote call for restructuring of any Nation.

(i) Scope of National Security and Varieties of National Security Systems (VNSS) or Architectures

A traditional definition of the State, often attributed to Max Weber, requires as a necessary condition, the effective monopoly of the use of violence within a given territory. The security of State was, therefore, threatened by any change that might threaten that monopoly of violence, whether it was through external invasion or internal rebellion. National Security was therefore, viewed purely from the military perspective. Consequently, National Security was, in the past, narrowly understood and insufficiently conceptualised. From most of the literature available, adopting this narrow view, National Security concept is given an essentially strategic meaning by equating military defence with national security as a whole.

This insufficient, essentially strategic, understanding of the concept is evident in the definition provided by Michael Louw. According to him, National Security can be defined as the condition of freedom from external physical attack (Louw, 1985). The same conclusion is advanced by Amos Jordan and William Taylor who see National Security as a term that signifies protection of the Nation's people and territories against physical attack (Jordan and Taylor, 1985). Similarly, Weifram Horrieder and Larry Bud in their book, Words and Arms, defined National Security as the protection of the nation from all types of external aggression, espionage, hostile reconnaissance, sabotage, subversion, annoyance and other inimical influences (Horrieder and Bud, 1984). These are all military-centered definitions of National Security.

It can be seen that the above strategic definitions of National Security are largely concerned with the protection of a nation-state from external aggression. This overwhelmingly military approach to national security is based on the erroneous assumption that the principal threat to a nation's

security comes from other nations or external attacks. Little attention is paid to the fact that the greatest threat to security of a nation could be internal, particularly when one is considering, as we are, transitional or developing societies. It is sometimes such internal threats that make states susceptible to external attacks.

Avner Yenor, a Russian military scholar, was thus right when he stated that

the ability of a nation to survive in conflict or even to win a war hinges not only on its military capabilities, but also on economic potential for war and the level of social mobilisation. Over emphasizing one of these elements of national security while disregarding the others may be natural in the course of a brief crises, but it could be disastrous in the long term (Yenor, 1985, p.25).

For the public to be mobilised to defend the Nation, they must also be allowed access to the public interest at stake.

National Security as Avner Yenor stated above, does not therefore, have to do with military defence alone. The concept of National Security must be located where it rightly belongs by attaching to it a broader meaning that emphasizes not only development in the military or defence sense; but also political, economic and social development of the society. This encompasses good governance and nation building as well. Development is thus a central concept in our understanding of National Security. There is, in fact, a dialectical relationship between the concept of development (which depicts both quantitative and qualitative improvements in the conditions of existence of a nation and its nationals) and national security. This includes improvement in the political, economic and social conditions (Mou, 2016; 2017).

According to Robert McNamara, a one-time President of the World Bank,

as development progresses, security progresses, and when the people of a nation-state have organised their own human and natural resources to provide themselves with what they use and expect out of life, and have learnt to compromise peacefully among competing demands in the larger national interest, then their resistance to disorder and violence will enormously increase (McNamara, 1968, p.12).

As a matter of fact, no country, no matter the level of military development, can be regarded as secure, if its economy continues to be described as a predicament, if unemployment, poverty, hunger and inequality continue to exacerbate.

National Security has also been seen by Dan Mou (2017, 2018) as protecting the interest of the dominant group/elite, who control the commanding heights of the economy, including the security apparatuses of the State. It is again seen by him as all efforts aimed at protecting the strategic interest and way of life of the people in a given society, by defending the territorial integrity, cultural values and norms of the society (Mou, 2017; 2018). Mou has further postulated that National Security Systems or Architectures are of different types or varieties. Their efficacies also differ greatly as we see below (Mou, 2017; 2018).

III VARIETIES OF NATIONAL SECURITY SYSTEMS OR ARCHITECTURES

In his recent book **National Security, Democracy and Good Governance in Post-Military Rule Nigeria**, Volumes one and two (2017), Dan Mou has demonstrated that there are basically two broad approaches for classifying the different varieties of national security systems or architectures. These are:

First, is what Mou (2017, 2018) calls the Dominant Ideology Classification of varieties of National Security Systems or Architectures. This approach categorizes national security systems or architectures as follows:

- a. Captured National Security System (CNSS) or Architecture: Under this situation, Mou argues that the dominant interests of a given social cleavage or a set of them in that society, have taken control of the State security apparatuses, so that the national security policy and objectives are influenced by the elite group. This group uses the nation's security apparatuses as the oppressive tool for their economic and political exploitation of others (Mou, 2018). The interests of the public, defined as whatever in the society that is for the common good of all, will not be a priority under this system or architecture of national security. The information for public consumption will also be distorted to suit the interests of that particular social cleavage elite. Opposition media houses tend to be oppressed with government machinery (Mou, 2018). A classical example is apartheid period in South Africa, where the government security apparatuses were used for the interest of the minority white people. It was also practiced in Germany during the

rule of the Nazis, led by Adolf Hitler (Mou, 2018). In fact, it is a common security architecture or system that operates in most nations, in different degrees, including in Nigeria, as we shall see below.

- b. Autonomous National Security System (ANSS) or Architecture: This, according to Mou (2018), exists where the state security apparatuses are operating independently of the dominant elites or classes in that society. National Security policy and its apparatuses, are more rational and objective in carrying out state policy, implementation and security policies that concern/cater for all its citizens. Security information management therefore, is easier since public interest and national security become similar (Mou, 2017). This type of security architecture currently operates mainly in industrialised nations, such as the USA, USSR, China, Germany, Britain, etc.
- c. Relatively Autonomous National Security System (RANSS) or Architecture: This position presupposes that the national security apparatus is neither captured nor autonomous (Mou, 2018). In most democracies, national security is relatively autonomous because they cater to some extent, for the common good of all citizens. The state operates a policy of freedom of information as the media have access and are empowered to seek for information. However, laws of secrecy exist and not all information is available at all times to the public (Mou, 2017).

The second broad approach, Mou (Mou, 2018) postulates, is the Organizational Determinant Categorization of National Security Systems or Architectures:

This second approach also categorizes National Security or Architecture into three types. These are: (a) the Segmentary National Security System (SNSS) or Architecture; (b) the Coordinated National Security System (CNSS) or Architecture; and (c) the Integrated National Security System (INSS) or Architecture (Mou, 2017, 2018). The three key distinguishing words are: Segmentary, Coordinated and Integrated. Each of these National Security Systems or Architectures has its advantages and disadvantages, which are considered briefly below.

(a) Segmentary National Security System (SNSS) or Architecture

The Segmentary National Security System (SNSS) or Architecture tries to apply the principle of federalism or even Confederalism to the security of a country. Under this arrangement, the country's security arrangement is left to the individual military or security services or their special units (Mou, 2018). In the event of security threats, each Service adopts its own strategy in repelling the threat. Individual Service Chiefs or Heads of Security Agencies therefore, mobilise their men and weaponry in the defence

orsecuring of whatever target is threatened. There is little or no harmonization of efforts by the various Services or Agencies and no coordination of their attack/reaction to the enemy or enemies. There is usually little or no communication and reporting across Services or Agencies during the operations (Mou, 2016; 2017). With the exception of South Africa and Libya (during President Gadhafi), all other African countries (including Nigeria) have adopted the Segmentary Security System or Architecture at one time or the other, even though the degree of application varied from one country to the other.

In Nigeria, for instance, under the administrations of former Presidents Shehu Shagari and Goodluck Jonathan, the Military and other security Agencies all operated separately, with little coordination and integration between them and other Security Agencies. The same appears to be the case now even with the present President Muhammadu Buhari Administration (Mou, 2018). This became more visible in their different strategies and operations regarding the control of the Herdsmen and Farmers conflicts and clashes all over the Nation, but especially in the North Central Zone of Nigeria (Mou, 2018). In the event of any security threat, as is the case with the Herdsmen and Farmers clashes, therefore, these Services reacted differently, with little coordination and integration of their efforts. This same SNSS is what was applied under former President Jonathan that is apparently being utilised under President Buhari in the war against Boko Haram. Hence, despite President Buhari's personal commitment, political will and allocation of a lot of resources, Boko Haram is still to be wiped out. The limit of the segmentary national security system or architecture, the SNSS, in our view, is also mainly what is hindering the successful conclusions of the military/national security operations throughout the country, including the failure to address decisively the Herdsmen and Farmers conflicts, all over the nation.

For instance, instead of the Armed Forces Coordinating efforts, with the Nigeria Police Force and other security Agencies, they always order the Nigerian Police Force, even the Police Special Terrorist Units, to withdraw before they start their own operations, as it was the case with the "Cat Race" operation "Ayem a Kpatuma" in the North Central, particularly Benue State.

(b) Coordinated National Security System (CNSS) or Architecture

The CNSS ensures that all Services, Agencies and Units assigned with the responsibility of national Security are closely monitored and supervised. This is close to the INSS approach, except that in this case, the Agencies and Units are not brought under one top

command umbrella. The closest example of coordinated national security system in operation in Nigeria, was during the Governments of General I.B. Babangida at the time of Alhaji Muhammadu Gambo Jimeta as the National Security Adviser (NSA) (Mou, 2017).

(c) The Integrated National Security System (INSS) or Architecture

The INSS or Architecture is the most comprehensive approach to National Security yet devised. It has also proved, in practice, more effective than the rest discussed here so far. It is variously referred to by security and strategic studies experts as the “multi-services” or “multi-faceted national” security system. In Nigeria, this approach has been adopted only by General Yakubu Gowon, during the Civil (Biafra War) of 1967-1970; General Aliyu Mohammed Gusau when he was the National Security Adviser under the regimes of General I.B. Babangida, Chief Ernest Shonekan and Chief Olusegun Obasanjo. It was also adopted by Alhaji Ismaila Gwarzo, during General Sani Abacha’s regime. This INSS or Architecture stated above, is a comprehensive and demanding approach to National Security. It is also the most effective and efficient one ever devised so far (Mou, 2018). All advanced countries, such as the USA, USSR, China, France and Germany use it.

It demands for the appointment of Deputy National Security Advisers, since you cannot expect a Director in the Office of the NSA to preside over the meetings of Service Chiefs and Heads of Security Agencies, in the absence of the NSA himself or in Special Committees that have to be formed for regular consultations on operations and strategies, that are needed under the INSS or Architecture to be carried out. It is like saying the Inspector-General of Police should “sack” or not allow the President to appoint the Deputy Inspectors-General and Assistant Inspectors-General of Police and operate instead only with Commissioners of Police. Of course, if that happens, the effectiveness and efficiency of the Nigerian Police Force will go down dramatically. This will affect effective policing across the whole country.

Yet, this is exactly what Col. Sambo Dasuki did with the Office of the NSA when he was the NSA during President Jonathan’s Administration and the present NSA, Gen. BabaganaMongunu has done in the Office of the NSA currently under President Buhari Administration. This is because they have adopted the Segmentary National Security System or Architecture. We have already discussed the characteristics, implications and consequences of adopting this kind of Security Architecture for the nation above.

Any National Security Policy expert will most likely conclude that the National Security Policy and implementation will suffer greatly under the SNSS model. They will also predict long term or medium term failure of any Nation that is operating this Segmentary National Security System. That was why the French and American Security Policy Organisations, predicted that

Nigeria will collapse in 2013 and 2015 respectively. This is because nation building suffers the most under the SNSS, and new security challenges continue to come, that are not anticipated or attended to in time. Also, old ones cannot be effectively and efficiently dealt with under this model. Soon, the Military and Security Agencies become overwhelmed by the multiplication of security threats to the Nation. This is usually the root cause of what makes a Nation to become a “failed State” (Mou, 2017, 2018). This is exactly what is happening in Nigeria at the moment (Mou, 2018). Hence, the Military is now directly involved in Internal Security Operations in the thirty States out of the thirty-six States in Nigeria. They are trying desperately to prevent Nigeria from becoming a “failed State”. Without these direct involvements of the military in international security operations, Nigeria would have since become a “failed state”!

To operate the Integrated National Security System or Architecture under the Gen. Babangida regime, Gen. Aliyu Mohammed Gusau, the then NSA, had to appoint in the Office of the NSA, three (3) Deputy National Security Advisers, viz: Alhaji Zakari Ibrahim as DNSA (Admin. & Finance); Ambassador Adamu Mohammed as DNSA (International and Liaison); Engr. David Awoniyi as DNSA (Technical) and Chief (Mrs.) Ayo as Permanent Secretary (National Security) and Dr. Dan Mou as Special Adviser(National Security Matters) to the NSA, just like Gambo did. Hence, the Government of Babangida was able to handle effectively and efficiently the security challenges of that era – which included the then “Boko Haram” – Maitatsine Militant Islamic Religious sect and the very serious security consequences of the dramatic economic and political policies that Gen. Babangida was operating, which earned him the nick name of “Maradona.” It was the Integrated National Security System and staff that Gen. Gusau put in place that Alhaji Ismaila Gwarzo inherited, including Dr. Dan Mou as his Special Adviser (National Security Affairs). It was Alhaji Gwarzo who took over from Gen. Mohammed Guzau as the NSA under Gen. Abacha regime. This was how Alhaji Ismaila Gwarzo also operated an Integrated National Security System or Architecture during Abacha’s regime.

Basically, according to Mou (2018), an INSS seeks to integrate the Armed Forces and the various Security Agencies and Units into a singular National Security Strategy. This involves the full participation of those concerned in National Security Policy making and implementation. It calls not just for coordination of all the Armed Forces Services and the Security Agencies and Units concerned with, and engaged in, any form of National Security matter, but their full integration under the NSA.

More than any other period in the history of Nigeria, the Military and other Security Agencies are new (2018) simultaneously engaged in major internal security operations. As we write, they are engaged in these operations in the six geo-political zones of the country in the thirty States out of the thirty six in Nigeria.

These major internal security operations include the war against terrorism, the Boko Haram war, the deadly herdsmen/farmers clashes, cattle rustling, kidnapping, oil theft and pipeline vandalism. Other joint interventions which even cover the whole nation include: the joint police/military security outfits against criminal activities, such as armed robbery in the thirty six States of the Federation and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. Thus, military personnel are now deployed all over the country in operations that should normally be police and other Security Agencies' operations. This is because political, social and economic integration in the country is currently at its lowest state.

IV TOO NUMEROUS INTERNAL SECURITY OPERATIONS: PREVENTING NIGERIA FROM BECOMING A “FAILED STATE”?

To give a sense of what we are discussing here, it is perhaps necessary to state some of these military involvements in internal security operations, with the other Security Agencies. These various operations involve huge deployment of military assets and manpower. They are also being prosecuted simultaneously at a period of dwindling national revenue and protracted war against terrorism and insurgency that has lasted over eight years, thereby stretching the military too thin. Yet, without them, Nigeria can easily slip into a “failed State” (Mou, 2018). When classified by Zones in Nigeria, they include the following:

1. North-East Zone:

- (i) Operation Lafiya Dole: This operation handles the overall counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency operations with expanded scope, scale and depth comprising three divisions and more than five States.
- (ii) Operation Crackdown: This is a specialized operation to wind down the war against insurgents and clear the remnants of the Boko Haram Sect in the Sambisa Forest.
- (iii) Operation Gama Aiki: This operation serves the same purpose as the Operation Crackdown, in the northern part of Borno State.
- (iv) Operation Safe Corridor: This operation was set up for the de-radicalism and rehabilitation of repentant Boko Haram terrorists.

2. North Central Zone

- (i) Operation Save Haven: This operation headquartered at Jos, Plateau State, covers a wide area, which extends to Benue, Kogi, Nasarawa and Kwara State. What the public and the media have had a field day debating is the name of the Operation, “Save Haven for who?” Many have concluded that its main target was to create “Safe Haven” for the herdsmen and their cattle. In other words, it was an operation to establish what became known as the “Cattle Colony Policy” of the Federal Government of Nigeria by force of arms.

The Military and other Security Agencies, have however explained the purpose and objectives of the operation differently. They argued that it is designed to quell ethno-religious conflicts and other criminal activities in the Middle Belt of Nigeria.

- (ii) Operation “AyemAkpatuma”, a Tiv language phrase translated as “Operation Cat Race”: This operation was launched after the repeated massive killings by herdsmen in the North Central, especially in Benue, Nasarawa, Taraba and Plateau States. This reckless killings of the natives in these States resulted in the massive killings of 1st January, 2018, in Benue State, that terminated the lives of seventy-three (73) indigenes of the State that were given mass burial recently. This incident generated a lot of uproar, both at home in Nigeria and abroad. This then gave birth to the Operation “AyemAkpatuma”.

3. North West Zone

- (i) Operation Sara Daji: This operation was commenced with President Buhari himself, in his capacity as the President and Commander-in-Chief of the Nigerian Armed Forces in full Military camouflage regalia. Its main purpose was to deal with cattle rustlers and armed bandits that were operating particularly in Zamfara, Kaduna, Kebbi, Sokoto, Kano and Katsina States.
- (ii) Operation Harbin Kunama: This operation was launched to complement the **Operation Sara Deji** and they shared the same purpose, objectives and operational areas.

4. South South Zone

- (i) Operation Delta Safe: This operation was to secure the oil wells, pipelines and all the activities involved in the strategic petroleum activities that takes place in the Zone. It covers all the oil producing States. It was also aimed at crushing the Niger Delta Militants.
- (ii) Operation Pulo Shield: This was also launched in the South-South Zone and it shared the same purpose, objective and operation areas as the **Operation Delta Safe**. These include crushing the resurgent Niger Delta Militancy and other acts of criminality, like oil theft, vandalism, and bunkering in the region.

5. South West Zone

- (i) Operation Awase: This operation Awase covers the whole of the South West. Its brief was to contain the criminal operations around Ogun-Lagos axis, particularly in the Arepo where illegal bunkering and pipeline vandalism are regular occurrences.

6. South East Zone

- (i) Operation Iron Fence: The purpose of this operation was to combat armed robbers, hooligans and kidnapers.
- (ii) Operation Python Dance I and II: The major aim of these operations were to quell the growing agitations for the separatist movement led by Mr. Nnamdi Kanu to create a “new Nation of Biafra”.
- (iii) Operation Mesa: Operation Mesa, unlike the others that were mainly conducted by the Military, was a Joint Task Force (JTF). It was targeted against all forms of criminal activities in all the States of the Federation.

V. THE CHALLENGES OF RESTRUCTURING THE POLITY

It is not surprising, that any mention of Constitutional Review and Restructuring tend to generate several reactions from the different sectors and social groups in the society. This is because the Constitution is the basic legal document that stipulates the power relationships between individuals, groups, corporate bodies and Governments. That Constitutions provide the basic framework for the conduct of affairs in modern societies is already well-known. Any review or restructuring, therefore, is seen by the various ethnic groups, sub-national units, and social classes as an opportunity to tilt the legal document in their favour (Mou and Watanabe, 1986). Basically then, it can be seen that Constitutions are as much the harvest of the political and economic experiences of modern societies as well as anticipations of future ones. Constitutional Review and Restructuring, therefore, become arena for power struggle for the subordination, emancipation or dislodgement by the previously subordinate or dominant ethnic groups and classes, real or imagined.

The anticipatory role of any Constitution, though probably the most problematic, has scarcely received much attention by public commentators, scholars, and politicians alike, comparable to its static sections and clauses, for instance (Hon, 2016). In countries such as France, China and Nigeria, the anticipatory roles of their ‘old’ Constitutions, have been clearly unsatisfactory. This is manifest in the fact that they have repeatedly undergone substantial revisions, total abolition or have remarkably been amended or restructured.

In contemplating any Constitutional review or restructuring in Nigeria therefore, the Government has to avoid the temptation of being constrained by the prevailing public temperaments, if Nigeria is to produce a document that will stand the test of time and protect her present and long-term national interests. This cannot be possible if the Government in power, pretends to be completely neutral to the form, character, proceedings and outcome of a Constitutional review or restructuring.

As Managers of the State, holders of State power, whether at the Executive, Legislative or Judicial Arms, have the wanton responsibility of ensuring that the National Security and long-term interests of the nation over which they preside are not allowed to be undermined or even sacrificed at the altar of any Constitutional Review or Restructuring. This section of the paper analysis the various ethnic, regional and other sectional agenda that are being advocated for inclusion for consideration in the constitutional review and socio-political restructuring, that are the hottest issues in Nigeria at the moment. It also discusses what should constitute the Government's stand vis-à-vis the various sectional interests.

There are prevailing public temperaments that currently inform the public opinion in Nigeria. These obviously have beclouded the views of different ethnic groups, regions, and States over the proposed Constitutional Restructuring. It is true that certain groups, especially the radical and human rights movements, have been advocating for one form of National Restructuring or the other, to deal with what they consider as the "National Question". These agitations have become highly magnified to the extent that other regional and ethnic groups have also joined. These have to be addressed so as to place into proper perspective the limitations and modalities needed to be placed on the extent of the restructuring, if it is to be done, by the Government in power.

For ease of analytical convenience, the Nigerian political, social, economic and security conditions which will invariably affect the Constitutional Restructuring, will be discussed here under the following headings:

- (i) The Political Integration Dimension;

- (ii) The Economic Integration Dimension;
- (iii) The Social Integration Dimension;
- (iv) The Institutional/Legal Integration Dimension; and
- (v) The Security Integration Dimension.

(i) THE POLITICAL INTEGRATION DIMENSION

Politics is about power and the game of power sharing. Mainstream social science research sees politics essentially as the authoritative allocation of valued resources in the society (Easton, 1963). These “valued resources” could either be material or status in nature. It could be for a nation, region, an ethnic group, or some other form of socio-political configuration or even an individual.

But we do know that politics is also about the legitimation of the prevailing social system. This is because, inherent in human society, such authoritative allocations tend to be unequal in the perception of those who compose such a society, whether real or imagined. Thus, legitimation becomes necessary to prevent such a society from falling apart or disintegrating.

The debate over political power in Nigeria recently, has elevated the issue of power sharing into what has popularly become known as the “National Question”. National Question deals with the forms and patterns of power sharing within a nation-state among the social cleavages that exist in that society. By social cleavages here we mean, those divisions in a society that are based on class, gender, ethnicity, regionalism, language, religion, caste, race, and even statism.

Another way of ensuring that the Constitutional Restructuring does not degenerate into an avenue for precipitating the disintegration of Nigeria is by insisting, as the Government has already done, that the unity of Nigeria is **NOT** contestable. This is very important because, already, certain radical, regional and ethnic groups or even eminent personalities, are advocating for a National restructuring through a Sovereign Conference. Basically, a Constitutional Conference is one in which selected and/or elected eminent citizens meet to debate and suggest revisions to an existing Constitution of their country, which they forward to the regime in power and the existing legislature for consideration and passing them into law, if agreed by the regime, or the National Assembly accordingly. In this case, Constitutional Conferences are by nature advisory.

A Sovereign National Conference on the other hand, is one in which eminent citizens are elected and/or chosen and assembled to debate the state of the Nation, including, of course, its Constitution; the outcome of which will not be referred to the Government in power or even the National Assembly for approval, before their implementations become obligatory on the regime in power. The outcomes are sometimes not even subjected to a National Referendum, before they become law and subject to implementation at all cost by the Government in power.

My suggestion, on this is that the sovereignty of these debates and conclusions should be limited. Whatever decisions they arrive at should be subjected to the approval of the National Assembly. In this way, Government would be able to forestall the promulgation into law of certain decisions that may be arrived at out of these deliberations which might be antithetical to our national interest. There is even no need for any Constitutional Conference. The National Assembly should be allowed to handle it.

(ii) **THE ECONOMIC INTEGRATION DIMENSION**

Part of the Nigerian public sentiments that might have some negative impacts on the deliberations on restructuring, when it is convened by the National Assembly, relates to the economic situation in the nation. Inherent in the capitalist developmental approach, which Nigeria adopted at independence, are regional inequalities. Capitalism, by its very logic, does not promote even-development. In the Nigerian case, Governments over the years, have attempted to arrest this unfortunate consequence through the instrumentality of National Planning. But the goals of even-development and inclusive growth are still far from being attained.

It is true that structural inequalities exist, both in resources endowment and location of industries, in Nigeria. Some of these uneven-development date back to the pre-colonial days. Others are as a result of nature. But there are some that could be regarded as man-made, that is, the quality of the leadership Nigeria has had at the various levels of government. Whatever the sources of such uneven development or economic inequalities in Nigeria, the truth is that it would affect the form and manner of contributions that the different regions, states, or even ethnic groups would

make regarding the Constitutional review or restructuring. Some of these are already manifested in the various paid publications that have appeared in Magazines and Newspapers since the Government made public its intention to consider a Constitutional review or restructuring.

There is abundant historical evidence in Nigeria to suggest that under severe economic hardships, as have now been occasioned, it becomes difficult for social cleavages to appreciate Nigeria's unity and the benefits of a united country. This is because deepening economic crises tend to generate more societal conflicts and anxieties, based on social cleavages that are quite detrimental to national unity and cohesion. The fact is that as the economic fortunes of the society shrink as a result of the deepening economic hardships, these classes and cultural pluralist conflicts tend to increase. The struggle for resources or as Nigerians love to put it, the "National Cake", becomes more intense.

All social cleavages or factions thereof, attempt to hijack the national cake for their exclusive use, particularly if it is located within their territorial area or soil. Corruption also increases as office holders engage in favouritism and primitive accumulation of capital for their personal, ethnic, or regional benefits. These developments make it very difficult for those who would want to continue to preserve the unity and territorial integrity of the whole nation-state. Sub-national agitations by ethnic or regional groups from those areas from which the central and subordinate governments are getting most of their resources or revenue, tend to want to secede from the nation with the selfish motive of commandeering these resources for their exclusive benefits.

No region in Nigeria can claim to be innocent from these selfish manoeuvres. For instance, when groundnut and other agricultural produce such as beniseed that are based in the Northern part of Nigeria were yielding a lot of foreign exchange, the North capitalized on that to agitate for the Northern Region to become a separate country in 1953.

Similarly, when cocoa and palm produce exports derivable mainly from the Western Region of Nigeria were yielding a lot of foreign exchange for the nation, the West, led by the Yorubas, canvassed severely for their autonomy as a separate nation. They sought autonomy from the rest

of Nigeria, first in 1954 and again in 1964 – ten years after. It is the same selfish sentiments and the desire to hijack resources of a region for the exclusive use by that region, that made the Eastern Region to declare their secession from the rest of Nigeria in 1967 and plunged this country into a devastating civil war, the Biafran War. The resources at stake here were the oil, petroleum, and its allied products, which were discovered massively in the area and for which commercial exploitation had begun yielding extensive foreign exchange for the nation.

It should not come to us as a surprise, therefore, that during debate the Constitutional review and restructuring in Nigeria, oil has again surfaced as a motivating factor for the Southern minorities, even when they are as small in population as the Ogonis, to still want to be an independent nation of their own so as to have total monopoly over the oil revenue from their land.

The present development too has arisen because of the prevailing economic conditions which now force all the component parts of Nigeria and their fortunes to be dependent on the oil industry. This is because exports from all other sectors combined are still less than 10% of the Nigerian national foreign exchange. The remaining 90% is from the oil sector alone. Thus, the oil sector brings the greatest part of the oil revenue coming into the Federation Account from which the Federal Government makes routine allocations to itself as well as to the other tiers of government (States and Local Governments). It is because of this basic fact that the oil producing areas have now constituted themselves into a serious threat to Nigeria's unity by agitating for their independence from Nigeria or Confederalism.

One must carefully note the fact that, when these oil producing States, for instance, are not threatening secession; they are still calling for a re-negotiation of the minimum new terms that will favour them mostly, if Nigeria must continue to exist as one entity with them as an integral part. The clarion call by them now is for some form of Confederation, if not for their total independence. Oil has really become an instrument for regional and ethnic chauvinism and agitations of disunity for Nigeria today.

It is now a matter for history - that has to be quickly redressed - to note that Nigeria oil reserves are not concentrated only on the soils of the Southern minorities. Records show clearly that, in the early days of independence when Nigeria was busy prospecting for oil, large quantities were also found in the Benue Valley, the Niger Valley and stretching all the way through Katsina and Borno States to the Lake Chad Valley. It is now a matter for mere regret that no national resources were committed, to the same degree as was done within the lands of the Southern minorities, to exploit these oil reserves in the North. It is again the uneven-development in the oil industry across the country, even though oil reserves were discovered in commercial quantities also in the North, that has now become a weapon of blackmail of the rest of Nigeria by the Southern minorities.

The importance of the forgoing discussion is that no reasonable regime can allow selfish agitations, based on the contemporary economic conditions in the country, to destroy the unity of this great nation for which a lot of blood was spilt to keep as one. While individual regions, states, and even ethnic groups may fail to see the long-term benefits of remaining together because of their myopic economic considerations; it is the responsibility of the central Government to look ahead and prevent the disintegration of Nigeria under the current threats of oil politics by the Southern minorities. This, we believe, can be done in two ways: First, the Federal Government must insist that the unity of this country is not open to debate and therefore, completely disregard the agitations by the oil producing or other States that are targeted at dismembering the country. While they should be allowed to table their case for fair treatment; they should be prevented from raising extra-territorial matters that border on separatist ambitions. Second, the Federal Government must quickly institute action to develop oil industries in the North where petroleum resources have already been discovered. This will bring a new twist to oil politics in Nigeria thereby promoting our national unity and cohesion.

(iii) THE SOCIAL INTEGRATION DIMENSION

Public temperaments having to do with the social AUTONOMY dimension in our society can be divided into two broad and distinct categories. The first set are those that relate to the nature of

our social structure. This is what we have referred to above as the social cleavages existing in Nigeria.

The second set has to do with what is generally referred to in Nigeria as social services. These include the performance of government agencies that are responsible for the provision of social services in Nigeria. Some of these agencies include National Electric Power Authority (NEPA) now known as Power Holding Company of Nigeria (PHCN), Nigerian Postal Services (NIPOST), Nigerian Telecommunications Limited (NITEL), etc. The critical social problems here hinge on poor performance and massive corruption, as we shall show below.

Within the social problems, a few will be discussed simply as illustrations of the kinds of problems they pose for the Constitutional review and restructuring, in particular, and Nigerian unity in general. Those to be discussed here are ethnic chauvinism and religious bigotry.

(a) Ethnic Chauvinism

It is already a known fact that with the approach of independence and the talk of introduction of a British model of liberal democracy, there came avenues for the display of ethnic sentiments. Nigerians who had made their fame in their strong nationalist agitations such as Nnamdi Azikiwe, Obafemi Awolowo, Tafawa Balewa, to name only a few, saw an opportunity in the emerging politics of numbers to seek ways of taking over from the colonial administrators. In their desire for political power, they evoked ethnic and regional symbols in order to appeal to the majority of people who were, largely, politically unsophisticated. The truth is that Nigeria's problems, since independence, have derived in large measure from the tensions, anxieties, and fears which have arisen between the various ethnic groups. Yet, the hostilities between them came about not from the ethnic differences themselves; but from the utilization of ethnic symbols and myths by a few ethnic chauvinistic leaders. These leaders, in their search for wealth and political power, evoke ethnicity and regionalism when they fail to accomplish their aims on other platforms.

In the on going debate on efforts at organizing a Constitutional review or restructuring, some ethnic and regional leaders that have started to advocate strongly for a Confederal System. Confederalism is an arrangement which calls for the down-grading of the powers of the centre and re-enforcing those of the sub-national units. These sub-national units could be ethnic groups, Regions, States, or Local Governments. The aim here is to create for themselves very powerful regions over which they hope to preside. It is in this light that we have seen the emergence of regional leaders and associations, such as the Northern Elders Forum, the Yoruba Forum, the Ibo Forum, the Middle Belt Forum, Committee for the Defence of the Southern Minority Rights, etc.

As it is to be expected, four types of autonomy are currently being agitated for by some of these regional groupings. First, is the economic or financial autonomy of the sub-national units. Here, it is argued that the resources of a particular region, state or even ethnic group should be left primarily for the exclusive benefits of the region, state or ethnic group from which they are derived.

Second, the security or monopoly of force autonomy. Here, regions, such as the South-South and the West, are now advocating for a separate Police Force and a regional Army. But we do know that such demands, even when they occur under the guise of Confederalism, are nothing but steps towards separatism.

The third category of autonomy such regional and ethnic champions are looking for is the institutional or administrative autonomy. Here, they argue, perhaps erroneously, that the membership of their ethnic groups in the Federal Civil Service is less than what it should have been. It is, therefore, better for them to seek to establish their powerful regional governments where their educated youths would also get greater opportunities to actualize themselves rather than be bugged down under the “yoke” of Federal Character as enshrined in the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Thus, the Federal Character principle, which was supposed to be a mechanism for promoting unity, fairness and equal

representation throughout the Federation is now misunderstood and misrepresented as a “regional tool” for the Northern part of Nigeria to “dominate” the Federal Civil Service.

The fourth kind of autonomy some of these regional leaders are seeking for is legal autonomy. Here, they believe strongly that if allowed the autonomy to operate in their regions without too much control from the central government, they would be able to formulate those laws that will better cater for their interests. But, we do know that regionalization, which prompted such disintegrative policies, such as “Northernisation Policy” for the North, “the East for the Easterners Policy” in the then Eastern Region, and “the West is Yoruba and Yoruba is West Policy” for the Western Region, served to perpetuate disunity which invariably led to the civil war, beginning 1967.

Part of the reasons for the resurgence of interests in Confederalism and regional autonomy, perhaps, relate to the fact that the intervention of the military in our polity, reinforced unitary tendencies. These, in turn, undermined the federalism principles which allowed for the sharing of power and responsibilities between the Federal, States and Local Governments, with the Federal Government having more powers and responsibilities than the rest, thereby acting as a senior partner in a mutual relationship.

An assessment of the Nigerian ethnic condition leads us to several conclusions. First, that the Nigerian Government should not allow the establishment of armies along regional lines since this will promote disunity and likely balkanization of the country in future. Having one central army for the country should also be considered as a settled issue that should not be open to debate in any Constitutional review or restructuring considerations to be held in Nigeria. However, the possibility of allowing the partial localization of the Police Force could be discussed. State Police, therefore, could be allowed for states that can afford it.

Second, we believe that the principle of federalism should also be regarded by the Nigerian Government as a settled issue, not open to debate at any such discussions. At best, delegates could be allowed to discuss only how to make the Federal System in Nigeria to work even better. Even this, should better be conducted under the auspices of the National Assembly.

Third, it is our view that the Federal character clause in the Nigerian Constitution was designed to promote social justice, unity and fair representation of the diverse social cleavages in Nigeria. It should, therefore, be regarded by the Nigerian Government as a “no go area” for the delegates at any Constitutional review or restructuring fora in Nigeria, now or in future.

In fact, we believe that the principle of Federal Character should be more closely enforced, not just in the Public Service, but also in political appointments, the mass media, admission to Government schools, the economy, and in the nomination of Ambassadors to foreign countries.

(b) Religious Bigotry and Fundamentalism

As we have just seen, in the 1960s, it used to be believed that the greatest challenge to nation-building and political co-existence in Nigeria was ethnicity. This is partially correct, given that ethnicity was at the heart of the Nigerian civil war of 1967-1970. In present day Nigeria, however, it is difficult to talk of a Constitutional review or restructuring that will lead to political stability and greater unity, without making reference to the phenomena of religion and religious bigotry.

Since the end of the civil war, religious conflicts appear to be the greatest threat to the internal peace and harmony in Nigeria. Many well-meaning Nigerians now earnestly fear that the ghost of religious bigotry, if not prevented by government, will rear its ugly head again beyond the current war with Boko Haram in the North East.

Three basic propositions characterize the relationship between the State (Government) and Religion. It is important for us to briefly discuss these options so as to conclude on which one the Nigerian Government should continue to adopt towards its major religious groups. These are:-

- (i) The atheistic option;
- (ii) The totalitarian or assimilationist option; and

(i) The State neutrality option.

The atheistic option requires that secularly based ideology be adopted by the State. The important point is that under this arrangement, the State does not recognize religion as a basic unit for sharing power, wealth or social amenities.

In the case of totalitarian or assimilationist option, there is usually one particular religion taken and elevated over and above others. In the totalitarian case, other religions are then prevented by force. This, we do not recommend for Nigeria. In the assimilationist case, however, followers of other religions are persuaded or co-opted, through incentives, to join the preferred religion.

The third option – the State neutrality option, is where all religions are allowed to prosper and are considered as equals by the State. The State tries to stay out of religious matters, acting simply as a neutral agent. In this case, State’s secularity and impartiality to religions are the norm. This is the model we will recommend to continue to exist in Nigeria. This is because we strongly believe that it is more suited for a multi-religious society such as ours. In this case, our opinion is that religion too should be considered as a “no go area” for the delegates to any Constitutional review or restructuring fora. In Nigeria, religious secularity and impartiality are already sufficiently enshrined in our 1999 Constitution.

(iv) Public Enterprises and Social Services

In their speeches on assumption of power, in post-military rule Nigeria, all Nigerian Presidents dwelt extensively on the conditions of Nigeria’s public enterprises and social services. These have also assumed a major dimension in public sentiments and perceptions which have already been expressed in some of the paid advertisements in the country’s newspapers and magazines. Three aspects of public enterprises have particularly been singled out for public concern and debate recently in the newspapers. The first has to do with the poor performance of these enterprises; the second relates to the level of corruption that exists within these parastatals; whereas the third has to do with occupants of the boards and top management positions within these parastatals.

There is no question that public enterprises such as NITEL, NIPOST, PHCN, Ports Authority, General Hospitals, and so forth, are clearly performing below expectation. This is particularly worrisome when seen against the background that the costs of their services have continuously gone up; whereas the services themselves have either remained stagnant or have significantly degenerated. There is need to, instead, ensure their penetration even to rural areas for even “the poor” to benefit from them.

On the question of public corruption, the general public is already very excited that a sense of discipline and accountability appeared to have returned back to Nigeria, with the creation of the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) and the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) under Olusegun Obasanjo regime. In fact, the numerous probes that had been inaugurated since the A.P.C. Government took over power under President Buhari already been inaugurated had served to illustrate to the public that corruption would be truly and comprehensively tackled. The point to note, however, is that crimes, such as corruption and the notorious “419”, could better be addressed by providing alternative avenues for the public, especially the young generation, to actualize themselves and accumulate resources for their future. There is, therefore, the need to find out more efficient and realistic ways of comprehensively tackling the issue of public corruption and the “419” crimes in Nigeria that allows the youth to actualize themselves profitably.

Another aspect of the public enterprises debate that is bound to surface at any Constitutional review or restructuring relates to the issues of ethnicity, regionalism, and religious bigotry as well as Federal Character, already discussed above. Newspapers and Magazines are full of paid advertisements indicating that some ethnic groups, regions or even religious groups are, usually, favoured in appointments as Chief Executives or Chairmen and members of these parastatals. The view here is that if the clause of Federal Character as enshrined in our Constitution, had been fully applied; such complaints, perhaps, might not have arisen. On this note, we further suggest that the Government should ensure the retention of the Federal Character clause in the Nigerian Constitution. In short, the only way of ensuring this is to consider the question of

Federal Character, as enshrined in the Constitution, as one of the settled issues and not subject to debate at any Constitutional review or restructuring forum in Nigeria.

(v) THE INSTITUTIONAL/LEGAL INTEGRATION DIMENSION

A lot of public discourse now also relates to the type of Government, or for that matter the form, government should take in the restructured or revised Constitution to be arrived at. Two areas will be specifically addressed here. The first relates to the form or type of government to be adopted; while the second has to do with the party system.

Whatever it is, it is clear now that Nigerians have experimented with the Presidential System in the two party arrangement and the parliamentary system with a multi-party arrangement (1960-1966). In the recent debate regarding the Constitutional review or restructuring, public opinion clearly differs on this matter. On the one hand, there were those who feel that there has been no problem with the 1979 and 1989 Constitutions. The problem had been with the operators. In which case, it is simply a waste of time and resources to engage in another Constitutional review, in the first place. On the other hand, there are those who feel that our experience with the Presidential system had already proved it to be too expensive and are already calling for a return to the parliamentary model.

We beg to disagree with those who say that calling for a Constitutional review or restructuring now is a waste of time. However, we would like to side with those who have expressed the view that having tried the Parliamentary and Presidential Systems, as well as the multi-party and two party systems, we are now better placed to make a decision on which one could be best for Nigeria. In short, the operations of the two political parties created by the General Ibrahim. B. Babangida Government, **the National Republican Convention (NRC) and the Socialist Democratic Party (SDP)**, have now given us the necessary raw materials with which to review this thinking.

We had discovered that the policy of funding political parties and providing for their other logistical support, such as vehicles and offices, had tended to elevate the two political parties into

some kind of mega government parastatals that had constituted very serious burden on the economic resources of Federal Government. Party officials and chieftains at the Federal, State and Local levels, saw themselves as managers of government parastatals in the “oil boom” era, who never thought of how to generate resources for themselves, but only of how to spend. They tended to rely entirely on government subventions for their operational and fixed costs. It is the view here, therefore, that no political party should be funded in future beyond the level that will be or is provided for in the Constitution.

As it concerns the type or form of government, some have said that there may also be need to re-examine the Presidential System once more. Having watched a full blown Presidential system in operation, one had come to realize that, given our fragile economic base, an expensive political superstructure such as the Presidential System, may not be the best suitable for Nigeria, unless it is dramatically modified. Our opinion here is to the effect that what had made the Nigerian Presidential System expensive was public corruption and not the system itself. Now that the corruption problem is being seriously dealt with, there may be no need to abandon the Presidential System.

(vi) THE SECURITY (MILITARY/POLICE) INTEGRATION

The role of the military in Nigerian society has increasingly come under devastating attack recently. In fact, there are those who think that Nigeria’s current economic, political and social problems were caused by repeated military interventions in our polity. The call for a constitutional review or restructuring are also blamed on the military who clearly, because of their command style of Government introduced unitary elements in our Federalism.

There are some agitations for constitutional review or restructuring that are seeking to temper even with the position of the military in the Nigerian society. They are seeking to be allowed to have their Military and Police Force in their States or Regions/Zones. As we have stated above, why the possibility for creating State Police should be considered and even allowed for States who can afford it; no State should be given the autonomy to the level of setting up their own

military. This will give birth ultimately to struggle by such States or Zones for separatism. It should not be allowed under any guise.

VI CONCLUSION

In this paper, we have attempted to deal **with the role the Government should play** regarding the Constitutional calls for review and restructuring. It focused specifically on the limitations and modalities that the Government must inevitably place on it. It explains how this is to be done and provides the necessary rationale for such actions.

We then discussed the various political, economic, social, legal and even security reasons that are been presented by different social cleavages in Nigeria calling for constitutional review or restructuring. We made our pertinent recommendations in each case. On the whole, we agreed that there is need to proceed with the constitutional review or restructuring in Nigeria. However, there is no need to inaugurate any new body, be it a sovereign or none sovereign Constitutional Conference or Constituent Assembly. This should be the task to be conducted or at least midwived by the National Assembly. All previous Reports by previous such Constitutional Conferences should accordingly be passed over to the National Assembly for further necessary action. No need to waste more revenues setting up a new body to do it.

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