

THE IMPARATIVES OF RESTRUCTURING **IN NIGERIA**

BY

PROF. B.I.C. IJOMAH

B.A. Hons (UNN); M. A., Ph. D, (Northwestern); ANIAM; QAM; FIUS (Chicago)
Director General, Centre for Policy Studies and Research
Proprietor, Madonna International College, Asaba

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THE IMPARATIVES OF RESTRUCTURING

Preamble:

I have accepted to give this lecture because, as a Nigeria, I am worried about the pervasive ignorance of many people who have been writing on the need for *Restructuring Nigeria*. Those who oppose and those support restructuring, have been writing from palpable ignorance, cushioned on ethnic and regional sentiments, and the desire of some people to control or to continue to control what has emerged as the present structure which we call Nigeria.

Those who have been debating on the topic, do not know how Nigeria came to be what it is; whether what is, is working for the good of Nigeria, or whether Nigeria as it is, can tackle the problems of growth and development, and meaningfully face the challenges of growth and development in the 21st century struggle to contain the challenges globalization. I appeal to all Nigerians to put aside the desire to control Nigeria or to resist those who want to control Nigeria.

Let us honestly look at our country being ravaged by ignorance, greed, and visionless politics that does not want to honestly know what is wrong with our nation. All politicians are concerned about the *NEXT ELECTION*. None has the political perspicacity to look at the sinking ship of the nation, and to proffer solutions. There is the naïve sloganization of *CHANGE*. When you do not understand the problem, how can the proposed change be contingent on the socio-political realities of our time? Every President so far, has been overwhelmed by the glaring problems he thought he understood. We invite “experts” to help. The so-called experts are “*abstractive experts*” whose recommended solutions are not contingent on the social and political realities of the nation. I was

compelled on my 80th birthday two years ago to publish a book – Quo Vadis Nigeria? *Where are you going Nigeria?*

I make bold to ask all the emerging aspirants for the presidential election the same question: (**Quo Vadis?**). One will be shocked at the disarming ignorance of those who want to lead Nigeria.

THE NIGERIAN FEDERAL STRUCTURE: ITS GENESIS

We blamed colonialism for the woes and problems in Africa. The truth is that without colonialism, the existing structures in every African country would not have existed. There is therefore nothing sacrosanct about the present structures. The structures were handed down to us by the colonial rulers. If these structures are found to be unworkable, it is only reasonable that they should be studied for possible amendment so that the structure does not implode and be destroyed.

During the scramble for African, Africa was partitioned into about 50 or so geographic compartments. This compartmentalization followed the avarice and competition of Europeans who shared Africa without a knowledge of Africa. It is therefore reasonable that as soon as possible, these inherited structures should be re-assessed to justify their continued existence. President Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana viciously criticized these colonial contraptions, and tried to see if there could be some amendments.

The emergence of United Arab Republic (UAR), the United Republic of Tanzania, the attempted Union of Ghana, Mali and Guinea, were frantic responses to the inadequacies of the colonial creations.

If these colonial creations are not re-examined, African counties will be plagued by ethnic issues. In most African counties, Nationalism did not mature because African politics was based essentially on grassroots affiliations.

Transcendental national image and ideology were not developed. Ethnic rivalry and wars have continued to show that what we have in most African countries, has been the decline of national consciousness which was ignited during the anti-colonial struggle. In Nigeria today, we now have irredentism and cultural revivals rather than the creation of national symbols and values. Indeed, the national sentiments that nursed the fires of anti-colonial struggles are dead.

THE NIGERIAN STRUCTURE AND INDEPENDENCE

STRUGGLE DURING THE TIME OF *Temple-Morel and Lugard.*

The argument about the inadequacy of the structure of Nigeria is as old as the structure itself, and it is based on insensitivity of the powers that created Nigeria.

When Harcourt, the then colonial secretary appointed Lord Lugard as the man to amalgamate the Northern and Southern protectorates, he was very confident that Lord Lugard who “reclaimed” the North and gave it a legal code, and established a land system, would do justice to the job. Lord Lugard was obdurate in his determination to succeed. He rejected every advice that could have led to a reasonable amalgamation, if indeed it was necessary.

Before we examine Lord Lugard’s structure, let us first examine the proposals which Lugard rejected. Such examination would enable us see the objective advice which Lugard rejected in order to create this structure which has refused to work for over a century. The persistent determination to protect this unworkable structure over the years, has led to the death of hundreds of innocent people. A comparison of Lord Lugard’s proposal with those of his lieutenant governors - Morel and Temple - throws more light on the inadequacies of Lugard’s amalgamation, which have continued to plague Nigeria till today. This may be found in some of my

works, especially, my work on Nigerian Nationalism. Lugard stubbornly refused to listen to any advice.

REJECTED ADVICE:

(I) FROM E.D. MOREL

E. D. Morel had in what he described as the “unauthorized scheme for amalgamation,” proposed breaking Nigeria into four provinces:

1. The Central state, with Zungeru as its headquarters;
2. The Northern state with Kano as its headquarters;
3. The Southern state with Calabar as its headquarters
4. The Western state with Oshogbo as its headquarters

The central state was to be bound on the South-West by the River Niger, on the South-East by River Benue, and was to include the Tiv area, up to the Southern portion of Zaria Emirate, the provinces of Bauchi, Niger, Yola, Muri and Nasarawa.

The Western Provincial state with its capital at Oshogbo was to include Ilorin and Kabba Provinces, the present Midwest, then in the Western region, and the whole of Yoruba territories west of the Niger.

The Eastern Province with its headquarters in Calabar was to include all the territories south of the River Benue, and east of River Niger, but excluding the Cameroon under German occupation.

The Northern Province was to include all the Emirates with Islamic civilization. One apparent advantage of Morel’s scheme was the isolation of, and homogenization of Muslim Emirates where at least Islamic civilization would have been left intact. Such isolation would have had two major effects:

- (1) The first would have been the separation of the Muslims from the non-Muslims of the North, particularly, the Tivs. This could have

averted the persistent conflicts between the Tivs and Northern Nigeria government.

- (2) The second advantage of Morel's scheme would have been that the Yorubas who are now lumped up with Muslims in the North would have been able to join other Yorubas of the Western Region of Nigeria. It should be noted that these two issues which were not addressed in 1911 remained to plague Nigerian politics. Morel's advocacy was to provide for the division of the country into provinces as far as possible corresponding to natural geographic boundaries, and existing political conditions, involving as few changes as possible.

Morel's scheme seemed to have contradicted the Lugard's proposals because Lugard wanted the North to remain intact, and the separation of the North and the South carried to other areas like the introduction of the provincial court ordinance.

Morel's proposals would have minimized separation, and would have unified the country, or at least would have laid the ingredients for unification. Lord Lugard rejected Morel's advice not because it was not sound but because Morel, as an editor of the *African Mall* had been critical of Lord Lugard's colonial policies.

(II) TEMPLE'S PROPOSAL

Due to Lord Lugard's personal obduracy, and his determination to be the Governor-General, he also rejected the advice his lieutenant governor for the Northern Province, Mr. Temple. Mr. Temple had advocated breaking the country unto seven provinces. Three in the North, four in the South. The South was to comprise the Lagos colony, the Eastern province, the Western province, the Central province.

By splitting the North, Temple was prepared to sacrifice his post as the Lieutenant Governor of the Northern Province.

Problems which resulted from these 1911 structural imbalance have continued to plague Nigeria. If we cannot take a bold step to restructure now on objective principles, Nigeria will move into the twenty second century carrying the burden of the twentieth century which it cannot solve because it cannot muster the political will to do so. **In the absence of a transcendental national ideology, there is no other force that can weaken or destroy ethnic and tribal force.**

THE MISTAKE OF 1914

In spite of the criticisms that greeted the amalgamation of the North and South, Lugard went ahead to amalgamate the North and the Southern protectorates to become **NIGERIA** or people of the Niger Area. It was an unfortunate amalgamation of people of different cultures, languages, history, religion and temperament. The only justification for the amalgamation was that it suited the creation of a large market for the expansion of British commerce. Ever since, the British colonial office did everything to ensure that its creation did not die a natural death. Nigeria was a sick colonial contraption right from its creation.

The 1914 Lugard constitution amalgamated the colony and protectorate of Southern Nigeria with the Protectorate of Northern Nigeria, and brought the creation under the colonial authority of the British Monarch. The process of this unification was fraught with problems *ab-initio*. Indeed Nigeria could be described as a “**Sickler Political Creation**”. To unite two groups that are incompatible in every respect, requires a great transformation to enable the two segments to be able to see things the same way. Even the Prime Minister, Tafawa Balewa regretted this marriage of incompatibles.

Many (Nigerians) deceive themselves by thinking that Nigeria is one...particularly some of the press people... This is wrong. I am sorry to say that this presence of unity is artificial and it ends outside this chamber... The Southern tribes who are now pouring into the North in ever increasing numbers and are more or less domiciled here do not mix with the Northern people...and we in the North look upon them as invaders.

Legislative Council Debates, Nigeria, March 4, 1948 p. 227

It took 39 years after the amalgamation for the Sardauna of Sokoto, Sir Ahmadu Bello to declare that “the Mistake of 1914 has come to light”. E. D. Morel, in what he described as the “unauthorized scheme for amalgamation, criticised the amalgamation. This is now history. We have inherited a political sickler. When we talk about restructuring, we are actually saying that this political child is sick. We do not want it to die. We are looking for ways to make the child well, and able to live and fulfill the purpose for its existence. This is not the first time people have worried about the existence of Nigeria.

I will briefly look at previous concerns, and what was done to make Nigeria survive as a political entity, but not as a cultural entity.

The colonial government sustained Nigeria with colonial grants in aid, against the principles of colonial policy. Infact, one of the reasons for the amalgamation was to shift the burden of sustaining the North to the amalgamated Nigeria, instead of spending the British tax payer’s money in the up-keep of the colony. Christopher Sapara-Williams was one of the vocal critics of the amalgamation. 104 years after the amalgamation, nobody wants the sickler to die! Our concern is how to sustain the sick child so that it does not continue to be a drain on the resources of the nation, and what we can do to make it achieve the purpose of its existence for the benefit of the whole country.

WHAT THE COLONIAL GOVERNMENT DID THROUGH CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS TO SUSTAIN THE CREATION.

(1) Lugard's Constitution 1914 :

The colony and protectorate of Southern Nigeria was joined to the Northern Nigeria Protectorate to form a single colony of Nigeria in 1914. The unification was done for economic reasons not political. Northern Nigeria was running at a deficit, and the colonial administration wanted to use the Southern surplus to offset the Northern deficit.

Lugard established a central secretariat in Lagos. He had a Legislative Council. There was a Constitution of 1913 which came into effect in 1914. The colonial government took Nigeria through several constitutional changes to prepare Nigeria for inevitable self-government and independence. It was naively believed that the problems of the colonial people could be solved if there was a legal transition from one stage to the other. They labored hard to produce several constitutions as was the case of Nigeria. I will list all the constitutional changes which they had hoped would make us live as Nigerians. They failed. They are still failing to know that:

When in the course of human thinking inconsistent cognitive elements are forced together by linguistic or behavioural assertion, stress is produced in proportion to the magnitude of the inconsistency or as sociologists have found that “where a number of historic cleavages intermix and create a basis for, ideological politics, democracy will be unstable and weak for by definition, such politics does not include the concept of tolerance”.

Prof. B.I.C. Ijomah, *Nigerian Nationalism* p. 283-284.

The colonial government took Nigerians through the following constitutional changes with implied structural changes in preparation for independence.

From 1914, the British Colonial Government did everything to prepare Nigerians towards eventual independence. The preparation came in the form of introducing gradual changes through gradual constitutional development. Unfortunately, there was no effort to get the people to know and love themselves. That was not part of the mandate of colonialism.

Clifford's Constitution was the first after amalgamation. It introduced elective principles, and permitted the formation of political parties – a practical training for Nigerian politicians. This was followed by Richardsons' Constitution of 1946 which came into effect in 1947. Richardsons' Constitution introduced regional administration. This was followed by Macpherson Constitution of 1951. Richardson constitution was criticised as being imposed without consultation. Nnandi Azikwe and Herbert Macaulay toured the country educating the people. Nigerians protested and the constitution was quickly replaced with Macpherson Constitution of 1951

Macpherson Constitution established central legislative council – House of Representative. It divided the country into three **unequal regions** each with its regional Legislature and Executive Council. It was certainly an improvement on Richardson's Constitution. This constitution offered the first test of whether the nation would work as planned.

ENAHORO'S MOTION:

Enahoro's motion calling for self-government was the first test of whether Nigerians could live together.

On March 31, 1953 Anthony Enahoros moved a motion for self-government. Malam Ahamdu Bello, the Sardauna of Sokoto, offered an amendment to replace the specific date of 1956 with the phrase "as soon as possible". The debate on the motion, the reproachment between NCNC and Action Group, the alleged collaboration between the Government and the NPC, the resignation of Adesoja Aderemi II (Sir), the Oni of Ife as

Minister without portfolio, the filibustering of K. O. Mbaduwe and Obafemi Awolowo, their vitriolic declarations of policy, and subsequent walking out of NCNC and Action Group, asked many unanswered questions. That ended the motion for self-government. On the motion to adjourn *since die*, the Sardauna of Sokoto made one sentence: **“The Mistake of 1914 has come to light and I should go no further”**.

The Northern obduracy ever since then, till now has directed events in Nigeria. After the adjournment, the Northern members were ridiculed and criticized by the Lagos crowd. They vowed never to come back to Lagos to witness such indignities again. Within a few weeks they submitted 8-point resolution which if implemented would have meant a secession of the North from Nigeria. They demanded, and the demand was endorsed by Northern House of Assembly and House of Chiefs:

- 1) The North shall have complete legislative and executive autonomy with respect to all matters except the following: defence, external affairs, customs and West African Research Institutions
- 2) There shall be no central Legislative body and no central Executive or policy-making body for the whole of Nigeria.
- 3) There shall be a central Agency for all regions which shall be responsible for all matters mentioned in (i) above and other matters delegated to it by a region.
- 4) The central agency shall be at a neutral place, preferably in Lagos.
- 5) The composition and responsibility of the central agency shall be defined by the order-in-council establishing the constitutional arrangement. The agency shall be a non-political body.
- 6) The services of the railway, air services, posts and telegraphs, electricity and local mining shall be organized in an inter-regional basis and shall be administered by public corporations. These corporations shall be independent bodies covered by the statute

under which they are created. The Board of the coal corporation shall be composed of experts with a minority representation of the Regional Government.

- 7) All revenue shall be levied and collected by the Regional Governments except customs revenue at the port of discharge by the central agency and paid to its treasury. The administration of the customs shall be so organized as to assure that goods consigned to the region are separately cleared and charged to duty.
- 8) Each region shall have a separate public service.

The inclusion of the demands in the revised constitution was sufficient restructuring that enabled the North to agree to remain part of one Nigeria. But as a result of these events, and the riots in Kano in which 36 persons were killed and more than 277 injured, “a post mortem was pronounced by the secretary of state for the colonies in the House of Commons: the closely-knit federation envisaged by the constitution of 1951 did not prove workable; therefore the constitution would be revised to provide for greater regional autonomy and for the removal of powers of intervention by the centre in matters which can, without detriment to other regions, be placed entirely within regional competence”.

The colonial government found that giving much power to the centre was not good for the country.

In these bleak circumstances delegates from political parties met in London with representatives of the Nigerian government and the colonial office (July – August 1953 to redraw the constitution). The constitutional conference of 1953, produced a constitution which transformed the structure of Nigerian government from Unitary foundations to the existing bases of federation. It included a lot of restructuring!

THE REGIONALIST CONSTITUTION OF 1954

Lyttleton Constitution 1953/54. In this constitution it was agreed that:

- i. Residual powers be vested in the regions
- ii. Majority party leader in each region be appointed premier
- iii. Allocation of revenue to the regions mainly according to principles of derivation.

The constitutional conference resumed in Lagos in January 1954. It established 3 regional governments.

The Lyttleton Constitution was enacted in 1954. It established the federal principle and paved the way for Nigeria independence. The independence constitution of 1960 came into effect October 1, 1960. This was followed by the Republican Constitution of 1963. After the military coups of 1966, Nigeria had its second constitution. This constitution ushered in the second republic. Nigeria abandoned the west minster model in favour of the presidential system. The third constitution came in 1993. It was not fully implemented before the army struck again in 1990. The 1999 (4th Republic) restored democratic rule. Since then the constitution has had many amendments. Amendments to the constitution came with changes or restructuring. Restructuring has been a regular feature of our growth.

This has led to my argument that our problem is not with the constitution but with people who implement the constitution. With all the amendments, with all the constitutional reviews, with all the coups, we are still in search of a basis for national unity and national existence.

The army struck several times. They gave lame reasons why they struck. We now know from Nigerian experience that the military are corrupt with impunity. The military in power may succeed in covering the tracks exposing their corruption, but they can never escape the verdict of History. President Buhari may have tried to cover all tracts asking questions about the mysterious 2.8 billion naira in Nigeria. The

inconclusive inquiry is not an exoneration. Actors come and go. Their actions must be subjected to sociological interpretation. They may not be there to cover any uncovered tracts. But the razor of sociological interpretation will expose them for what they are-*fraud simpliciter*.

No wonder Sir Winston Churchill, the celebrated Prime Minister of Britain wrote about the army in power as long ago as 1899 in the following acerbic remarks:

“The army, when they take over power instead of submerging tribalism became a victim of it. The army instead of being above the confusion and the non-political arbiter of the nation’s internal order and external security, the army became a participant in the nation’s political arena”.

“The problem of the state structure: cited in the role of the military” in Arnold Rivlain, Nation Building in Africa: Problems and prospects

This is exactly what has happened in Nigeria. The army became part and parcel of Nigeria’s problem. The army doctored many constitutional changes with a mirror to their own backgrounds that did not reflect the actual socio-political realities and empirical needs of the nation. The persistent tinkering with the structures of the country, dragged Nigeria from the independence constitution which actually addressed the fears of Nigerians expressed in the reactions of the Northerners to Anthony Enahoros’ motion for self-government, and to the Lyttleton Constitution of 1954 that established the Federal Principles which paved the way for independence. We have so ignorantly tinkered with the independence, constitution that because of the thick cloud of sectionalism which has prevented us from seeing clearly and objectively, the real problems of Nigeria, Nigerians have been chasing peripheral issues in search of power and privileges. Until we apply sociological interpretation to our national crisis, we can never understand those critical variables that can hold Nigeria together.

From 1914 to 1954, we have amended, and amended the poor constitution. Constitutions are guides. They are not templates for social and cultural integration. Within our short existence, we have witnessed the death of the flames of nationalism that promised hopes in the '50' and '60s'. We are not fighting for one Nigeria now. That spirit is dead. Our concern now is how to save this nation from the marauding herdsmen whose penchant in history is to kill and take over people's lands. They cannot learn now to do things differently.

This is one of the compelling reasons why Nigeria must be restructured so that we can accommodate new experiences. A restructured Nigeria can accommodate all of us, in modernized forms. 10 to 200 modernized ranches all over the country can create more jobs, educate the roaming nomads, industrialize and take the nation to a new level.

As presently structured Nigeria cannot cope with the challenges of the 21st and 22nd centuries. Most of our leaders are analog. They cannot see into the future to appreciate the tremendous potentials of a restructured Nigeria.

SOCIOLOGY TO THE RESCUE

Since this is a conference of Sociologist, permit me to apply sociological principles to explain what we mean by restructuring. Politicians should not try to manipulate it. Every sociologist must be familiar with the theories of social system. The works of Talcott Parsons and Robert Merton and their generation of sociologists have shown that the society is a social system. In order to understand the society we must always have a tap on the input and output in the system. It is a sociological truism that as a social system matures in size, age and growth and expansion, the system must adjust on all fronts in order to accommodate both planned and unplanned growths and consequences. Growth in size

compels adjustment in functions and social teles. **Social tesis** simply means – progress that is intelligently planned and directed so that the society can attain its desired ends and goals, by using reasonable means available. Here, there is one indisputable fact: Nigeria today is not Nigeria *fifty seven years ago*. It has grown in size, functions, and external relations. It must be compelled by forces of **social telesis** to look beyond the present. If it does not, **it will atrophy**. It will enter a stage of *social atrophism*. It is bound to lag behind in development and modernization. The same happens to all nations and civilisations.

For the politicians who cling to what is, when what is, is no longer functioning satisfactorily, simply because the nation has grown, and matured, I advise them to close their eyes, and imagine what Nigeria will look like in fifty years from today.

Restructuring does not give any element of the system any special advantage. Restructuring simply says that the system has grown. Certain things must change so that the system can function better. In restructuring things must be so planned that it is the system not some elements of the system that must be restructured. The President or Vice President must see restructuring as a developmental imperative. It is not political. If we do not restructure to plan for the future, many parts of the nation will suffer from what in sociology we call **lag**. Places suffer from social and cultural lag.

Nigeria in 2018 cannot operate with the mindset of 1960. We must move with time and events or we must be prepared as a nation to suffer developmental and cultural lag behind other nations.

Restructuring is a regular plebiscite in modern world. Unfortunately, our respected and learned Vice President, **Prof. Osibanjo** said, “*Our problem is not restructuring*” *Vanguard, August, 28, 2018. p.11.* and **Barr. Falana** said “*Restructuring can’t guarantee unity and political stability.* *Vanguard September 6. P. 10.*

Let me advise that “*Restructuring is a complex variable*”. If it is properly implemented, it can trigger positive results including the stabilization of the nation, and lead to unity in diversity. It must not be politicised.

Let me also say that we must restructure our electoral system. Those who witnessed the last election conducted by the out-going colonial officers will recall that the election was rigged by the colonial officers. Since then, Nigerian politicians have improved on the rigging, to the extent that a serving President could boldly tell aggrieved Nigerians to go to court if they are aggrieved. The electoral system has collapsed. The Chairman of APC did not know when he admitted that he rigged. **It is a great national tragedy.**

Nigeria needs wholistic restructuring. There is no way we can continue with the old way. Let me agree with our President that we need **CHANGE**. Only a wholistic restructurings can prevent the nation from relapsing into social and political catalepsy.

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