Peace and Reconciliation the Anti-Dote To Global Technological Advancement

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Abstract: This paper, seeks to appraise the new emphasis and insistence on peace and reconciliation as hallmarks for social justice and development in Nigeria in particular and Africa in general. The paper will achieve this purpose by focusing on the functional role of peace and reconciliation as sociological index for measuring and promoting co-existence, tolerance, integration and respect for the differences of ethnic nationalities in Nigeria. secondary sources of materials was mainly used for this paper and based on the findings therefore, The made some recommendations bordering on the Constitutional issues should be referred without any further delay to the National Assembly for legislative action. Failure to do this will amount to washing down the drain the colossal financial and human resources invested in the National Conference.

Keywords: new emphasis and insistence, peace and reconciliation, functional role, sociological index and legislative action.

1. Introduction

Globalization and technological advancements have their tools on the way and manner people respond to others from different background and situation. The strong feeling of supremacy associated with the giant socio-economic developments explains not only class struggle, but the desire by the bourgeois to exploit, dehumanize, degrade and suppress the poor, the less privileged and the weak. The conditions that made Marx and Engel (1971) to state that “the history of hitherto existing societies is the history of class struggle”. (p.29) is still here with us in Nigeria. Kolawole (2007) states that “though, I recognized the inevitability of conflicts in human integration, but such conflict wherever it arises should be managed effectively”. (p. ix). Historical past events seem to have militated against social justice and development in Nigeria. Authentic Nigerian identity has been dulled by slavery, poverty, slave trade, trafficking in human persons, prostitution, obnoxious cultural practices, and conflict of cultures in Nigeria. Western civilization has a corroding influence on Nigerian cultural values and norms. This is based on the fact that western value systems manifest what Nnonyelu (2007)
describes as “Eurocentric cultural arrogance and fall into the trap of western-centered ethnocentrism”. (p.159).

Nigeria has witnessed a lot of conflicts over the years because of apparent disunity on one hand, on the other, the various processes of sustaining and maintaining peace through dialogue, counselling and prayers are not put in place. Consequently, constructive engagements of reconciliatory tools are far from reality. Resorting to violence as a means for resolving political and social problems is dangerous. War destroys, cripples and retards development. War does not build up; rather, it weakens the moral, economic and social foundations of Nigeria and creates further divisions and long lasting tensions. These have brought untold hardships including death and loss of properties.

This paper, therefore, seeks to appraise the new emphasis and insistence on peace and reconciliation as hallmarks for social justice and development in Nigeria in particular and Africa in general. The paper will achieve this purpose by focusing on the functional role of peace and reconciliation as sociological index for measuring and promoting co-existence, tolerance, integration and respect for the differences of ethnic nationalities in Nigeria. Development, therefore, goes beyond material structures. It includes attitudinal change in habits, norms and values. A critical look at the need for social injustice in the face of harmful cultural practices in Nigeria, and the way forward will promote the right to peace which will ensure respect for all other rights, encourage the building of true humanism in Nigeria. It is observed that if the above are religiously adhered to Nigeria will be a model for the promotion of peaceful co-existence the world over.

The National Orientation Agency (NOA), a Parastatal under the Ministry of Information and Culture, has a lot to do if we are to have a united country; in the wake of the renewed pro-Biafra agitations, I was expecting to see messages on television, listen to jingles on radios and read adverts in newspapers stating why Nigeria is better-off as a united country. We had a terrible civil war between 1967 and 1970, and those who experienced it will never pray it happens again, but with what is happening in the country today, we are at the risk of having another war. The Igbo people have resurrected the Biafra agitation, Niger Delta militants have returned to the creeks, with some of them even threatening to declare a Niger Delta Republic; there is also the killings by herdsmen who are rampaging through the Southern part of the country. Let us take a look at Yemen, Libya and Syria; the wars in these countries started as mere protests, and before the citizens knew what was happening, they had turned into full scale wars. Today, I know Syrians will be regretting ever starting the protests that have ruined their once beautiful country.

Almost a third of Syria is empty now, with normal life existing only in the protected capital, Damascus. Even, with all the military protection, Damascus residents are still in a state of fear. So, we may also think that all the protests and agitations across the country are insignificant, but there are fifth columnists who are ever ready to hijack such peaceful protests. Therefore, the NOA, and other agencies of government, particularly those in the South East and South South, should start projecting the need for peace in the country.

The truth of the matter is that we have a bright future ahead of us with our huge population; this is why China and India are destinations of choice for international investors. Nigeria should, therefore, use its huge population to serve as catalyst for its economic growth. We have a population that can consume any product; this is a plus for those setting up businesses in the country. In fact, it is better to have a 20 per cent market share in Nigeria than have a 100 per cent share in some other countries of the world.

2. Statement Of Problem

One may think that the biggest obstacle to African development is poverty, but like Onwudiwe (2005) argued, “the strategic danger to Africa’s expected rebirth is the disintegration of Nigeria, the largest political concentration of African people in our continent,” with a population of 150 million people, any major conflict is a disaster to the continent. Nigeria is also another point of concern, as “one of the potential areas of instability” according to Porter J. Goss, the former U.S. Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, in his address to the Congress (Jolayemi, 2005). His fear was that in southern Nigeria, the military were struggling to contain militia groups in the oil-producing area, the continued ethnic violence that frequently erupt throughout the country and the threat of Muslim
population. But as the Nigerian government struggle with the various challenges that faces her, it has been emphasized that as a political and economic giant in Africa, its future can either be a shining example for the continent or a cautionary tale of what happens when great potential is sabotaged by poor governance, lack of leadership and pervasive corruption (International Crisis Group, 2006). Since Nigeria got independence in 1960 from the British, the military had ruled for approximately 30 years out of her 50 years of existence (see annex). Nigeria experienced her first military coup d’état in 1966, six years after independence, since then the country had successive military intervention before it returned to the second republic in 1979, it collapsed in 1983 by another military intrusion in her political history, judged for incompetence and corruption on politicians, this saw Nigeria into another 16 years of dark military dictatorship. Again, Nigeria in May 29, 1999 returned to a democratic rule that is still on going. As the nation enthusiastically embraced this long awaited change in governance by electing President Olusegun Obasanjo in 1999, a former military leader who willingly returned power to the civilian in 1979, regarded by many as a bridge across several of Nigeria’s major fault lines, it was believed that the Obasanjo’s administration would usher in many democratic dividends that will guarantee peace, human security, rights and development centered on the people.

However, “the country remains handicapped by political malpractice, deep economic contradictions, social inequality and a considerable potential for violence due to the politicisation of identity” (International Crisis Group, 2006a) characterized by religious, ethnic and communal conflicts, insecurity, organized crime, human rights violations among others. Between 1999 till date, Nigeria experienced critical events that undermined her coexistence. In November 1999, the introduction of Shari’a Law (Islamic civil and criminal code) met aggressive resistance that caused the religious crisis of February 2000. Two years later in November 2002, Nigeria witnessed another religious crisis motivated by the Miss World Pageant, which was incited by an article in a local Newspaper-TIHSDAY. Because Nigeria won the 2001 edition by Agbani Darego, it was a leverage to host the 2002 Miss World in Nigeria, but the timing coincided with the Muslim Ramadan festival and it met stiff opposition from the Islamic clerics. Questioning the Muslim groups that condemned the hosting of the Miss World pageant and arguing in favour of it, journalist Isioma Daniel wrote, “What would (the prophet) Mohammed think? In all honesty, he would probably have chosen a wife from among them (the contestants)” (CNN.Com/World, 2002). The massive public protest and riots that followed these two events caused lost of lives, many injuries and damaged properties worth millions in local currency. As if it was not enough, the Kurt Westergaard “Danish cartoon” (BBC News, 2006) protest of February 2006 will not be forgotten, 16 deaths left Nigeria as the highest casualty all over the world.

It is important to emphasize that the change in each party’s identity—the revision in its narrative—that I am defining as reconciliation implies a strengthening, rather than a weakening, of each party’s core identity. I would argue that a revision in the group’s identity and the associated narrative is possible only if the core of the identity remains intact. In fact, changes in more peripheral elements of identity are often seen as necessary in order to preserve the core of the identity. This was the basis, for example, on which a majority of Israelis and Palestinians were (and I believe continue to be) prepared to revise the territorial dimension of their national identity in order to maintain the essence of that identity (Kelman 2001).

This analysis points to a major dilemma of reconciliation. Reconciliation requires parties to change an element of their identity—the negation of the other—which is far from trivial for parties engaged in an existential identity conflict, while at the same time preserving, even strengthening, the core of their identity. This is more easily achieved in situations in which one of the parties has already rejected part of its identity—as was the case for many Germans in post-Nazi Germany and many whites in post-apartheid South Africa—although even in these situations resistances are bound to arise. It is particularly difficult, however, in conflicts in which each side insists on the justice of its cause and sees itself as having been wronged by the other. The dilemma is that the amount and kind of identity change that A requires from B in order to be ready for reconciliation may be perceived by B as undermining the core of its identity. A good example here would be the demand to acknowledge collective guilt to which even post-Nazi Germany was reluctant to accede (Auerbach 2004; Feldman 1999).
In conflicts such as that between Palestinians and Israelis, negation of the other is a central element of each party’s own identity, which it cannot give up easily. Given the nature of the conflict, each party finds it necessary to deny the other’s authenticity as a people, the other’s links to the land, and the other’s national rights, especially its right to national self-determination through the establishment of an independent state in the land both claim, because the other’s claims to peoplehood and to rights in the land are seen as competitive to each party’s own claims and rights. Moreover, negation of the other is also important to each party in a violent conflict as a protection against negative elements in its own identity (cf. Kelman 1999b). Insofar as the other can be demonized and dehumanized, it becomes easier for each party to minimize guilt feelings for acts of violence and oppression against the other and to avoid seeing itself in the role of victimizer, rather than only the role of victim.

Thus, in protracted identity conflicts, negation of the other is not a peripheral, marginal element of each party’s identity that can be easily discarded. My argument is merely that, from an “objective” point of view, negating the identity of the other is not a necessary condition for preserving, and indeed enhancing the core of one’s own identity. However, for conflicting parties to arrive at a point where they can be free to relegate negation of the other to the periphery of their own identities and eventually discard it requires the hard work of reconciliation. What is central to that work is the growing assurance that the other is not a threat to one’s own identity. In that process of assurance, the conditions for reconciliation play a vital role.

Parties in a conflict in which both sides perceive themselves as victims are helped to deal with the dilemma of abandoning some elements of identity without threatening the core of their identity by the reciprocal nature of reconciliation. Changes on the part of one group make changes on the other’s part more attainable. But this view suggests that the process of reconciliation requires a certain amount of “negotiation” of identity, including negotiation of the conditions for reconciliation, which turn on such issues as truth, justice, and responsibility. It is my contention that reconciliation—especially in cases in which neither party is prepared to adopt the role of perpetrator—cannot be achieved on the basis of purely objective criteria of truth, justice, or responsibility, anchored in historical scholarship or international law, but requires some degree of mutual accommodation in the course of negotiating the conditions for reconciliation.

I can identify five conditions that may help groups in conflict arrive at the difficult point of revising their identity so as to accommodate the identity of the other. One might also think of these as indicators of reconciliation, or steps in a process of reconciliation. They are both indicators of movement toward reconciliation and conditions for further movement in that direction. I shall merely enumerate these conditions here; further elaboration can be found elsewhere (Kelman 2004; 2008).
1. Mutual acknowledgment of the other’s nationhood and humanity, which involves acceptance of the other as an authentic nation and inclusion of the other in one’s own moral community.
2. Development of a common moral basis for peace, allowing for a peace that both sides perceive as consistent with the principles of fairness and attainable justice.
3. Confrontation with history, which does not require a joint consensual history, but does require admitting the other’s truth into one’s own narrative.
4. Acknowledgment of responsibility, expressed in both symbolic and material terms.
5. Establishment of patterns and institutional mechanisms of cooperation, including various people-to-people activities that are genuinely useful to both parties and based on the principles of equality and reciprocity.

All five of these conditions for reconciliation are designed to facilitate changes in the collective identities of the conflicting parties, with particular emphasis on removing the negation of the other as a key element of each group’s own identity.

Insecurity of lives

While this paper acknowledges the struggle for political power within the ruling class, the security systems are largely undermined. The security crisis today is damaging the country’s international image. Nigeria wants foreign investors but lacks strong and strategic security in place for human protection. Nigeria is currently degenerating into a state of terror and fear, where everyone is afraid of its own shadow, the lapses in security calls for concern. Nigeria is loosing more lives and prominent citizens even when the nation is not confronted with external aggression. Over the years, Nigeria has
witnessed series of assassinations. On the 23rd of December, 2001, the former Attorney General of the Federation Chief Bola Ige was assassinated in his residence; the killers are still at large, yet to face the justice. On March 5, 2003, Marshall Harry - the national Vice Chairman for the South-South Zone one of the opposition party; All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) was murdered at home (Human Rights Watch, 2003), his house was a walking distance from the police headquarters, when the police were alerted at a nearby checkpoint that night, they said they had no fuel in their vehicle, so they could do nothing. Barnabas Igwe, the Chairman of the Nigerian Bar Association Onitsa Branch and his wife were assassinated on September 1, 2002, Prophet Eddie Okeke was murdered in November 2000, Chief Ezeodumegwu G. Okonkwo a chairman of a local government was killed in February 2001, in 2006 Engr. Funsho Williams and Dr. Ayodeji Daramola suffered similar fate (Patrick, 2006). The two men were on the platform of the then ruling Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and governorship aspirants of Lagos and Ekiti State, respectively.

Others who had met their untimely death in the past were Kudirat Abiola, the wife of late Chief MKO Abiola, the presumed winner of the annulled June 12, 1993 Presidential Election, Chief Alfred Rewane, Mr. Godwin Agbroko the Chairman, Editorial Board of the THISDAY Newspapers among others. It is disheartening and painful, if security of lives and properties cannot be guaranteed in a democratic state. If gunmen could kill a well meaningful Nigerian like the Chief Law Officer and one time state Executive Governor (1979 to 1983) under the police protection and escorts, Nigerians may not be safe. So far, the puzzles behind these murders are yet to be solved, whether they are politically motivated or otherwise are left to the state to answer, but it is certain that Nigeria like many other African states see political office as the biggest business; therefore violence becomes an ideological apparatus and struggle to achieve political power. History they say repeats itself, resolving high profile assassinations by the Nigerian Police is quite unimpressive because the Police lacks the will and competence to investigate crime, apprehend culprits, and ensure justice which eventually erodes the public confidence for safety.

3. Corruption as a national cancer

Speaking at a colloquium in January 31 2007 at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria; the former Chairman for Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) deplored the state of corruption in Nigeria. “You do not need to be a smart social scientist to make the nexus between corruption and how it threatens the rule of law, the democratic principle, human rights, fairness and social justice as well as good governance” (Lawal and Omofoye, 2007). Described in the academic circles as cancer militating against Nigeria’s development, corruption is deeply threatening the fabric of the Nigerian society. The Independence Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) and the EFCC established to fight graft (few of the best things done by the former President Obasanjo’s administration) has been highly criticized by many politicians and academics for selective targets, tools in the hands of state officials to witch-hunt unfavored political opponents. But criticism may not solve the problem because this ‘cancer’ is real. It could be recalled that following a ruling by the Swiss Federal Supreme Court on February 7, 2005, the Switzerland government invited the World Bank to monitor the repatriation to Nigeria of “$500 million lotted funds deposited in the Swiss accounts.

The struggle for the “national cake” resources from oil is fierce. Sabotaging the interest of the Nigerian state is not in short supply. The case of “bunkering” (a name coined from stealing crude oil into tankers by breaking pipelines) is a good example. Under the Nigerian federal constitution, all minerals - oil and gas belong to the government; any oil extraction outside this agreement with the Nigerian authority is a crime. In 2003, it was reported that illegal bunkering probably reached a maximum of 150,000 or 200,000 barrels per day (Human Rights Watch, 2003a). There were other claims that the theft of oil was greatly underreported, that it reached 650,000 bpd. “The loss to the Nigerian government from illegal oil bunkering amounts to figures in the order of U.S. $750 million to $1.5 billion annually at oil prices between nineteen to thirty dollars a barrel” (Human Rights Watch, 2003a). The Nigerian government was severely affected by this theft than the private multinational oil companies in the joint ventures. In terms of revenue losses, this is economic sabotage too many, oil experts have argued that Nigeria has the highest oil bunkerers among the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). As a member of OPEC,
Nigeria enjoys a daily quota of 2.4 million barrels per day. Therefore, oil theft is a serious challenge to Nigeria economic survival because 80% of total revenue receipts of government are from the oil sector (DAILY SUN, 2011). Indeed, unbridled oil theft are not surprising, also, it is not strange because some political leaders and elites have been fingered as conspirators with the bunkering cartels, but what is odd is the government acknowledgment of this illegal activities for years, regrettably, the government has not taken enough decisive action to curb this criminality. The billions of dollars lost could be used to fund viable initiatives and infrastructure development.

The Nigerian situation is complex, the solution may not be far, but as a country with such complicated political ethnic landscape, what seems to amaze everyone is that Nigerians are not bereaved of ideas and knowledge which are abundant, but only lacks the simple leadership and political will to do the right things for the good of all. It is so appalling that the political class has learnt nothing from the problems that brought the ship of this nation to its current sorry state; however, no Nigerian irrespective of class or status should be excused from this blame. During the launching of the “Heart of Africa Project” in November 2006 in London, a programme designed by the Nigerian Government to project her image, phenomenal growth and uncommon potential as a first class destination for investment and tourism (Nigeria First, 2006), Hon. Baroness Valerie Amos, the Leader of the House of Lords pointed out 3 prominent issues confronting Nigeria in her opening remarks; the first is to ensure free and fair election in 2007, the second; to sustain and deepen the current [former President Obasanjo’s] economic reforms programmes and thirdly, tackling the Niger Delta question (Adeniyi, 2006). In furtherance of the aforementioned project, the former Minister of Information and Communications, Professor Oteh, C. O. & Odukwe, E. 2019. Peace and Reconciliation the An 4. Niger Delta and the agitation for resource control

Resource control, allocation of revenue, environmental degradation and the neglects of the people of the Niger Delta are some of the challenges in the region covering the “nine oil-producing states of Nigeria; Abia, Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, Imo, Ondo and Rivers States with a total land area of about 75,000 km² and 185 local government areas” (UNDP, 2006a) as shown in Figure 1. Statistics has shown that oil and gas have generated 40% of Nigeria’s national GDP in past decades. Between 2000 and 2004, oil accounted for about 79.5% of total government revenues and about 97% of foreign exchange revenues, but progress and hope, much less prosperity remain elusive in this region (UNDP, 2006a). Decades of peaceful protest had given way to attacks, kidnapping and struggle for the emancipation of the region. History has shown that long military intervention in politics has legitimized the use of force and violence as instruments for social change and attainment of set goals and demands (Angaye, 2002). On the 19th of April 2006, in the city of Port Harcourt, River State, South-South Nigeria, the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) (International Crisis Group, 2006) detonated a car bomb in the military barrack, killing two and injured six; this was the beginning of series of attacks that followed (Figure 2).

Poverty, unemployment, and underdevelopment had increased the struggle for resource control in these states, accelerating the activities of youth gangs and numerous pressures groups. Access to large quantities of small arms and light weapons, and the persistence of widespread dissatisfaction with the federal and state governments in the Delta region were combination that created fertile recruiting ground for the likes of MEND and other militant organisations (International Crisis Group, 2006). In fact, the growing number of various movements and pressure groups includes; the Martyrs Brigade, the Niger Delta Liberation Army (NDLA), Niger Delta People Volunteer Force (NDPVF) led by Alhaji Mujahid DokuboAsari (International Crisis Group, 2006), Coalition for Militant Action (COMA), Joint Revolution Council (JRC) which is a coalition of three militant groups namely; the Martyrs Brigade, MEND and NDPVF. Others are the Niger Delta Vigilante Force (NDVF) led by Ateke Tom, the Movement for the Survival of the Ijaw Ethnic Nationality in the Niger Delta (MOSIEND), the Ijawbased Federated Niger Delta Ijaw Communities (FNDIC), the Ijaw Youth Council (IYC), the Urhobo Union, the Itsekiri General Assembly, Egbesu Boys of Africa (EBA), Chikoko Movement and the popular Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP). While some have served as pressure groups, others have taken the position of hard-line...
militant activities. Can the activities of these militants be classified as terrorism? If the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Code of Federal Regulations (FBI, 2001) and the Department of State (United States Department of States, 2004) definitions of terrorism are applied to the current situation, the Niger Delta militants are likely to be classified in this sense - though they have different agenda to justify the reasons of their, but their operations are similar to the definition of terrorism, in the sense that they issue threats, use the media, abduct, detain, make demands, carry out targets and claim responsibility attacks as shown in. These militants do not differentiate between armed adversaries and non-combatants, they fight the law enforcement agents of the state, detonate bombs with cell phones, wield big guns, always on mask - clandestine activities and access to finance. They display sophistication, professionalism and expertise in their operations. CNN correspondent Jeff Koinange visited the creeks to see the activities of the militants. He reported that “MEND in recent months has escalated its struggle, kidnapping expatriate oil workers at alarming rate (more than 30 in January [2007]), indiscriminately killing Nigerian military forces, and carrying out attacks on oil installations in the region that cut the flow of oil dramatically” (CNN.Com/World, 2007), well-calculated strategies to reduce foreign interests in the nation’s oil and crumble Nigeria economy. They warned that all expatriates should leave Nigeria, not only the Niger Delta, but to leave the country because they wanted to take and destroy lives. “Nigeria is Africa's largest oil producer. In 2005, it was the world’s sixth largest exporter of oil, but the conflicts as mentioned earlier [in the Niger Delta] has cut distribution by an estimated 500,000 barrels per day, according to the U.S. Department of Energy” (CNN.Com/World, 2007). As the militants make good their threats, many countries warned their citizens to stay away from the Niger Delta. Threats of attack in the year 2006 contributed in increasing the oil price in the international market to $70 in 2006 and $140 in 2008 before the global financial meltdown.

5. What is Boko Haram?

The Boko Haram sect is a militant Islamic group. Their agenda is to see that Shari’a Law is imposed in the Northern States of Nigeria. The term Boko Haram means that western education is a sin and western civilization is forbidden. The group started in 1995, led by Lawan Abubarkar and later handed over to Ustaz Mohammed Yusuf. Until the death of Mohammed Yusuf on 30th of July, 2009, the sect had recruited about 500,000 members. Boko Haram is seen in some quarters as Nigeria Taliban because they operate and have all the features of Al-Qaeda – they target security outfits e.g. police stations and they are against the state interests. They stationed in Kanamma, Yobe State, Northern Nigeria and their base is called Afghanistan. Their major attacks and operation are in various parts of the Northern states like Bauchi State, Yobe state and especially in Maiduguri, the capital of Bornu state. They maim, kill and destroy and invade churches.

Boko Haram insurgency remains the latest and a very big threat to Nigeria peace and security. The dreadful sect is known for their bomb blasts and bows with poisoned arrows. Many innocent lives have been wasted as they made Nigeria ungovernable by launching a total ‘jihad’ on the Nigerian state. June 17, 2011 was a terrible date in Nigeria history as she witnessed the first suicide bombing attack at the Louis Edet House – Nigeria Police Headquarters at Abuja targeting Hafiz Ringim - the Inspector General of Police. Boko Haram had vowed that more bombs will be detonated in time to come in the major cities of Southern Nigeria, stating that they will not stop until Nigeria is Islamized. To address the menace of Boko Haram, Nigerian government should engage in dialogue with all stakeholders, it does not require the use of force since the situation is out of hand now. Furthermore, government should strengthen and restructure the security agencies where appropriate, especially in the area of intelligence gathering with necessary training both home and abroad. It is absurd that intelligence gathering in Nigeria is almost near zero while militants and criminal are having a field day. For instance, recent happening have proved that Boko Haram have more intelligence than the government security agencies.

7. Ethnic and Communal Conflicts: Vigilante and Separatist Groups

Niger Delta on the brink of breaking down and the Christian-Muslim conflicts were not the only crisis plaguing Nigeria, indeed Nigeria have had her own share of political, ethnic, and communal
conflicts and they are still on going from time to time. It was estimated that one million Nigerians were displaced by internal conflicts between 1999 and 2004. Using Plateau State as an example, inter-communal clashes over political control, land, and competition over resources among others between February and May 2004 generated about 250,000 Internal Displaced Persons (IDPs) (International Crisis Group, 2006), setting the pace, as Nigeria’s most IDPs, since the return of civil rule which made the former

President Olusegun Obasanjo to exercise his constitutional power by declaring a state of emergency in Plateau State. Combinations of factors like shortcomings in the security sector, lack of democratic space and public discuss, increasing youths without education and jobs, access to arms, and the struggle to come out of the military past of the 1990s which destroyed the civil society in our democratic history contributed to the emergence of ethnic militias, community protection forces and separatist movements (International Crisis Group, 2006). The Fredrick Fasheun and Gani Adams O’odua

Peoples’ Congress (OPC) purports to defend the Yoruba rights and struggle for political power, but also serves as ethnic militia, it is involved in vigilante activities in the South West. Over the years, they have been engaged in violent clashes with ethnic, rival groups and the police (Human Rights Watch, 2003a). The Movement for Actualisation of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), led by Ralph Uwazuruik in the South Eastern Nigeria is a frontline movement for demanding the independent state of Biafra for self-determination; they are still nursing the grudges from the 1967 to 1970 Nigeria civil war. The Bakassi Boys in the same South East serves as vigilante group for policing while the Hisbah Guards led by Sheik Farouk Yahaya in the North, a group organized by the government of Shari’a states asserts the Muslims identity through the enforcement of Shari’a Law (International Crisis Group, 2006). A common factor that runs across these groups is lawlessness. They engage in arbitrary arrest, harassment, torture, and extra-judicial killings by taking laws into their own hands. Loyalty to ethnic nationalities and “God Fathers” comes first before the Nigerian state, no wonder the government’s response was to crackdown on these groups. But in the face of political marginalization, lack of democratic dividends, insecurity, and absence of human development, cracking down on militias and trying their leaders for treason may not be the solution, if the Nigerian government fails to address the structural imbalances, the needs and agitations of these groups and the problems facing Nigeria today, otherwise it would be counter productive and these militias would become martyrs and recruit more followers.

Remembering the 1967 to 1970 civil war experiences, no doubt, again Nigeria is sitting on a keg of gunpowder, a time bomb waiting to explode. A major crisis in Nigeria will produce mass refugee across Africa. It would amount to strong disaster and great burden for the United Nations and the rest of the international community, considering the humanitarian and logistical challenges it would pose if Nigeria should break down. The Sudanese humanitarian crisis is a lesson to learn from. Now is the time for intervention, prevention is better than cure. Already the Nigerian presence is felt all over Africa. One out of every six Africans is a Nigerian. In situation of civil war, where would Nigerians go? Liberia and Sierra Leone came out of war not too long ago, the 1994 Rwandan genocide is still fresh in our memories, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is still swimming in troubled water, the situation in Guinea remains alarming, in fact it is at risk of becoming the next West Africa’s failed state and chaos could spread beyond its borders. Nigerians are not too friendly with Cameroonians following the October 10, 2002 International Court of Justice (ICJ) Hague landmark verdict that ceded the Nigerian oil rich Bakassi Peninsula to the Cameroon and was finally handed over to the Cameroonian authority on the 14 of August, 2008. Niger Republic is too poor a desert, Central African Republic (CAR) is passing through turbulence times, Sudan is a “no-go area” – South Sudan just got independence and might have to face internal adjustment as a new state. The Ugandan government forces and the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) are still struggling for supremacy, Ghana may not want us, and small Togo may be too tiny for Nigerian refugees.

8. Peace Methods And Solutions

The approaches to meeting these challenges are most promising and important, if all the stakeholders can embrace peace by looking at the issues that are militating against Nigeria’s
coexistence. The first step to peace process would be a good democratic system that would attain the goals of peace and security focused on the citizens. Building reliable democratic process to accommodate all political affiliations would be a welcome development for Nigeria because of the diverse ethnic, religious and multicultural interests. For such process to be acceptable and for the people to have confidence in the political system, the system must give room for elections to be transparent, open, fair play, encourage equal participation, and accountability to the citizens. Participation by women should be encouraged, avenue should be created to allow women more access to positions and political power at all levels of government, this will ensure gender balance and equal participation, because they are wife’s, mothers and their vital contribution to the family income and national development have roles to play in peace building, in this wise, leadership should not be an all men affair.

Leadership comes with accountability; the greatest national challenge facing this Heart of Africa and the most populous black nation on earth is leadership. Nigeria lacks quality leadership that is yet to transform economic wealth and distribution of state resources meaningfully into the lives of the governed. Until leadership is accepted as service to the nation and mankind and not the opportunity for personal wealth or enrichment, until Nigeria experience leadership that makes citizenry central to development and first in the affairs of the nation state, Nigeria shall remain in the same spot while the people live in penury for many generations to come. It is pertinent to note that a nation is respected when it is built on the rule of law and order. In a country where power means everything in the public arena and there are unconstitutional checks of balance of power between the Executives, the Legislatives, and the Judiciary, the rule of law will be undermined and the confidence in both the constitution and the judiciary that is the last hope of the common man will be eroded. The hijack of democracy and the unconstitutional impeachment saga in the President Obasanjo’s administration by the same lawmakers who took the oath of office to protect the same constitution was uncalled for. This display of lack of respect for the electorate and brazen lawlessness should not be repeated in this new administration. Impeachments in Oyo, Plateau, and Anambra States respectively was ruled to be unconstitutional and declared null and void by the competent court of law. Impeachment in its context is good for checks and balance in any democracy, but using impeachment as tool of blackmail is unacceptable.

The former Chief Justice of Nigeria Modibbo Alfa Belgore in his valedictory speech emphasised that “where we borrowed some elements of our constitutional practice, they have tried impeachment for not more than four times in over two hundred years. It now appears impeachment is daily lying on our breakfast table” (Supreme Court of Nigeria, 2007). To avoid mayhem, we should retrace back our steps he advised. This legal luminary once showed dismay on “how the Presidency [under the Obasanjo’s administration] picks and chooses which rulings of the court that is convenient for it to obey” (Abati, 2006) as it is to be recalled that the Obasanjo’s administration once ignored the Supreme Court ruling in the case of Lagos State and overruled the Court of Appeal in the Anambra State case. Disregarding decisions of a sacred institution as the judiciary is dangerous for the future of Nigeria. It is a clear invitation to anarchy and the beginning of the end of the institution, which serves as the pillar of Nigeria young democracy. Taking lives is cheap in Nigeria; there is state of insecurity, the basic function of any government is to guarantee the security of human lives and the welfare of her people. The lapses and void in the security sector were exploited for creating vigilante groups that purportedly claimed they came into existence to protect the people. The Nigerian Police should be reformed for effectiveness. The police should be trained to take up their constitutional roles of combating crime, control and quell internal conflicts and urban violence (not the military whose role is to defend any external aggression against the state). Police officers should enjoy good salaries and conditions of service and well equipped with arms and logistics, many at times they have complained that the arms in the possession of the robbers and hoodlums are more sophisticated to what they have in the event of confrontation.

9. Challenges To Peace And Reconciliation In Nigeria

Many people (outside our country) consider Nigeria as a theatre of absurd conflicts and interminable crises. They may be justified in holding this view; with the Jos crises festering for years,
with post-election violence and suicide – bombings, it is difficult to think otherwise. When we consider Nigeria’s population of 150 million, half the population of West Africa, its over 250 ethnic and language groups, its regional and geo-political configurations, its landmass and its diversity in religion and culture, we may be constrained to reach a different conclusion. Nigeria may, after all, be a paragon of stability which, as God Almighty has willed, shall undergo all the trials allotted it early enough in its national history.

But in all fairness, systemic ethno-political and religious crises, like the ones we have witnessed in recent years, do not have a long history in Nigeria. They all began in the late 1980s, following the intense competition for power and influence especially among the western educated elite; the Kafanchan crisis of 1987, in Southern Kaduna, was quickly followed by the Zangon Kataf and other crises; all in the same vicinity. The democratic dispensation, which began in 1999 also came with its set of problems, the most visible being the Shari’ah Crisis and the First Jos Crisis which led to the declaration of state of emergency in Plateau State.

But these crises, varied as they were, reveal the multi-dimensional nature of Nigeria as a political entity. We witness the primacy of politics in almost all these conflicts. In the struggle for power and political supremacy, politicians exercise no restraint in aggravating the socio-religious and ethnic cleavages, which characterize the geo-politics of the Nigerian state. It should not be forgotten that the Second Jos Crisis of November 2008 was also ignited by a botched Chairmanship election in Jos North Local Government.

The second dimension to these crises, especially in Kaduna and Plateau States, is the indigene/settler dichotomy, which is yet to be addressed properly by the Nigerian State. Many ethnic groups in these conflict areas see the other ethnic groups as foreigners who should not enjoy the full rights of bona fide residents. Most of these disenfranchised Nigerians also happen to be Muslims. However, those who oppose this dichotomy argue that these so-called settlers had spent more than two hundred years in the areas they reside. Moreover, as Nigerian Citizens, they have the full right to reside wherever they wish and pursue their legitimate business without let or hindrance. After all, they cannot be settlers in their own country.

10. Looking Ahead

Understanding the multifarious nature of Nigeria’s ethno-religious crises should strengthen our resolve and determination to deploy all the energies and resources at our disposal to see to their resolution. Our inability and reluctance to take meaningful action go to challenge not only our common humanity but also our self-worth. It is, therefore, important for us to appreciate, first and foremost, the importance of consensus building within the polity, with a view to ameliorating the current state of political polarization in it. The Nigerian political class must be able to speak and understand one another as well as to develop a minimum national agenda to chart the way forward. The political class must also be able to open dialogue on a variety of national issues, including the perennial problem of power rotation and willingly enter into agreements that they can honour with dignity.

Also, governance, at all levels, must translate into tangible benefits for all Nigerians, regardless of their ethnic and religious affiliation. Nigeria has the resources to make life more pleasant for its people. It is equally imperative to address the poverty problem as well as the needs of the youth population both in all the geo-political areas of the country. In a situation where over 50% of our population is jobless at less than 19 years of age, we are definitely sitting on a time bomb much deadlier than that of Boko Haram unless we take urgent action to defuse it.

Furthermore, there should be renewed determination to address both the Jos and Boko Haram sectarian crises. The Federal Government must take seriously its security responsibilities and effectively contain these crises. But beyond that, a genuine dialogue must be initiated, to begin healing festering wounds and to bring genuine understanding and reconciliation amongst the entire people of Plateau State and beyond. The social dimension of the Boko Haram cannot also be resolved by the mere use of force. This is the reason why I have consistently suggested dialogue and education to counteract its message, especially those aspects dealing with modern education. Millions of Muslim pupils are already outside the school system. Millions more will definitely follow if urgent intervention is not undertaken to enlighten the younger generations. And the question I have always asked is What
kind of society can we build in the 21st century when our youth turn their back on Science and Technology and are unable to produce the next generation of doctors, engineers and other specializations necessary for sustaining the socio-economic development of the society.

Finally, we should not neglect the impact of the International environment on Nigeria’s ethno-religious crises. Happenings in the US, Iraq, Afghanistan, Norway, Netherlands, the UK and France are as current and relevant as events in Jos, Maiduguri and Abuja. We must preach international tolerance and moderation. The fight against extremist groups should never be perverted to become a fight against Islam and its doctrines. We should all remember that in the final analysis, it is not what the perpetrators of violence do that really counts. It is the actions we take, individually and collectively, that would shape the fate of humanity”

11. Conclusion

Peace and reconciliation are seen as complimenting one another in promoting social justice and development in Nigeria. They are latent in man and become a life of commitment. The various situations in Nigeria conceptualize peace and reconciliation as functional in manifesting observable characteristic features which are hallmarks for development in Nigeria. It is the height of hypocrisy to work towards peace and reconciliation and not to downplay huge investment on weapons of mass destruction. As conflict management strategy, peace and reconciliation offer freedom from war, a calm and quiet state free from disturbance which facilitates development. Respect for inter and intra Ethnic groups in Nigeria engenders peaceful co-existence, improved understanding, remove confusion, ignorance, selfish, defense and reckless propaganda that have hundred social justice and development in Nigeria.

12. Recommendations.

Truth and Reconciliation Commission: Nigeria should convene a Truth and Reconciliation Commission to resolve every crisis in the nation. The nation needs healing and only the truth can provide it.

“Conscience is an open wound; only Truth can heal it.” – Othman Dan Fodio. Implementation of the 4th Alteration of the 1999 Constitution: We identify with the current efforts of the National Assembly to give full effect to the 4th Alteration of the 1999 Constitution. We commend the efforts of the 7th Assembly for making the provision that the Constitutional Amendment is a continuous exercise.

The wisdom of the leadership of the 8th Assembly to continue from the 7th Assembly stemmed in recognition of the enormous human and financial resources invested in the 4th Alteration exercise. This is a clear manifestation of the commitment of the 8th Assembly to the stability and future of the Nigerian Republic.

We therefore urge the Presidency to remit without delay to the National Assembly a copy of the original 4th Alteration Bill which was submitted to the Presidency and was allegedly signed by the immediate past President of Nigeria, in order to assist the National Assembly in its current exercise.


The Recommendations bordering on the Constitutional issues should be referred without any further delay to the National Assembly for legislative action. Failure to do this will amount to washing down the drain the colossal financial and human resources invested in the National Conference and will be a great disservice to the Nation at large.

Finally, The paper recommends that the said report be Gazetted and made public as is usual with such National document for Nigeria to move forward in peace and stability.

13. References


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