

DEMOCRACY, INSECURITY, RESTRUCTURING AND THE NATIONAL QUESTION

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Preamble

The theme of (his vein's conference addresses a longstanding debate in the field of social sciences. For long, both Nigerians and people of other nationalities have raised concerns about voter apathy in general elections, the high incidences of abuse of the rule of law, insecurity, and the rising ethnic divisions in the land. I therefore, commend the organisers for choosing such a germane topic that addresses the issues of the time. But the topic has as main as four variables. So, let me warm you from the onset that a lengthy topic deserves a length) discussion. All the four variables in the topic must be addressed satisfactorily for a meaningful discourse. I accepted the invitation as a keynote speaker enthusiastically. Part of my letter reads that I was selected based on "merit, adjudged pedigree, experience and high-profile contributions in the field of social sciences." Thank you indeed for the compliments. But the task is also challenging in the sense that the topic is sensational, volatile, pervasive and susceptible to varying intellectual viewpoints. Another challenge is that I have been asked to lead a discussion in an area that I command very moderate expertise. But I accepted the challenge. In the field of academics, we learn every day. I also consider it as part of learning to attend this conference to be listened to and to listen to other scholars and gain new knowledge in the field of social sciences. As a keynote speech, my article bears the torchlight of the Olympic Games. The games are not in the torchlight, but the torchlight is part of the games. The article contains the most basic of the ideas on the topic only to provide leadership for intense discussions to follow. It is organized in sections, in accordance with the order of the variables of the topic.

Democracy: From Theory to Practice

I set out to provide answers. But in doing so, I would ask probing questions, which will serve as a roadmap to our discourse. The questions are: Is democracy practised the same way in all countries of the world? Is the meaning of democracy the same over time or has it changed? If it has changed or not, why?

Does an original model of democracy exist? Is it possible to model a democracy for Nigeria that follows that/the original model? What type of democracy is practised in Nigeria? Let us begin with the most basic of the questions—**What is democracy?** In answering this complex question, which to many seems very simple, but certainly is not—many refer to the etymology of the word, often traced to the Greek words, '*demos*' meaning 'people' and '*kratein*' meaning 'to rule' (Hyland, 1995, p.40) and then stop at that. Some define the term using Abraham Lincoln's words, 'government of the people, by the people for the people.' But a thorough literature search has revealed that the meaning of the 'concept' democracy is far more complex than I personally thought.

It seems to me that two important factors, namely *period of time* and *personal philosophy* or *ideological leaning* influence how people define the term democracy. What is consistent in the literature is that democracy means "majority rule" or is "rule by the people" (*The concise Oxford dictionary of politics*, 2009) and promotes "equality of the vote, basic political liberties, and the principle of representation" (DiZerega, 2011). Democracy is characterized by the existence of competitive elections for the executive and legislative posts instead of them being filled by means of hereditary succession, violent revolutionary means, etc. (Segrillo, 2012)

To Segrillo (2012), in ancient Athens (5th BC to be precise), democracy was practiced in the form of allowing every male adult citizen vote in the Assembly (*ekklesia*) on the most important question in the city. According to Sultana (2012), "democracy means rule by the people, and it can refer to direct, participatory, and representative forms of rule by the people" (p.27). Direct democracy is usually associated with the ancient Greece while representative democracy is associated with the modern world (Peonidis, 2008).

The views of classical scholars notably Aristotle, Joseph Schumpeter, Tocquville, and Robert Dahl on democracy are also considered in this article. Aristotle presents six different forms of political rule, which according to Cunningham (2002) are *royalty*, *tyranny*, *aristocracy*, *oligarchy*, *polity*, and *democracy*. According to this source, royalty is a form of rule where one person exercises authority in the common interest; *tyranny*, an opposite term, depicts a form of leadership where one person rules in his private interests. The third concept is *aristocracy*, a term used to depict type of rule by the few. Aristotle used the term *oligarchy*, the opposite word for aristocracy. Another type of rule is *polity*, which stands for the proper rule of the many, while the opposite term is *democracy*, which serves the interest of the needy. Of these six forms of government, Aristotle argued that the best would be a *royalty*, where a single, noble ruler performed his proper function, followed by a properly functioning aristocracy. Aristotle models his

democratic ideals on what happened in Athens. He preaches a kind of democracy which pursues the interest of the poor or needy. In such a democracy, crucial state deliberations and decision making are the function of the assembly and are in no case left to the magistrates, whether elected or otherwise selected. Aristotle views democracies as very polarized societies, containing rich and poor and not much in between. For democracy, "equality is above all things their aim, and therefore they ostracize and banish from the city for a time those who seem to predominate too much through their wealth, or the number of their friends, or through any other political influence." (Aristotle, [c320 BC] bks gamma and delta).

After considering the views of other writers on the concept democracy as "incoherent or else wholly unrealistic" (Hyland, 1995, p.44), Schumpeter describes democracy as:

... that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people's vote (Schumpeter, 1962 p. 269).

Schumpeter's idea of democracy places significant emphasis on 'clean and competitive' elections, which presupposes a series of civil and political liberties (Segrillo, 2012). It was Schumpeter's idea that democracies must meet the following conditions before they are considered to be successful. The conditions according to Cunningham (2002) are:

Availability of qualified leaders; assurance that experts and not the public decide matters requiring special knowledge or talents; a well-trained bureaucracy; and a public whose members are tolerant of one another and are prepared to allow politicians a relatively free hand in governing, (p. 10).

Hyland (1995) maintains that Schumpeter's definition of democracy is precise and has become very famous.

In another view, Robert Dahl as cited by Sultana (2012), and Lundstrom (2004) used the phrase "full procedural democracy" (Dahl 1989, p.222) to argue that such should meet the following criteria: (a) Voting equality (b) effective participation (c) enlightened understanding (d) control of the agenda, and (e) inclusion. Dahl (1989) further introduces the term *polyarchy*, which depicts the seven institutions that form the counterpart to the five principles listed above. The seven institutions are (a) elected officials (b) free and fair elections (c) inclusive suffrage (d) right to run for office (e) freedom of expression (f) alternative information, and (g) associational freedom.

The list of definitions of democracy is endless. Some are or seem to be revised versions of others. But we have to end by summarising the review of these definitions, in three perspectives as follows:

- (a) The view of democracy as a normative political principle. This principle examines the value of democracy (Lundstrom, 2004) as well as "what an ideal democracy should be like" (Scgrillo. 2012. p. 10). Some seminal scholars, the likes of Schumpeter, Anthony Downs, and Dahl recommend a form of democracy dominated by elites "on the grounds that such a system serves to promote social peace, stability, and efficiency" (Lundstrom, 2004, p.5)
- (b) The view of democracy in reality. This refers to "the way societies called democratic actually function or might realistically be anticipated to function (Cunningham, 2002, p.11).
- (c) The semantic dimension of democracy, where the basic concern is about the meaning of democracy as seen by people according to their different ideological leanings is highlighted. Lundstrom (2000) maintains that the definition of democracy is just a question of terminology, a mere matter of semantic convention, which does not involve taking a political or moral position.

Nobody will deny the fact that democracy has become the most widely accepted political system in the world today (Sultana, 2012). But individual countries practise democracy according to their ideological leanings. Democracy practiced along Marxist beliefs places emphasis on the power of the elite who know the truth have the right to decide what is best for the people as different from those the communists. On the other hand those practicing democracy along western or liberal ideology places emphasis on equality of the law, freedom of speech and assembly, the right to choose one's job, and free and fair elections.

In his inaugural speech, United States President, Joe Biden described democracy as "the right to dissent peacefully" He maintained that unity is the soul of democracy stressing that "Bringing America together. Uniting our people. And uniting our nation" is what he has set out to do. Biden stressed that "without unity, there is no peace, only bitterness and fury. No progress, only exhausting outrage. No nation, only a state of chaos." (Inaugural speech, 2021).

What cannot be denied is the fact that since many developing nations import virtually everything, it appears that even the form of democracy in use in such nations is also imported. But to conclude that way may even lead to more complex questions such as: Who introduced such acts like vote buying, illegal possession of ballot article, announcing and publishing false results, ballot box snatching, thuggery, electoral violence, and a horde of other acts in Nigeria's democracy? Where is the people's will again when the loser is declared the winner, a development that leads to marathon legal tussles between and among the

contestants'? Why are people losing faith in the electoral process, that is meant to guarantee their fundamental human right of choosing their leaders?

The Theory of Liberalism and its Impinging Ideological Relationship with Democracy

Leonardo da Vinci once said: "He who loves practice without theory is like the sailor who boards ship without a rudder and a compass and never knows where he may cast" (cited in Kegley & Blanton, p.31). A discussion without reference to theory would be like what Leonardo da Vinci described above. To avoid this, I have decided to anchor my discussion of the concept 'democracy' by referring to the liberal theory or liberalism for short. Why does the theory of liberalism deserve to be referred to? I dare say, its tenets shed significant light on democracy. Some scholars argue that the similarity between the two is subject to debate, yet there are striking ideological and philosophical relationships between the two. At first, I was afraid to outrightly assert that the two are related until I read the perspectives of DiZerega (2001), Sergrillo (2012) and J.S. Mills. Liberalism is an opposing theory to realism. The latter is premised on the idea that world politics is essentially and unchangeably a struggle among self-interested states for power and position under anarchy (Kegley & Blanton, 2012) while the former centres on the application of reason and universal ethics to bring about a more orderly, just and cooperative world. Liberalism is the belief that it is the aim of politics to preserve individual rights and to maximise their freedom (*The concise Oxford dictionary of politics*, 2009). Liberals typically believe in putting in place a government that can protect individuals from being harmed by others, but they also recognize that government itself can pose a threat to liberty (Dagger, Minogue, Ball, & Girvetz, 2020). Liberalists believe that anarchy and war can be effectively checked and controlled through institutional reforms that empower international organization and law (Kegley & Blanton, 2012). The influential scholars who are the proponents of the liberal theory are John Locke, Immanuel Kant and Adam Smith. The main principles of liberalism are:

- (a) The need to substitute attitudes that stress the unity of humankind for those who stressed parochial national loyalties to independent sovereign states.
- (b) The importance of individuals their essential dignity and fundamental equality throughout the course of history, and the analogous need to place the promotion of human rights and freedom ahead of national interests and state autonomy. Liberalists see the home as the microcosm of the larger society.
- (c) The use of power of ideas through education to arouse world public opinion against warfare.

Kegley and Blanton (2012) argue that after World War I, the liberal thought significantly influenced international politics and policy resulting to the formation of (a) global institutions to tackle the problem of 'struggle for power between self-serving, mutually suspicious states. This movement promoted the principle of 'collective security' with the resolve to prevent future wars. This is with the view that the international community will mobilise itself against any aggressor. The resolve has been so strong that attack on any member nation means attack on all. (b) Since conflict-resolution practices used at home could equally be used when dealing with international disputes, the legal procedure is emphasised to adjudicate disputes before they could escalate into armed conflicts. The belief that rational creatures are capable of settling their political disputes through dialogue and compromise (Daggar, et al., 2020) that led to the formation of international bodies such as the International Court of Justice (World Court), the League of Nations, the United Nations have tried to wade into conflicts between nations to avert wars. A good example is the dispute between Nigeria and Cameroon over the Bakassi Peninsula in which the World Court ruled in favour of Cameroon in 2002 (c) The principle of 'Beat swords into plowshares' came into force as a measure of disarming warring groups. The expression, 'beat swords into plowshares' originates from the Book of Isaiah 2: 3-4. The keyword 'plowshare' represents tools that benefit mankind as opposed to sword, which stands for lethal tools of war and destruction. When two nations are at war, and one is weaker and is subdued, it leads to peace. The type of peace advocated in these two Bible verses is not that kind of peace. It is the peace that will prevail when a new world ruler in the person of Christ emerges. During his reign, swords and spears will be respectively converted to plowshares and pruning hooks. In other words, the destructive weapons will be converted to useful implements that will give mankind peace, justice and development. All nations, ethnic groups and families are encouraged to adopt this principle to engender peace, love and unity. Democracy draws its precepts from liberalism looking at its significant emphasis on the rule of law, basic human rights and accountability of leaders. Immanuel Kant, one of the proponents of liberalism had argued in his publication, *Perpetual peace* (1795) that "When citizens are given basic human rights such as choosing their leaders through ballots as well as civil liberties such as free speech and free press, these democracies would be far less likely to initiate wars than would countries ruled by dictators and kings" (in Kegley & Blanton, p.263). John Locke, another liberalist, holds that majority rule is the ideal political standard (DiZerega. 2001). Liberalism can thus be called the foothold of democracy.

Liberalists support egalitarianism, i.e. belief in the equality of all people. DiZerega (2001) maintains that:

...majority rule is the only fair way to make political decisions, but for the majority to really rule, political equality must pervade far more than merely in the final choices made in a voting booth. (.3)

In today's world, and in Nigeria in particular, the phenomena of illiteracy, diseases, poverty and insecurity are threats to equality but if government makes it its priority to tackle these impediments, such a government is said to be practicing both democratic and liberalist ideals. According to Dagger, Minogue, Ball, & Girvetz (2020), in modern liberalism, the chief task of government is to remove obstacles that prevent individuals from living freely or from fully realizing their potential. When governments advocate that women, the disabled and other vulnerable groups in society be actively involved in the electoral process it is practising the ideals of liberalism. Social scientists have over the years given credit to J.S. Mills, who had advocated that franchise should be extended to women and the state's common wealth be equally distributed. Mill had given a new dimension to 'pure democracy' by naming such a government as "government of the whole people by the whole people, equally represented" (see Cunningham, 2002).

The similarities between liberalism and democracy can be summarised as follows:

- (a) Both have ideologies that impinge oneach other. A good example is that in a democracy, governments derive their authority from popular election; liberalism, on the other hand, is primarily concerned with the scope of governmental activity (Dagger, et al, 2020).
- (b) Both liberal and democratic principles dominate modern political thought (Samet & Schmeidler, 2003).
- (c) Liberalism believes that decisions on certain mailers rest with the individual and not \itli the society.
- (d) Democracies assign the power of decision making to majorities.
- (e) Like in a democracy, liberalism recommends the use of diplomacy in place of force. Liberalists see politics as a zero-sum game, which has been defined by Kegley and Blanton (2012) as "an exchange in a purely conflictual relationship in which what is gained by one competitor is lost by the other" (p.38).

Insecurity of Human Lives and Property as a Global Problem

Insecurity is the opposite term for security. The safety of the citizens Nigerian and other nationals living in Nigeria has to be guaranteed by the Government of the Federation. Nigerians need safety to work on their farms and offices. They must feel safe to travel to and live in any part of the country. But copious incidents of kidnapping for ransom, insurgency, banditry, national protests

as witnessed today not only make the safety of lives and property in doubt. The phenomenon of insecurity slows down the rate of infrastructural development, the production of food for daily consumption, and increase the chances of plunging the economy into another recession. Unfortunately, the situation is worsening every day. As modern man is making more scientific and technological breakthrough, the phenomenon of insecurity is becoming more and more complex. Arms manufacture, trade and use have become pervasiveness, while the insecurity of lives and property has assumed frightening proportions. This has negative consequences for global peace. A time existed in the history of humanity called the 'Cold War.' The term means a political conflict between two power blocs (Westad, 2000). Although, many historians tend to disagree with the exact era, they tend to point to the years between 1947—1991. The year 1991, the year that the Soviet Union under the leadership of Mikhail Gorbachev fell. The year has significance in human history. Two superpowers namely, the United States of America representing the western bloc and the Soviet Union representing the eastern block were involved in political conflict which created a lot of tension across the globe. While a lot of political propaganda and psychological warfare were going on, the two blocs simultaneously developed nuclear arsenal, which portended that another World War was likely to erupt.

Another major international disarmament process to foster world peace is the nuclear war that was nearly fought led by North Korean leader, Kim Jong-un and Donald Trump of the United States of America. The entire globe has been pursuing the disarmament process as a security measure with the first international conference on disarmament popularly called Geneva 1932. A breach of agreement on disarmament was noticed between North Korea and the United States of America. In fact, in 2003, North Korea openly declared its intention to plan series of nuclear tests targeting the United States (US), the sworn enemy of the Korean people. Hostilities resurged between the two countries until it was resolved during the 2018 North Korean-US Singapore Summit.

What lessons can Nigeria learn from the world picture described above? On the home front, Nigeria has been contending with the problem of insecurity for long. It appears the various regions of Nigeria have insecurity challenges that are peculiar. Obarisiagbon and Akintoye (2019) point to Boko Haram "insurgency in the North, kidnappers in the Eastern and Southern part of the country, ritual killings in the West, and political and non-political assassinations across the nation" (p.46) while the violence between mostly Fulani herders and settled communities have been concentrated in north central Nigeria - the Nigerian middle-belt, particularly the states of Benue, Plateau, Kaduna and Nassarawa (Prusa & Kilanko, 2018). The conflict between farmers and Fulani herders is as

ominous as the insurgency and Prusa and Kilanko (2018) warn that if not contained, it "has a potential to boil over to a regular sectarian war." And each passing day, the problem is getting worse. For want of time, I have limited my discussion of insecurity to six major forms namely:

Boko Haram Insurgency: Boko Haram started insurgency in Nigeria since 2002 (Cook, 2011) and later, Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP) joined the movement. The group, which goes by the name Jama'at ahl al-sunna lida'wa wa-l-qital, meaning "[Western] education is forbidden" is responsible for suicide attacks, the violent deaths of many civilians and military personnel many and the abduction of the school girls at Chibok and Dapchi. The epi-centre of their operation is the North Eastern States of Borno, Adamawa and Yobe. Boko Haram has also posed a cross-border security threat to neighbouring Cameroon, Chad and Niger.

Farmers and Herders' Conflicts: The pattern and scale of conflicts between herdsmen and farmers in recent time is alarming. This can be noticed in the patterns of attack, weaponry used, scale of attack and motive of attack.

Coordinated Crime: Organized crime involving syndicates takes place in many forms in Nigeria. Sometimes it takes place in the form of money laundering, human trafficking, arms proliferation, smuggling of drugs and contraband goods across porous borders or the nation's waterways. Another form is banditry attacks on road commuters along major highways in Nigeria.

Niger Delta Insurgency: The insurgents in this region engage mainly in the criminal sabotage of the nation's oil asset. They carry out oil theft by either tapping directly from the oil pipes or causing the pipes to explode in the air while leaked oil is collected and sold. Sometimes the term *oil bunkering* is used to describe their activities.

Kidnapping and Abduction: According to Prusa and Kilanko (2018), when kidnapping started in Nigeria, it was targeted at:

foreigners, especially Americans and the British, mainly to draw attention to then-plight of environmental degradation, caused by oil and gas exploration and production. The hostages were usually kept for a week and released after a press conference, which will be broadcast by CNN and BBC. This trend continued and actually brought the desired publicity to the Niger Delta issue. Kidnap for ransom in the Niger Delta started when an international oil company was not patient enough for negotiations to go through, went ahead to pay N300, 000 as ransom to release of their expatriates. The introduction of this large sum of money at that time, made the militants rethink the whole process of taking hostages and releasing them after achieving the publicity they desired. They also saw it as a means of financing their arms and ammunition purchase.

Today, abduction and kidnapping has become a very big business. In less than one year, school students have been abducted in Katsina State, Niger State and most recently, Zamfara. Who knows which school and state is next?

Community-Level Violence as a Corollary of Insecurity

Violence is a corollary of insecurity. Evidence of rural conflicts escalating to larger proportions leading to the destruction of houses, farm crops and other valuable property have been witnessed over and over. Example Ikyurav-Shitile crisis in Katsina-Ala Local Government Area, Tyomu crisis in Makurdi, etc. In fact, rural conflict is a major push factor for urban migration and the phenomenon itself exacerbates insecurity in urban settlements (Moser & Rodgers, 2005).

Why is Nigeria Experiencing so many Incidents of Insecurity

Diverse opinions have been expressed as to the causes of insecurity in Nigeria. Some people have blamed the numerous cases of insecurity on the aftermath of the Civil War and the military intervention into politics, which increased the use of arms and ammunitions (Ewetan & Urhie, 2014), some have blamed it on ethnic bias and the marginalization of some sections of the country in the distribution of basic infrastructure and these have greatly compounded the security of Nigeria (Nwadiakor, 2011). Yet Umaru, Pate and Haruna (2015) blame insecurity on frustrated expectations and a state of hopelessness and sustained mainly by bad governance, corruption and a pervasively weak institutional framework. My opinion on the matter is as follows:

Factors Exacerbating Violence and Insecurity in Nigeria

- (a) Complicity in crime by officers and men of the security sector (the army, the navy, customs, police, etc.). The army has reported many times that some of its men and officials supply arms and ammunition to the Boko Haram insurgents. Major General Lucky Irabor said this in a press conference televised on September 4, 2016. Another major incident is the case of kidnap kingpin, Wadume who was initially arrested and was being transported by the police but was freed by Nigerian troops of 93 Battalion who also shot the police officers conveying Wadume.
- (b) The role of fake news and disinformation. There is so much fake news in circulation so much that one hardly differentiates real from fake news. And the problem with fake news is that some citizens believe the first version of any news that break. Later versions, whether they counter the first are never believed at all. Youths in Nigeria use fake news to execute character assault and campaign of calumny to achieve political points/gains.

- (c) Lack of sportsmanship spirit to concede defeat after election. Violence, especially politically-motivated violence can be triggered by political players' lack of spirit of sportsmanship to concede defeat in election. Many cases can be cited to support this. The 2020 Presidential Elections in which Democratic candidate, Joe Biden reportedly defeated the incumbent, Donald Trump. After his defeat, Trump stoked the anger of his political supporters claiming the election was fraudulent and stolen. Trumps' rabble-rousing press statements and defiant posture led to his supporters staging a protest on January 6, 2021 at Capitol Hill leading to the disruption of the final perfunctory session to confirm Joe Biden's victory by Congressmen. Notwithstanding his antics, Biden's victory was certified a day later and Trump had no option but to concede defeat. Donald Trump said:

"Even though I totally disagree with the outcome of the election, and the facts bear me out. Nevertheless there will be an orderly transition on January 20th." By this time a lot of damage had been done (including the death of 4 protesters). This singular incident led to other consequences. One, there has been widespread international condemnation of Trump's action. Two, Facebook and Twitter immediately placed a ban on Trumps' account. Three, Trump was charged for 'incitement of insurrection' and an impeachment trial commenced soon after he bequeathed power. Even though he was acquitted eventually, the incident contains important lessons for humanity. Trump is a sharp contrast of Mitt Romney, who conceded defeat to Barak Obama in 2012.

Back home in Nigeria, post-election violence is a common occurrence especially if the loser does not concede defeat. That is why, in the 2015 presidential election, when then President Goodluck Jonathan conceded defeat to All Progressives Congress (APC) Presidential candidate, Muhammadu Buhari, some analysts remarked:

"Jonathan's action traumatized many of his supporters; those who could not easily believe they are out of power. Such people wished that Jonathan rejected the result of the presidential election, to throw Nigeria into crisis. They had envisaged a situation where crisis would erupt in the country and consequently the entire election declared cancelled, paving the way for another election or even a military take-over." (Ahokegh, 2017, p.63).

- (d) Activities of Armed Herdsmen. No organized group has brought carnage on fellow Nigerian citizens more than the Armed Fulani herdsmen. Their activities and bloodletting impact are not in Benue alone but in other states like Kaduna, Plateau, Ekiti, Zamfara, etc.

- (e) Increased activities of cultists, political thugs and militia groups. Youths who have taken to cultism, thuggery and banditry constitute a security threat to their family members, friends, neighbours and the larger society.
- (f) (Individual and collective) Complacency: When Boko Haram started their activities, many northerners were happy about it thinking that the target of the insurgents were mainly Christians and non-northerners. Neighbours were not willing to volunteer information leading to the arrest of the perpetrators until they started paying for it in many ways.
- (g) Delayed justice (or no justice) in punishing political offenders and criminals is another crucial factor.
- (h) Hate speech and improper use of language. Let me draw an illustration from 1 Samuel 16:7-8. In this story, Shimei, a man from Saul's clan (opposition group) *pelted* David (the Commander-in-Chief) and his officials and *insulted* David using such words as *scoundrel*, *murderer*. Shimei's action sparked an angry reaction from David's foot soldiers. In v9, there is verbal retaliation. One of the foot soldiers called Shimei *a dog* and took permission from David to go and *cut* Shimei's *head*. My reference to this Bible story is for three reasons: (1) to show you how improper and discourteous use of language and behaviour can lead to strife, violence and fatalities; (2) to show how most secrets of people in power is revealed by those in the opposing group and this sort of information increases apprehension, political distrust, etc. Shimei inadvertently revealed the sins of adultery, deceit and murder David once committed; (*Do you still remember the leaked audio about the conversation between two prominent Benue sons?*) (3) to show how the ordinary citizens pay for the past transgressions of our leaders. Like the case of David, our politicians are responsible for the untimely deaths of many political actors and members of the opposition, a development which often triggers vengeance.
- (i) High unemployment rate: Kidnapping of innocent citizens and demand for huge ransom from families of the kidnapped victims are on the increase because of the huge monetary gains involved. Bandits and kidnappers are having a field-day because during negotiations, huge sums of monies running to millions of naira is paid. Thus, the perpetrators see it as a profitable business.

Political Restructuring

An exhaustive discussion on political restructuring in Nigeria must recognize the concept 'federalism.' Majekodunmi (2015) describes federalism as a system of government in which sovereignty is constitutionally divided between a

central governing authority and constitutional political units. Majekodunmi's ideas are based on Sir Kenneth Wheare's definition in which federalism is described as a system of government that sovereignty is divided between the central and state governments with neither government subordinate to the other in legal authority. Nigeria has practised federalism as far back as 1954. (Adamolekun, 1991). At inception, it comprised a national government and three regional governments namely Eastern, Northern and Western. At the moment, Nigeria as a federation has 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. Federalism has been a source of intense controversy since the period before independence. "Nigeria exhibits a system of federalism wherein the federating units have no clear independence from the centre; rather, they are dependent and subordinate" (Babalola & Onapajo, 2019, p.43). Ali and Ahmed (2019) argue that the amalgamation of the southern and northern protectorates has created the problem of power-sharing and resources among the diverse ethnic groups (Ali & Ahmed, 2019). Agitations for restructuring are hinged on the belief that it is the solution to federalism. But Babalola and Onapajo (2019) hold a contrary view that the solution to Nigeria's problem is good governance and not restructuring. From the debate so far, it is ostensible that Nigerians are not unanimous on the principle of restructuring. But let us know in great detail what restructuring means.

Even if I am unable to answer all the following questions, myself, others will. Moreover, their use at this stage will guide the rest of the discussion. *What is restructuring? Is restructuring a new thing or has it existed with us? Where do the regions stand should the wish for restructuring be granted? How prepared are Nigerians for restructuring? What sort of restructuring do Nigerians want? How do they want it?*

Agitations for political restructuring did not start today. At various times in the political history of Nigeria, Nigerians have agitated for power-shift from one zone of the country to the other (hence the slogan, 'power-shift'). Another term is 'change;' change from Peoples' Democratic Party, a party that promised to rule Nigeria for 60 years. The other one is resource control (hence the slogan 'resource control'). There is also 'true federalism' as different from 'federalism.' At the centre of each movement, the political elites lead the way supporting their viewpoints with theoretical and practical arguments.

Restructuring in the Post-military Era

(a) June 12 annulment, agitation for power shift

After the annulment of June 12 Presidential election, NADECO (National Democratic Coalition), a pro-democracy movement championed the movement to not only fight the injustice that was associated with the annulment of an election

adjudged to be credible, fair and transparent in the history of Nigeria, but also possibly reverse the decision and revalidate the result. Chief M.K.O. Abiola was believed to have won the election. His trial, incarceration and mysterious death under detention saddened many, including the international community. In ensuring that history does not repeat itself and that the Yoruba race (represented in the person of Chief M.K.O. Abiola) occupied the number one seat of government, agitation for 'another' Yoruba man to emerge as President of the Federal Republic dominated the political scene after the military had stepped aside. With a 'gentleman' agreement that the President should come from the Yoruba group, all the parties featured presidential candidates that were Yoruba. The arrangement paid off. Chief Olusegun Obasanjo's emergence as the next president placated an outraged Yoruba nation. Secondly, the agitators had succeeded in achieving powershift from the North, a region which had produced Presidents in quick succession for nearly 15 years.

(b) Third Term Movement and the second powershift

In 2005, Nigerians woke up to shock to learn that the Senate Constitution Review Committee had initiated moves to amend the constitution to allow then President Olusegun Obasanjo run for a third term after a second term. When Ghali Na'Abba raised the concern, many thought that it was his usual opposition posture against PDF-led government of Olusegun Obasanjo. Power must return to the north. So, the political body language of the northerners seemed to be saying. Alhaji Umaru Musa Yar'adua succeeded Obasanjo and so the desired powershift had again been achieved. But Yar'Adua's tenure did not last long after his death overseas. Political tension returned to the national scene again. But nobody thought that Dr Goodluck Jonathan had the ambition to succeed his master at all means, and his kinsmen argued strongly that the South-South political zone had not yet produced a president for the country. Jonathan became Nigeria's next President. After his first term in office, the All Progressive People's Congress, a coalition of all progressive parties took over power from the incumbent, the first time in the history of Nigeria. The South-South feeling that they have not had eaten the national cake to the fullest started muttering disgruntled campaigns of resource control. Babalola and Onapajo write:

When Goodluck Jonathan lost the presidential election to Mohammadu Buhari in 2015, the country yet again witnessed an upsurge in violence in the Niger Delta following daily bombing of oil installations by a newly formed Niger Delta Avengers (NDA) and other emergent militant organizations, which coincided with a radical fall in oil prices at the international market (p.45).

(c) The national conference option. In 2005, President Obasanjo organized the National Constitution Reform Conference principally to address the contentious problem of balance of power between the Federal and State governments. In 2014, President Goodluck drew 500 delegates from the different ethnic interests across the nation to a national conference to address the political structures and issues of revenue-sharing formula among others. The gains of such conferences is yet to be felt till date.

Ostensibly, one can therefore, say that even with the powershift and two national conferences held among other measures, the problem of Nigeria did not end. Religious intolerance between Muslims and Christians, claims of marginalization of minority groups by the majority groups, claims of political domination by other ethnic groups have given rise to restructuring. Till today, the Igbo ethnic group are agitating for secession, hence the formation of Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) and Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB). In the midst of all this, the Igbos are saying in 2023, an Igbo President is the answer. It is not clear whether it is an Igbo President to head the Republic of Biafra that exists in their imagination or the President of Nigeria. The youths in several parts of the country have taken up arms against the state, but they are not clear about their agitations. Nigerians gave the youths a good opportunity during the #ENDSARS Protest, but instead of demanding for concrete reforms, they claimed the protest was hijacked by hoodlums to burn down critical public and private assets, set criminals in prisons free, disturb public peace and run down the economy. Who are the youths and who are the hoodlums? At the end of gangsterism, they too are saying, there must be restructuring. They also come in the form of #REVOLUTIONNOW PROTEST, etc. Those agitating for restructuring are those without jobs. Those without food. Those without security. Those who are not near the corridors of power. Overall, they are those in the opposition party. But once there is a good job; once there is good food; once they are safe; once they are in positions of government, things are working well. As the Tiv aphorism goes, *kwaghyan doon ayooso ga* (It is bad manners to be talking during a meal).

The APC-led government, which produced Muhammdu Buhari as the Head of State during the 2015 and 2019 general elections capitalized on some of the weaknesses of the federal system of government and promised Nigerians in its manifesto to "initiate action to amend our Constitution with a view to devolving powers, duties and responsibilities to states and local government in order to entrench true federalism and the Federal spirit." (APC manifesto). A few years after it took off, Nigerians did not see much of the change the APC-led government promised so they are losing their patience.

Returning to the earlier questions, what sort of restructuring do Nigerians really want? Has restructuring got a new meaning? Going by the debate above, Nigerians seem to be calling for the division of the country under the guise of restructuring. Should such restructuring happen, where does a tribe like Tiv stand? Where does a region like Middle Belt stand? I hope this is one other issue that will be addressed in the conference. As another political dispensation is billed to start in 2023, where will the Benue people pitch their political tent?

The National Question

Historians should answer: What was Nigeria called before 1914? Are we referring to Nigeria as a nation on the basis of the amalgamation of the protectorates? Nigeria recently marked 60 years of political independence with the theme "Together" to emphasize the need for citizens to see themselves as one. But has the unity of the nation been achieved or not? If not why? If yes, how? Does Nigeria have the attributes of a nation? With the many agitations for secession by the various regions, can we still say the 'national' spirit is in Nigerians? What are those challenges that need to be surmounted for Nigeria to continue to exist as a united indissoluble country?

The mystery about the national question is that there is no single answer to the national question. Views on the matter are as diverse as mine. The social cohesion and unity of Nigeria has been threatened for years. Between 1967 and 1970, Nigeria fought a Civil War. The problems of Nigeria did not end even after the war. A lot has happened and is still happening, which casts doubts in the mind of the various constituent elements that make up Nigeria as to whether Nigeria is a united nation. The various citizens of Nigeria are suspicious of one another, the core values of love, unity, peace and progress seem to be geometrically diminishing every day. The citizens of Nigeria mock their country's concrete achievements especially when the successes are recorded by a government that is led by their political opponents. During protests that were intended to be peaceful, such protests end up to be bloody and the protesters destroy the little public asset that we have. Various ethnic groups and individual citizens cry and are still crying of marginalization, unfair treatment and lack of adherence to the federal character principle as entrenched in the Nigerian constitution. Disgruntled groups daily give notice of peaceful protest to express their grievances. Much as there is clamour for restructuring, the various intentions toward restructuring are not the same. Whereas to the citizens of South-South geopolitical Zone, restructuring is for the purpose of resource control, the South-Easterners want to secede and institute self-rule. The Boko Haram insurgents and criminals have taken arms against the state to pursue their ulterior motives. Take the issue of community policing or State police for instance, which is a security measure to tackle insurgency and nationwide

criminality, different people give different arguments about the matter. In sum, one can say each day leads to more and more unresolved national question in Nigeria.

The common desire by citizens for national advancement is the goal of nationalism. When the citizens assert the interest of their nation instead of personal interest, when they are devoted to the national ideals and democratic values that bind them together, if they take the developmental process as a collective task, if they take the nation's economic, political, social, health, educational and security challenges as a collective responsibility then the sense of nationalism can be guaranteed. But certainly this is not the picture we see. The complexity of the phenomenon made Ito (2020) to refer to nationalism as 'Aporia'. Aporia means "a problem which is impossible to solve - even in the study of history and in social science" (Ito, p. 197). But he further retorts: If we give up too easily on nationalism by calling it an "Aporia", how can we contribute to create a world with peace and justice?

The nations of the world must enjoy peace and justice. The citizens of Nigeria must enjoy peace and justice. There must be fairness in the appointment of Nigerians into key positions of government following the principle of federal character as enshrined in the constitution. Qualified and employable youths should be gainfully employed as due and when due. Police brutality on the citizens must end. The rule of law must be followed at all times. The President of Nigeria should see himself as the President of Nigeria and not of his ethnic group. In same spirit, the citizens should see their President in such a light. The various groups, whether minorities or majorities must enjoy a fair share of the national cake. The unity of the nation, which has been threatened by continuous coordinated activities of heavily armed bandits, marauding herdsmen, separatist movements like IPOB and MOSSOB, kidnappers and Boko Haram insurgents must be brought to an end for the country to achieve her developmental agenda. 'Who will do it?' There goes the big question. 'All of us' is the answer.

Practical Suggestions as the Way Forward

Having not only identified but also discussed the problem of insecurity and the ideology behind agitations for restructuring, I have the following suggestions on the way forward:

- **Disarmament:** The Government of Nigeria should pursue aggressively a disarmament or demilitarization programme to disarm the various groups and youths that take up arms against the state before another war breaks up in Nigeria.

- Restoration of discipline in our national life: Till date, indiscipline is a major problem of this country. The Buhari/Idiagbon regime fought this monster headlong. But the problem has resurfaced in alarming proportions.
- Emphasis on merit: Placing merit in the selection of youths into the Airforce, Navy, Police, Army, award of contracts, recruitment in public service, etc. will significantly address the question of injustice.
- Embarking on campaigns to give orientation to children and youths on nationalism: National orientation on national values, patriotism, etc. should be stepped up in schools, religious organizations and in the operations of the National Orientation Agency.
- Polite use of language and effective communication in both private and public life should be emphasized. Nigerians hardly apologise for wrongdoing. Willful lawbreaking and infringing on the rights of others threatens peaceful coexistence and this behaviour sparks chains of reactions including the tendency to seek vengeance on the part of those who are willfully wronged.
- Ensuring equitable distribution of keeping a share of national cake for the less privileged/uneducated/vulnerable citizens should be emphasized.
- Enforcing the principle of rule of law. As Aristotle once said, it is more proper that law should govern than one of the citizens.
- In schools, teachers should use curricula that place significant emphasis on skills acquisition to tackle the problem of unemployment.
- Government should create jobs and recruit qualified youths from time to time to tackle the problem of unemployment. And it should be stressed that appointment should be on merit.
- Encouraging effective participation in the democratic process, especially reducing voter apathy by increasing the number of polling units, promoting issue-based campaigns, and allowing youths into elective positions.

Conclusion

The theme of the conference raises issues of germane importance to the individual life and political health of Nigerians and Nigeria. We are all living witnesses to and in some cases victims of the frightening incidents of insecurity both within the local environment and other parts of the country, a development which has affected the workplace, the smooth operation of schools, commercial, recreational and worship centres. The democratic experiences raise doubt about the significance of democracy as a system of government or let me say, democracy as practised in Nigeria by Nigerians. As we collectively brainstorm on creative ways to tackle the problems already identified, may I request you to address the issues. Leave out academic technicalities but focus on the way forward. Let us as people

think of the type of legacy we are leaving for the next generations. Wishing you very engaging and fruitful deliberations.

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