

Sovereign Negotiations Still the Most Preferred Option for Nigeria

by

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Any fool can be a politician. It is common-place knowledge that many school drop-outs are the politicians in Nigeria. This is part of a general anomaly, where intellectual capacity counts for little. Since the students of politics, (unlike other professionals), have failed to prevent charlatans from pontificating on politics, you have so many politicians, so called 'men of God' etc., mounting the rostrum today resulting in a cacophony of voices on the restructuring of the Nigerian reality. Some of them even go to the extent of lying that they are now chief diplomats who are about to bring salvation to our country through consultations with the major countries of the world.

Interest is Politics

Elsewhere, I have argued that the core of politics is interests. Whether at the individual, family, community, countries or international levels, politics involves the aggregation and articulation of interests. For me, it is the struggles of peoples within nation-states and across countries for the realization of interests in the processes for the allocation of resources whether emanating from the gifts of nature and/or the social produce of society in order to satisfy the basic needs of food, shelter and clothing. Individuals, in conjunction with others having identity of interests, are classes in the processes for the allocation of resources. Across nation-states classes are in constant collaboration and competition for advantageous positions at the world level on the allocation of resources.

The dominant interests in such struggles build the rest of society in their image. To prevent an overturning of the social order that is beneficial to a minority of social forces, an ineffective welfarism is usually fronted.

In some societies, the aggregation and articulation of interests is carried out through organized arrangements called political parties that are definitely not the bastardized mutation in Nigeria that I have often described as the shifting alliances of thieves. Ethnic groups of all kinds, referred to by some as nationalities in their own rights in Nigeria, also play the aggregation and articulation of interests. Though despised, even terrorists of different types (freedom fighters in some situations) are also modalities for the aggregation and articulation of interests.

Power is a mere instrument

Power that some define as politics is nothing but a mere instrument for the realization of interests. Power could be in terms of brute force, judicial enforcements or soft power that could take the shape of deployment of religion or other ideological suasion to ensure obedience. In many societies, effective and efficient governments wield power as implementation agents on the basis of agreed impartial rules and regulations (rule of law), to ensure just allocation of resources to satisfy interests, including responding to the needs of those who are periodically incapacitated by adverse natural occurrences.

In effect, Nigeria is no exception to the juggling of contentions and compromises for the realization of the interests of citizens. The country itself exists within a world order in which

all countries strive to realize the interests of their citizens or really the interests of the dominant social forces in respective countries. This is important. All nations are trying to realize their respective interests at the international level. In this strive, conflict and cooperation are deployed as necessary.

Crucial is the fact that no country sacrifices its own interests for another, never mind the naivety of Nigeria's school drop-out misleaders who erroneously expect to be saved of their incompetence by erstwhile colonizers. This high gullibility erroneously expect that deft imperial/colonial powers would behave towards them as friendly redeemers. This will never happen except through occasional win-win negotiations.

Restiveness in the Land

This background is essential for making sense of the restiveness that is the order of the day in Nigeria today. If it is not kidnapping for ransom or for rituals to acquire wealth, including of schoolchildren, it is wanton maiming and killing of people in order to dispossess them of their material belongings or other countries having built discord at the same time rushing to sell weapons directly or indirectly for additional mayhem.

The environmental problems of the Sahel, resultant conflicts among ethnicities there as well as terrorism in places like Mali, Burkina Fasso etc., are driving different ethnicities towards Nigeria. The unfortunate thing is that clueless Nigerian leaders are at each other's throats as those pretending to be born to rule are clueless and are being effectively pushed aside in the Northwest by terrorists from the Sahel. Boko-Haram is unrelenting in the Northeast as accountability has disappeared over purchases of weapon systems with corruption becoming one of the major drivers of that conflict. It is appearing that vested interests are not against the thriving of Boko-Haram.

The Northcentral of Nigeria is no longer facing only Herdsmen, they also have Boko-Haram in-situ to contend with. There is fear of the capture of Abuja as a possibility. The Southeast is becoming a difficult space for the Federal Government of Nigeria to govern over, there is insurgency thither. The Southwest and especially the South-south (that once had a stalemate with the entire Federal might), are warming up as Herdsmen and kidnappers have unbearably rendered production in farms impossible or difficult.

It has been documented that President Muhammadu Buhari (PMB) lacks the political will to fight corruption. It is now clear to Nigerians that his administration has terrorist(s) or sympathizer(s) in cabinet under his protection. PMB's administration has, so far, shown that it is failing when it comes to the fight against terrorism.

This backdrop makes the case that Nigeria's problems are more complex than being perceived. A comprehensive approach in addressing the existential problems of Nigeria will involve more than deploying state forces or shouting Nigeria's unity is non-negotiable. It is also more than mere assertions of restructuring and/or self-determination. It would take on board efforts to address development deficits, peace/security, justice/human rights as well as humanitarian deficits. But addressing these must take place within efforts to, at the same time, improve on a poor situational foundation to address leadership deficit, corruption, failures in institution building, external interference as well as the harnessing of limited resources to meet the needs of majority of citizens and not just those of the dominant social forces.

To undertake this urgent task, the 1999 Constitution needs to be jettisoned. As I have argued elsewhere, the 1999 Constitution is nothing but a fraud. Though put forth as a popular constitution, in actual fact, it is foisted on the people by the leadership of the Nigerian military in 1999. This fact led me to conclude elsewhere that: “What rests on the barrel of the gun can only be a militarized constitution and not a democratic one. We can continue to deceive ourselves till tomorrow that we have democratic governance. What rests on a lie can only produce a lie”.

What then is the way forward in the current dire situation? Robert Clarke (SAN), has suggested that Nigeria would collapse in about six months. To prevent such, he would like to see a short military intervention to allow us negotiate peacefully.

I, however, differ from Robert Clarke a bit. Any unbridled allowance of the military under any guise would be a repeat of the mistake of 1966. Recall that, aside for the dastardly civil war, the military remained in power for 33 years with a short hiatus of four years between 1979 and 1983.

There is no doubt in my mind that sovereign national negotiations remain the way out. It is different from the President Goodluck Jonathan’s election gimmick normally referred to in Nigeria as the 2014 national confab. The sovereign national negotiations would have its decisions become law immediately. A low hanging fruit could be to immediately borrow and make Chapter II of the current militarized constitution justiciable unlike the current fraudulent constitution that puts out “Fundamental Objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy but used Sec 6 (6) (c) to remove any accountability with respect to those laudable objectives.

The pressures for change are there but no-one yields power because of popular talks on the need to do so. To yield on power normally would involve actual or the credible threat of force being the push of occupant out of power. Clarke took the easy way out because of the reasonable firepower that the military is bequeathed with. But there have been many examples of popular demand for popular change.

Change Possibilities:

1. Popular organization building up against the status quo resulting in disruptive change. These could be similar to what Sudan has done a number of times. Credible technocrats can steer the affairs of state under the coordination of PMB. A popular uprising could also result in a revolution of sort or a further deepening of the current mild anarchy in which people do whatever they like without fear of repercussions.
2. Indeed, an organized power that Nigerians are disenchanted with – the military - could re-enter and make changes that could be positive or negative. There’s no doubt that Jerry Rawlins made a difference in setting Ghana on a path that has made the country less corrupt in comparison to Nigeria.
3. Nigerians think the map of the world is settled. Nothing could be far from the truth. Crimea was taken back by Russia in recent history. An external power could enter and impose stability on Nigeria.
4. Boko-Haram type and/or other terror enterprises could over-run the country easily with or without the acquiescence of those currently in power. In effect, such a conqueror imposes its own order. Idris Deby succeeded with this option in Chad.

5. A sovereign national conference could be supported by the current government towards a negotiated confederacy. I had argued in an earlier piece in *Leadership* that Nigeria has passed the stage of fiscal federalism as appeasement. The time has come for a seriously weakened centre that serves the interests of the nationalities making up Nigeria. Every component unit can be grouped together under the current six geopolitical zones.

6. A sovereign national conference could also result in negotiated self-determination for all those nationalities wanting same as the remaining entities come together to equally form states. However, I would hasten to state that separations have tended to follow wars. Even the Czech and Slovakia one was part of the general flow of events as the Soviet Union crumbled at the end of an intense cold war.

Dreams of major powers like the United Kingdom and/or the United States or even the United Nations as a whole coming to solve our problem is delusional. Things do not work that way. Nigeria has to be worth the while for the interests of other countries before they can involve themselves for our good. Of course, PMB inviting powerful countries to replace his failure to lead Nigeria is like committing the sins of our fore-fathers who signed fraudulent protection agreements that resulted in the formal colonization of Africa at the Berlin conference.

It is action time for ourselves. We can choose to direct the nature of the action as a state-led unit by embracing Sovereign National Negotiations, or watch the actions happen without our control. I think the former is the most preferred!

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