

Democracy, Regional Integration and Sustainable Peace

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ABSTRACT

Nigeria, a country with an estimated population of over 170 million attained independence in 1960. Since then there has been the challenge of incorporating the diverse peoples into a stable and single national community and sustainable democracy in order to achieve the utmost goal of sustainable development. This paper with particular focus on democracy, regional integration and sustainable peace in Nigeria. This study attempts to look at the concepts of democracy, sustainable peace and it went further to discuss the challenges of sustainable peace in Nigeria. The study adopts the documentary method for gathering data from secondary sources and recommends among others, that government should make attempt to bridge the gap between the rich and the poor. There should be the diversification of the economy to create more jobs for the teeming unemployed youths. It concludes that there should be urgent need for a re-direction of government policy toward building a strong and reliable democracy that would promote equality, transparency and sustainable peace and the inculcation of democracy in the citizen is a panacea for regional integration and sustainable peace.

Keywords: Democracy, Governance, Sustainable Peace, Development, Economy, Rule of Law, Regional Integration, Security

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria today is the story of a determined goal of two major social values- one of which is regional integration through ideological, social, economic and Political integration on the basis of social justice and the other sustainable democracy and peace for even distribution of the material means of existence. It is noted that history or any subject which concerns itself with the study of the past has important contributions to make towards the attainment of these basic goal of human society. Nigeria, no doubt, represents a unique entity evidenced in its multi-ethnic character, which has variously been estimated to be between 250 and 370. With an estimated population of about 200 million Nigeria has been battling with regional integration and measures to sustain the nascent democracy which came on board in 1999. In the course Nigeria's political history, the country has experienced the civilian and the military governance, yet the problem of regional integration continued. Sustainable democracy has to do with the establishment of the fundamental tenets of democracy. However, one may not understand a situation in life without some perception of where it fits into a continuing process or whether it has happened before. This study intends to highlight the relevance of democracy, regional Integration and sustainable peace in Nigeria.

Regional integration promotes political stability for concerted development in any country. In order to capture appropriately the notion of regional integration, it would be apposite to first give accepted meaning of the term integration and national. For instance, Ibrahim Tahir (1999:11) defines it as the emergence of a situation in which every citizen is a perfect substitute for any other citizen for nomination to perform socially determined roles...¹ It equally means the progressive reduction of cultural and regional tensions and discontinuities on the horizontal plane in the process of creating a homogeneous territorial political community. This definition no doubt emphasized development in homogenous community as one of the strongest bonds uniting a large social grouping and it member's awareness of a common history. This will show how group identity has endured through shifting circumstances without that awareness citizen would not easily acknowledge the claims of their

loyalty in the nation but instead to other social grouping such as religions and ethnic nationalism. In a similar note, regional integration is a process leading to political cohesion and sentiments of loyalty toward a central political authority and institution by individual belonging to different social groups or political units. Ernest postulated that “regional integration is a process whereby political actors in distinct national setting are persuaded to shift their Loyalty specification and political activities towards a new centre, whose institutions possess or demand jurisdiction over the pre-existing nation state”.² These definitions implied that quest of regional integration entails bringing people of different background to become as one family for the progress and development of the state.

In relation to Nigeria since the attainment of political independence, regional integration or national unity has eluded the nation for quite some time, mainly as a result of conglomeration of many ethnic nations. The dominant groups include the Hausa/Fulani, Ibo and Yoruba. Other nationalities exist in the country. These three groups have by virtue of their numerical strength and vantage position in power matrix only assumed a dominant character and as such tend to subsume other groups or nationalities of these different ethnic nationality groups which had although had relation before then but wanted it to end at that so as to protect their sovereignty. On the contrary the colonialists were more guided by perceived economic and social gains in their intra-European struggle for the soul of Africa. Equally, there were no concrete efforts to integrate the various ethnic nations especially between the north and southern region. Rather different policies and systems of administration were adopted which further undermined the fact according to Akinyele (2003:14):

The nature of ethnic groups of Nigeria relates to a people whose unity rest on some racial, linguistic, religious or cultural ties hence they are always on ethnic groups self-consciously united around shared history and traditions beliefs and value system, language and culture and other forms of affinity.³

It thus becomes imperative for the state to wake up and embrace regional integration which is required towards sustainable peace. The observation of the use of Nigerian history as the main force in the question to Nigerian integration has been further explained by Aiswaju (1999:77-82) when he posits that:

...Archaeological finds in respect of the Nok culture, based on the Jos Plateau and extending over an area 300 miles east to west and about 100 miles north to south of the Old Zaria Province, and the stylistic and structural relationship with the celebrated Ife, Benin, and Igbo Ukwu arts have provided historians with the basics data not only about the great antiquity and glory of the past of the individual regions but also of the connection between the diverse local histories.⁴

Similar impression of close cultural connection is indicated in linguistic studies. Transitions of common origin such as those of Kisra is relating Kanuri with the Jukun, the Bariba and sometimes the Yoruba, of Oduduwa and Bayajidda providing charters of unity for the Yoruba and the Hausa peoples respectively simply affirm the fact of these relationships.⁵

Mabogunje (1998:117-123) posited that:

Democracy as politics is concerned with the institutions and process of governance that they elicit which tend to foster consensus whilst simultaneously promoting and sustaining respect for the ideology of democracy. Sustainable democracy is therefore simple defined as the longevity of the fundamental tenets of democracy.⁶

Therefore, for democracy to be sustained in Nigeria, it must provide those tenets or instruments which promote accountability, transparency and rule of law. In addition to the realistic separation of powers between the three arms of government, it must also represent the views of the opposition and the minorities.¹⁸ Conceptually, democracy is complex and means different things to different people. Scholars have recently identified three critical elements encapsulating the democratic agenda for sustainability: popular participation, equitable representation and accountability because a society is democratic in so far as the public can play a meaningful role in the managing their own affair. Thus according to Dahl (2001), democracy is conceptualized as:

A system of government that meets three essential conditions: an extensive competition among individuals and groups especially political parties for all elective positions of government power, at regular intervals and

excluding the use of force: a highly inclusive level of political participation in the selection of leaders and policies at least through regular and fair election, that no major social group is excluded; and a level of civic and political liberties freedom of expression, freedom of the press, freedom to form and join organizations sufficient to ensure the integrity of political competition and participation.⁷

In another way, it means a society is democratic if at minimum, it involves both the provision of the means to pursue the representation of diverse interests in government and the institutionalization of mechanism to hold rulers accountable to the public will- including instruments that allow for the peaceful removal of governments from power.⁸ This is one of the intrinsic values of democracy which will create a system of government in which rulers are held accountable for their actions in the public realm by citizens, acting indirectly through the competition and cooperation of their elected representatives. From the above, we can deduce that democracy requires nurturing with proper mechanisms before it could be sustainable for the promotion of peace, development and stability. Nigerian nation has an objective even though not clearly defined. It is stated in Nigerian constitution:

To live in unity and harmony as one indivisible and indissoluble sovereign nation under God... and to provide for a constitution for the purpose of promoting the good government and welfare of all persons in our country on the principles of freedom, equality and justice and for the purpose of consolidating the unity of our people.⁹

Indeed, one does not need an oracle to point out that Nigeria needs for a sustainable democracy for all- round development which could be achieved when the Nigerian histories we are envisaging here will expose lessons from the remote and near past as to why our previous democratic governments failed woefully. They failed because of the exclusion of the historical problems associated with election, party formation and politics, issues on poverty and corruption.

Indeed, sustainable democracy is built on periodic election and the emergent government legitimacy is derived from the conduct of free and fair election. That is an election conducted in an atmosphere devoid of harassment, intimidation and other coercive means in order to bend the will of the voters because it is the litmus test of democracy. Without elections, there will be no yard stick for gauging or assessing the democratic content of any regime. It is describe as the act of choosing or selecting candidates who will represent the people of the country in the various arms of government. It is also said that an election is a contest between competing political parties or groups for government power. People expect fairness and justice, with due process in the manner of choice regulated by rules and regulations of the state. Besides, election negates obnoxious policies thereby enabling people decide the type of policies that should be adopted by government by choosing political parties with policies of their choice through the manifestoes they presented to them during electioneering campaign. Amuwo (2000:52-61), posits that apart from the above election is:

An instrument or process which makes rulers accountable; foster democracy, measure public opinion on certain issues in a country; educate the electorate bestows legitimacy; integrates various groups and the encouragement of and promotion of healthy political competitions in a country.¹⁰

Additionally, elections are used as barometer for gauging the popularity of political leaders. Election gives people who are qualified for elections equal political opportunity to vote and be voted for. Moreover, election is used to check government excesses by curtailing the dictatorial and tyrannical rule of government in power. Indeed, election is an important instrument in the democratic process thus it fairness, equity, justice and acceptability by the electorates has been a real challenge to a sustainable democracy in Nigeria. Since independence, conduct of free and fair election in Nigeria has been subject of debate as no election has been held without becoming a matter of litigation. Due to wide spread rigging, violence, disputations and unacceptability, for example the collapse of the first and second republics at our attempt at democracy was rooted in the crisis of elections⁴⁹. The first democratic system that lasted from 1960-1966 was fashioned after British West Ministership or parliamentary system. The formation of government by the prime minister is expected from the party with a simple majority in the parliament. Unfortunately, the first republic was characterized of gross electoral malpractices both at the federal and regional levels. Four years after independence, the Nigerian politicians could not organize hitch-free elections to choose their leaders and form a stable central government.

There occurred unprecedented electoral malpractices during the federal elections held in 1964. The NPC central government was accused by the A.G and the N.C.N.C. of rigging the election in the north. The N.C.N.C and the A.G to check this act in western and eastern region formed an alliance-United Progressive Grand Alliance (UPGA) to enable them win the majority vote at the central legislature. The N.P.C also allied with the N.N.D.P. formed by S.L. Akintola a.k.a. high priest of election rigging! The result of this was that when the result of the 1965 regional election was announced declaring Chief S.L. Akintola the winner. The UPGA accused the N.P.C of assisting the N.N.D.P. in manipulating the result of the election in their favour. The supporters of the A.G and N.C.N.C felt dissatisfied with the result of the election and consequently, there was breakdown of law and order in the western region leading to looting and arson in what was coded operation Wetie.²³ Similarly, in the Second Republic [1979-1983] six political parties emerged. They included the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) led by Alhaji Shehu Shagari, the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) led by Chief Obafemi Awolowo, the Nigerian Peoples Party (NPP) led by Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe. The People Redemption Party (PRP) led by Mallam Aminu Kano, Great Nigerian Peoples Party (GNPP) led by Waziri Ibrahim, the Nigerian Advance Party (NAP) led by Tunde Braithwaite. After the general elections held in August 1979, the NPN won the highest votes but could not form the national government. The NPN therefore reached a political agreement with the NPP to form a coalition government. Before and after the coalition government of the President Shehu Shagari, there were controversies with the elections. There were wide allegations of rigging and counter rigging which eventually created the constitutional controversy of what constitute 2/3 of Nigerian federation of their nineteen states. Furthermore, it was the recurrence of the election manipulation said to have given the incumbent government of Shehu Shagari “land slide” victory that was questioned by other political parties the electorates that led to military intervention again in Nigerian politics to seize power in December 31, 1983. Formation of political parties and the nature of their politics is another instrument for achieving sustainable democracy in Nigeria, because parties are formed or permitted to operate for the purposes of forming a government on political party basis. Party system is therefore imperative for elections to be conducted with ease in this complex nature of modern day politics and society.¹¹ After independence the nation had to grapple with the problem of increasing sentiments of regionalism and ethnic nationalism. People seem to continue to generate allegiance to their regions than to the Federal Government. The leaders made little effort to create greater national consciousness and patriotism for good governance. The gap between the centre and the states continued to widen as unscrupulous politicians formed tribal parties with the motive of whipping up tribal sentiments during elections to win votes. Even parties which formerly had a national outlook went tribal and sentimental after elections in order to have a share of the national or Federal cake for its kith and kins. According to Majumobi (1998:15-21) he opined that though political parties are duly registered each tried to be national in outlook but end up being personalized ethicized or sectionalized.¹² And as a result of these problems, sustainable democracy and regional integration has eluded the Nigerian state. Another major problem challenging the sustenance of democracy is poverty which the Nigerian history. Nigeria since independence is a major player in the oil industry, being the sixth largest oil-producing nation in the world. But the abundant wealth of the nation has turned to its poverty such that the country is rated one of the poorest in the world where an average person lives on \$1 per day. Poverty as a social problem affects the nation as well as the individuals. There is the vicious circle of poverty in Nigeria. What this means is that, unstable political system and government rigging of elections, and several other social problems is caused by poverty. Nwakanma (2001:1-13) lament that:

This Nigerian has to be flogged out of the highway when the “bigmen” are about in their siren convoys; he subsists on less than one hundred naira a day, he lives in a badly built house, in poorly designed cities, dies from easily treatable diseases, and most recently, although he was told that education is his mean ticket out of poverty, managed to put his children through the hardship of badly built schools and poor education until they earned university degrees currently unusable anywhere else in the world, and has found to his chagrin that there is no job, even for the educated.¹³

All affirms poverty is real and the present malaise is not new to most adult Nigerians where most people in Africa lives.¹⁴ It is noted that about sixty- five million Nigerians do not have access to portable water, accommodation, decent home and quality food. These social problems not only create alienation and insecurity but also frustrations and divisiveness among citizens. In such a situation therefore, democracy, regional integration and sustainable peace will make no meaning to the poor. The challenge is therefore for the state to create awareness of this (poverty) danger by promoting the teaching and learning of Nigerian History in our

educational school system. Poverty is indeed an enemy of democracy. Regional integration and sustainable governance. Another major problem impeding regional integration and development is corruption which since independence has negated all attempts at fighting poverty, achieving unity and stable democracy. Akinola, et al (2005:30:) sees corruption as a destruction or subversion of honesty and integrity.¹⁵ In Nigeria, corruption is like pandemic prostitution manifesting itself in inflation of contracts, over invoicing of imports, forgery, embezzlement of public funds, fraud, illegal dealing in foreign exchange, smuggling, misuse and abuse of office etc. There by destroying economic development and reforms. The implication is that it hinders the growth of democratic institutions and concentrates power in the hands of a few. Corruption is destructive to governmental structures, parastatals and agencies, mining the legitimacy of governments and rendering governance ineffective. It is responsible for the systematic collapse of social and economic infrastructure and the pauperization of the citizenry. Besides, it wastes skills and causes capital flight and brain drain. Ohueri, G.O. (2005:30) opines that: In Nigeria as in most African countries, political instability and inefficient and corrupt administrations has been obstacle to economic development. For example, the collapse of the railways, National Electric Power Authority in-spice of the change of name to Power Holding Company of Nigeria (PHCN), the Nigerian Airways, Nigerian Telecommunications (NITEL) has been linked to corruption.¹⁶ The Nigerian elite especially the political elite have been the major hindrance to the survival of democracy. For example, obstacle to democracy have little to do with culture or religion but much more to do with the desire of those in power to maintain their position at any cost. Unquestionable corruption checkmates all vision for a morally strong and economically prosperous society. Indeed, corruption is antitheses of development and progress of Nigeria's democracy. Bribery and corruption in recent democracy since the nation gain independence have increased in alarming proportion. The democracy experienced so far in the country has no concrete indication yet of reducing corruption and unscrupulous activities of some political elite who engaged in kick-backs and inflated contracts.¹⁷ Since the Nigerian political elite would have had knowledge of this developmental instrument and what is expected of any leader, the protected issue of regional integration and lasting democracy and sustainable peace would be a settled matter.

Sustainable Peace

This can be derived in any society when there is good governance and reverse would be the case when there is bad governance. According to Diamond (2004:222), there are several dimensions to good governance which include:

- the capacity of the state to function in the service of the public good;
- commitment to the public good;
- transparency, the openness of state business and conduct to the scrutiny of other state actors and of the public;
- rule of law;
- mechanism of participation and dialogue that enable the public to provide input to the policy process, to correct mistakes in policy design and implementation, and to promote social inclusion.
- it also breeds social capital, in the form of networks and associations that draw people together in relations of trust, reciprocity, and voluntary cooperation for common ends.¹⁸

From the foregoing, there is no gainsaying the fact that good governance not only bring about peace but also development. This is because it is a government that gives the people satisfaction and therefore, they would have little or no reason to act in such a way that could threaten the peace of the society.

Having examined good governance, what does bad governance entail? Bad governance exists when there is failure of government officials to appropriately and effectively harness and manage both human and material resources for common good. It manifests in such a way that those in positions of authority instead of pursuing and achieving the good of all concentrates on the pursuit of personal interest. When the people are neglected in the

process of governance they find themselves in a situation where they decide to take their destinies in their hands and the end result would be the Hobbesian state of nature where life is solitary, nasty, brutish, poor and short. This situation is not favourable to both the ruler and the ruled. This explains why Nelson Mandela asserted that

as long as poverty, injustice and gross inequality persist in our world, none of us can truly rest. It is a world of great promise and hope. It is a world of despair, disease and hunger. Overcoming poverty is not a gesture of charity; it is an act of justice. It is the protection of a fundamental human right, the right to dignity and a decent life, while poverty persists, there is no true freedom.

This shows that bad governance creates an unconducive and crisis ridden environment to all and sundry and under this condition achievement of peace is a distant dream. It is in line with this that Akpan (2008:23) asserted that: “bad governance triggers conflict drivers in the society such as communal tension, social division, militarization, elite’s fragmentation and competition and the emergence of ethnic and sectarian militias”¹⁹ This scenario vividly captures the situation in Nigeria where you have all kinds of violent groups causing high level of insecurity in the country. Kidnapping has spread to virtually all nooks and crannies of Nigeria, same with the menace of Fulani Herdsmen, virtually all parts of the country have witnessed and experienced the wanton killings by the marauding Fulani Herdsmen, we have the resurgence of militancy in the Niger Delta where oil installations have been destroyed as well as the separatist agitations by the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB).

Having considered and examined the concept of governance and its dimensions, what then is Peace? Peace can be considered to be a conducive and favourable condition that enables man to exhibit his potential for a meaningful and existence in the society. According to Francis (2006:17), “Peace is generally defined as the absence of war, fear, conflict, anxiety, suffering and violence, and about peaceful coexistence. It is primarily concerned with creating and maintaining a just order in society and the resolution of conflict by non-violent means”²⁰. Francis went further to say that in general, six meanings of peace are agreed on by many peace researchers including; Peace as the absence of war (absence of direct violence); Peace as justice and development (absence of structural violence); Peace as respect and tolerance between people; Peace as Gaia (balance in and with the ecosphere); Inner Peace (spiritual peace) and; Peace as “wholeness and making whole”.²¹

Galtung, cited in Francis (2006:18) outlines two dimensions of peace: ‘negative peace’ i.e. the absence of direct violence, war, fear and conflict at individual, national, regional and international levels, and ‘positive peace’ i.e. the absence of unjust structures, unequal relationships, justice and inner peace at individual level. The way the society is governed to a very large extent determines the nature and pattern of peace in that society. A condition of negative peace as identified by Galtung is not sustainable and desirable for man because there are tendencies inherent in that condition that can trigger serious threat of peace. But positive peace is a sustainable and desirable condition that is favourable and conducive for man to be able to operate and live a meaningful life. This type of peace can only be derived when there is good governance.

Encarta, cited in Adebayo (2007, p. 1) gave the following important meanings of peace, these are:

- a. Freedom from war
- b. The end state of war
- c. Tranquility; a calm quiet state free from disturbance
- d. A state of mental calm, serenity, devoid of anxiety
- e. A state of harmony, free from conflict or disagreement
- f. A treaty agreeing to end an hostility
- g. Law and order; a state devoid of violence, crime and other forms of disturbance.

To Aja (2006), “peace is a relative condition of security friendly climate that allows individuals and group relations to progressive order and stability”²². Aja went further to say that “peace is the human desired condition and order of existence that allows the ruler and the ruled fulfil life obligations with minimum fear or danger on life, liberty and property. According to Aja (2006:2), sustainable peace includes;

- a. Good governance
- b. Good followership
- c. Non-violent value system
- d. Preservation of human rights, including the prime sacredness of life and liberty
- e. Fear of sovereign creator and respect for man
- f. Security measures to guarantee the absence of fear or threat to the subjects and core values of a society
- g. Mutual commitment between actor in support of free flow of communication (dialogue) as the supreme strategy of conflict transformation and conflict resolution
- h. Sensitiveness to the early conflict signals and a pragmatic response to forestall their graduation into conflict scenario (proper)
- i. Religious tolerance that guarantees to each the “natural” liberty to any form of worships (in spiritual terms)
- j. Creating an institutional mechanism for the promotion of more collaborative activities than discord
- k. Introducing appropriate remedies timely, where applicable.

There is no gainsaying that fact that when all these points stated above are in place we have sustainable peace and sustainable peace is a precondition for development.

Challenges to Sustainable Peace in Nigeria

The high level of insecurity in Nigeria today has made it so imperative to interrogate the socio-economic and political condition in the country with a view to ascertaining the factors that cause insecurity in Nigeria with a bid to fashioning out a way out of the condition of insecurity in order to enthrone an atmosphere of sustainable peace in the country. The level of insecurity is so high to the extent that the American government cautioned its citizens not to travel to visit 20 states in Nigeria, citing armed robbery, kidnapping and terrorism among others, as reasons for the advice. The factors that cause insecurity are x-rayed and stated below:

Lack of Transparency and Accountability

Those who occupy government positions have the mandate to do so in a democratic setting. And as such are expected to conduct the business of governance with utmost sense of sincerity, transparency and accountability. But in Nigeria, the only time the political class have regard for the masses is when they are soliciting for their votes during elections. As soon as they succeed at the polls and find themselves in government offices they start to operate as if the offices abinitio belong to them. They conduct the business of governance based on their whims and caprices without recourse to the input of those who voted for them.

Electoral Malpractices

One of the factors that spark violence and crisis in Nigeria is electoral malpractice. In Nigeria, politics is highly valued to the extent that it is played with disregard to the rules of the game. The Do or Die attitude of our

politicians make them to want to win elections by all means and this manifests in election rigging. According to Dudley (1973:14), “instability is the inevitable consequence of the failure of political actors to play the game of politics according to constitutive and regulative rules of the game”. People are bound to react violently when their wishes and will are subverted.²³

Lack of Respect for the Rule of Law

According to Alonge (2005:132), “the doctrine of rule of law is about the recognition of legal equality, impartiality and individual liberty”²⁴. It ensures the enjoyment of human right and the prevention of arbitrary power. It is an essential ingredient for attainment of an orderly society. Therefore, for the promotion of good life and harmony, the rule of law should be allowed to govern human society. The law is expected to guide the government and the governed and as such the actions and inactions of all and sundry should be in accordance with the law. When people’s actions are governed by law there is high tendency of bringing about peace but the reverse would be the case when people act in disregard to the laws. A lawless society is crisis ridden. It is against this background that Egugbo (2014:23) opined that “there is no gainsaying the fact that a society not regulated by law is prone to confusion, crisis and possible collapse”²⁵

Marginalization of Some Ethnic Groups

Nigeria is a country that is multi-ethnic and multi-religious and as such it is expected that for peace to reign, the diversity should put into consideration in making appointments and distribution of resources. According to Section 14(3) of the 1999 Constitution as amended “the composition of the government of the federation or any of its agencies and the conduct of its affairs shall be carried out in such a manner as to reflect the federal character of Nigeria thereby ensuring that there shall be no predominance of persons from few states or from a few ethnic or sectional groups in that government or in any of its agencies”. The essence of this Constitutional provision is to ensure that no part of the country is marginalized in the conduct of government business in Nigeria. When this is done, there would be happiness and satisfaction by all and sundry and this would make them to maintain peace. The otherwise would be the case when the reverse is the case. The Buhari’s administration has been accused of favouring the Northern part of the country in the appointments he has made so far. For example, about 90% of the head of military and paramilitary agencies are headed by Northerners, the newly constituted board of NNPC have majority of them Northerners. Some people have attributed the agitation of the Igbo’s for the sovereign state of Biafra to lopsided appointment by the Buhari’s administration.

High Level of Unemployment

International Labour Organization (ILO) described unemployment as “the population of persons aged 15-64 who during the reference period, were available for work, actively seeking for work, but were unable to find work”. The level of unemployment is very high in Nigeria presently. The National population of persons aged 15-64 who during the reference period, were available for work, actively seeking for work, but were unable to find work”. The level of unemployment is very high in Nigeria presently. The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) said the population of unemployed Nigerians increased by 518,000 to over 1.45million between December 2015 and March 31, 2016.²⁷ The high level of unemployment in Nigeria has serious security implications because an idle mind is the devils’ workshop. According to Rotimi cited in Tom (2014:18), “the increased rate of sectarian violence, crimes and terrorism are connected with unemployment”²⁸. It is very difficult if not impossible to guarantee peace in an environment where you have very high unemployment rate. This is because according to Akwara et al cited in Tom (2014), “where the youths cannot get clean jobs, they make themselves available for odd jobs to stay alive which takes any imaginable criminal dimension”²⁹

Religious Intolerance

Nigeria is a country that is not only multi-ethnic but also multi-religious and as such there should be the freedom of worship that would ensure that people are allowed to freely decide and determine their religious groups as well as mode of worship. This explains why Section 39(1) of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria as amended guarantees every Nigerian; Muslims, Christians, idol worshippers, free thinkers’ etc. freedom of expression, to hold opinions and to impart ideas and information without interference. When this

provision of the Constitution is observed and respected, there is high tendency of achieving peace but peace cannot be guaranteed where people are forced to abandon their religious beliefs or having another religion imposed on them. Nigeria over the years has witnessed series of religious related crisis due to religious intolerance.³⁰

Mismanagement of Public Fund

Part of the reason why Nigeria is poor today is because of high rate of mismanagement of public fund. Most state managers in Nigeria today find it difficult to differentiate between personal and public fund and as a result they tend to appropriate public fund to themselves. This situation has partly resulted to a situation where most state governments in Nigeria are not able to pay workers' salaries as and when due. Workers in some states are being owed up to 4-6 months' salaries. There is no gainsaying the fact that these workers have become so impoverished. How can peace be guaranteed where people are poor, hungry and angry? According to Ifejika and Aliu (2015:67), "poverty instigates class struggle in the society, truncates government policies and efforts, creates a sense of marginalization or deprivation, breeds social crimes and upheavals and makes development planning and implementation difficult"³¹

Prospect for Sustainable Peace and Development in Nigeria

There is no gainsaying the fact that development cannot take place in an atmosphere of absence of peace. It is against this backdrop much emphasis is placed on peace in order for the country to achieve the needed development. The high level of insecurity in Nigeria today is so disturbing to the extent that all hand should be on deck to seek for ways of bringing about peace. This paper is of the view that if the factors below are put in place; they would provide high prospect for sustainable peace and development in Nigeria. The factors are as follows:

(a) Transparency and Accountability

These can be said to be essential ingredients of good governance which is a panacea for peace. Those in position of authority are there based on the mandate of the people and they are expected to conduct the business of government in a transparent way. With this, people would have a window of opportunity to make their input in the governance process and as such their wishes and aspirations would not only be taken seriously but effort would be made towards achieving them. According to Olowu (2002: 141), public accountability is the requirement that those who hold public trust account for the use of that trust to citizens or their representatives. Public accountability underscores the superiority of the public will over private interests for those engaged in the provision and delivery of services to the general public.³²

Olowu went further to say that "accountability is one of the five norms of good or better governance, the others being efficiency, transparency, predictability or rule of law, and legitimacy"³³. From the foregoing, it is obvious that transparency and accountability give room for the citizens not only to be aware of what goes on in government but also have the conducive atmosphere to make their contributions in the governance process. If this situation prevails, good governance would not only prevail in the society but sustainable peace would be achieved.

(b) Respect for the Rule of Law

According to Egugbo (2014:23), "the complex nature of man and its society makes it inevitable to have a framework that would serve as a guide to both the governed and the government and as well check their excesses. This framework can be considered the rule of law"³⁴. The United Nations Security Council cited in Bjornlund (2014:5) defined the rule of as when all persons, institutions and entities, public and private, including the state itself, are accountable to laws that are publicly promulgated, equally enforced and independently adjudicated, and which are consistent with international human rights norms and standards. If those in positions of authority and the governed act in consonance with the laws of the land; there is high tendency that peace would be the order of the day. This does not mean that some miscreants would not go against the law but when such happens they would be dealt with in accordance with the laws and this would serve as a deterrent to others.

(c) Free, Fair and Credible Elections

Free, fair, and credible election is a panacea for peace because the parties involved would be satisfied with the process in view of the fact that no one is cheated. Free, fair and credible election is achieved if the agencies involved in the conduct of the elections decide to be transparent, impartial and fair to all the parties involved. According to the Voter Education Handbook (2005:41), four basic conditions are necessary to create an enabling environment for the holding of free and fair elections. These are:

1. An honest, competent and non-partisan body to administer the election (usually referred to as the electoral commission);
2. The knowledge and willingness of the political community to accept basic rules and regulations governing the contest for power;
3. Developed system of political parties, traditions and teams of candidates presented to the electorate as alternative choices; and
4. An independent judiciary to interpret electoral laws and settle election disputes.³⁵

All and sundry have the responsibility of ensuring free, fair and credible elections and this can be achieved if the agencies to conduct the elections create conducive and level playing field for all the political players.

(d) Prudent Management of Resources

When resources are prudently managed, there is high tendency that those in government would make more positive impact on the lives of the people. This is because opportunity would be created where workers' salaries and pensions would be paid as and when due. Development projects would also be springing up. When people are gainfully employed and their salaries are paid as and when due it would reduce greatly the tendency of people to go into crime as well cause crisis.

(e) Diversification of the Economy

The country's overdependence on oil revenue has had adverse effect on the economy in such a way that it had made people as well as government to be lazy in terms of looking for and exploring other sources of revenue. The end result is that it has made the economy to contract with its attendant consequences manifesting in lack of jobs as well as revenue. It is on this note that Nigeria government should live up to expectation by ensuring the diversification of the economy in order to tap the resources for the country's development. When the economy is diversified a lot of jobs and revenue would be created to the benefit of all and sundry.

(f) Religious Tolerance

Nigeria is multi-ethnic and multi-religious country and as such people should be made to feel free to practice their religion without hindrance. Section 39(1) of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria as amended guarantees every Nigerian; Muslims, Christians, idol worshippers, free thinkers, even agnostics, freedom of expression, to hold opinions and to impart ideas and information without interference. There must be the respect for the provisions of our Constitution in all ramifications. A situation whereby some people take laws into their hands by attempting to force others to abandon their religious beliefs or impose their religion on others should not be tolerated and anybody found to be doing that should be sanctioned in accordance with the Law.³⁶

(g) Strict adherence to the principles of Federal Character in Appointments

Section 14(3) of the 1999 Constitution as amended advocates that "the composition of government of the federation or any of its agencies, and the conduct of its affairs shall be carried out in such a manner as to reflect the federal character of Nigeria thereby ensuring that there shall be no predominance of persons from few states

or from a few ethnic or other sectional groups in that government or in any of its agencies”.³⁷ If this provision of the Constitution is adhered to in making appointment at the federal, state and local governments levels there would not be any need for feeling of marginalization as well as agitations and protests arising from it.

CONCLUSION

Development cannot take place in an atmosphere of insecurity. Nigeria economy has now gone into recession occasioning hardship to the citizens. The gap between the rich and the poor has been widened because majority of those in positions of authority engaged themselves in amassing of public fund. Some of the poor who do not have legitimate means of livelihood engage in nefarious activities to be able to survive. The activities of this set of people have enthroned a situation of insecurity in the country. This situation is not favourable to any form of development; it scares away foreign investment and also kills local investment. This ugly trend portends grave danger to the country more as it is being witnessed presently. The inculcation of democracy in the citizen is a panacea for regional integration and sustainable peace. As an academic discipline, it will retrace the nation’s quest for integration and sustainable government as a precondition for success in developmental aspiration. Because the sterling qualities of the democracy, regional integration and sustainable peace envisaged here will encourage social justice, equity, tolerance and compromise as was the experience in the pre-colonial period.

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