

Unmasking operational supportive Rhetoric in Nigeria: A recipe for national Integration

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Abstract: Nigeria is presently overheated with calls for secession and restructuring. This is consequent upon perceived socio-political and economic imbalance, which has bifurcated the polity into the classes of agitators against and beneficiaries of the operative unjust politico-economic system. While those at the receiving end of the imbalance and disequity clamour for re-organization or total renegotiation of the country's unity, the beneficiaries of the present unjust arrangement utilize the mass media to spread their slogans, propaganda and rhetoric. This is done in order to hide the reality of imbalance. This study therefore argues for a demystification of three identified supportive rhetoric operational in Nigeria. It recommends the reawakening and/or raising of critical consciousness among the citizens as a first step towards a praxis of reflection and action, which is hoped to stall this oppressive and manipulative system. The researcher employs the expository and analytical methods of inquiry and further suggests that the unveiling of these rhetoric will encourage transparency and mutual trust, which are prerequisites for national integration and cohesion

Keywords: Supportive rhetoric, Polity, National integration, Restructuring

1.1 Introduction

An unmasking assignment entails a task to reveal, unveil, disclose or removal of a disguise in order to lay bare a previously hidden phenomenon. This paper aims to uncover nefarious ideologies, which entrench and perpetuate an unjust socio-economic and political system by Nigerian government. By rhetoric here, is meant is an art or discourse that strives to inform, persuade or motivate others to interpret the world, actions or inactions that affect them from a particular perspective. "Aristotle is generally credited with developing the basics of the system of rhetoric that thereafter served as its touchstone" (The Rhetorical.3). However, the power of rhetoric lie in persuasion.

A supportive rhetoric in the context of our discussion delineates all fields of discourse, which are mapped out with established rules, which are legitimated or more correctly, are determined by social practice such that anyone who wants can begin studying, talking and criticizing for all he is worth. As Kelvin Harris explains, "This sort of thing is not merely made available and left at that, people are positively encouraged to engage in the discourse, and so build up a body of rhetoric, provided that they stay within the field, and play according to the rules" (76). The purpose of supportive rhetoric is to make the people see their present states as the best possible world. Supportive rhetoric do not encourage cross border thinking, it is not creative rather, necrophilic. After all, if you keep people jumping all their lives, they might become excellent jumpers, but will never learn to run. This wooly ideology is what informs and underlies the notion of supportive rhetoric. This pernicious type of rhetoric manifests in myriad ways in Nigeria.

Our paper therefore, uncovers the following manifestations of operational supportive rhetoric in Nigeria namely: the clichés of "One Nigeria", "Federal Character Policy", and the present national restructuring propaganda". We intend to expose in what manner the foregoing constitute supportive rhetoric and how they impinge on equity and the unity of the different ethnicities that make up the country, Nigeria. We will conclude by suggesting a pragmatic orientation namely, of critical consciousness as a pathway towards a praxis of reflection and action, which are necessary tools that nurture the spirit of national integration, which in turn, is germane to the practice of true federalism.

1.2 The Nature of Supportive Rhetoric

Supportive rhetoric is composed of interest serving ideologies, which through the process of mystification, disguises itself as an instrument which serve to make things seem as they are not. This is done in order to hide intent or divert attention away from central issues, which form the concern of the led and without which their secured livelihood becomes a farce. It is the nature of supportive rhetoric to deify cognitive inertia and received views, which promote the 'status quo ante'. It serves the interests of the ruling class, who in turn ensures that such rhetoric prevail. Such rhetoric not only disguises the imposed nature of the received view, it, as well allows people through critical discourse; to internalize that view as if it were their own or at least to champion their own slight variations of it" (Harris 81). These rhetoric are harped by government media and promoted by formal education, which transmit certain pernicious type of ignorance and at best, presents a distorted world. Education in such an acclaimed "liberal democratic capitalistic society" as Nigeria, embroidered by supportive rhetoric is concerned to transmit knowledge that distorts people's worldview, thereby creating satisfied pigs in the persons of those certified under this system. Such education, does not overcome ignorance rather as Helvetius submits, "children (under its system- additions mine) are born ignorant, not stupid, it is (such – addition, mine) education that makes them stupid (Ravi 29). Supportive rhetoric, which colour such education so occupies people's time and energy that they become incapacitated and unable to criticize from other perspectives. Is this not why most Nigerians still see a golden future for our seemingly failing state? Those immersed into supportive rhetoric cannot see behind the veil under which they are enclosed. They either fail to recognize that there could be other perspectives, or they have no time to explore them.

In order to break free from such enslaving rhetoric, there is the need to recognize interest serving ideologies, which are promoted as values but are discriminatory and repressive. This identification can be done, if we deliberately search governmental actions, statements and positions on national issues for implicit values, for distortion, which serve particular interests, that is, if we examine also the social dimension in both their production and functions in the society. In doing this, false consciousness, which consists in seeing oneself, the world and one's relationship to the world in a distorted way is unveiled. Such consciousness is responsible for the feeling by some persons in Nigeria that they are better equipped for rulership or for other positions of authority and responsibility than the rest. When internal contradictions, which characterize such distorted worldview surface as it is the case in present Nigeria, a near war situation arises. Hence, to avert a full-fledged war, a re-interpretation of situations and a confrontation of these internal contradictions becomes the Hobson's choice to liberation and national cohesion.

These confrontations have arisen in Nigeria context in form of Socio-religious upheavals, intractable corruption and crime, wanton destruction of lives and property, violence occasioned by injustice; militancy and calls for secession, disintegration and / or restructuring. What these indicate is that there is now the need for a paradigm shift, which must muscle away repressive ideologies and all supportive rhetorics that have stalled transformation, reformation and growth. As Paulo Freire observes, "it is a farce to affirm that men and women are ...persons and as persons should be free, and yet to do nothing tangible to make this affirmation a reality" (Pedagogy 26). We will now proceed to identify few of these supportive rhetoric that are peddled in Nigeria.

1.3 Some Supportive Rhetoric in Nigeria

a. The Notion of One Nigeria:

"One Nigeria" is pretentiously intended to promote "unity". However, monolithic unity can never be a good servant to a diversified society such as ours hence, "One Nigeria has become a calculated lie directed towards justifying forced amalgamation of disagreeable ethnicities of present Nigeria by Sir Lord Lugard and in the year 1914. To promote the supportive rhetoric of "One Nigeria", beneficiaries of the unjust politico-economic system operative at the center in Nigeria have tried in vain to locate a commonality in cultures of the different peoples of Nigeria. The attempt to evolve the 'WAZOBIA' language as Nigeria 'lingua franca' has turned an abysmal failure. The echo of one Nigeria", which often fill the air in times of political campaigns, when people from a different ethnicity visit states other than theirs, is only meant to be a big deceit directed towards extraction of people's votes either by force, cash or crook. Regrettably, it is only during football matches that Nigerians unite but only as transient as those matches last.

A true "One Nigeria" must necessarily entail a symbiotic relationship among all ethnicities that make up the polity. Such relationship would see the North complementarily make up for food shortages in the South. The south in the same symbiotic spirit, will in return supply their naturally endowed oil to make up for the shortcomings of the rest of the country. The West, with their manpower and economic knowhow and enlightenment will have brought these to bear on the national economy whereas the ever pragmatic and business oriented East, will have done the same. Such arrangement when equitably arranged would have fostered the right spirit of federalism. Unfortunately, this dream has been truncated by tribalism, greed, ignorance and the false spirit of superiority of certain parts of the country over the rest.

The history of injustice in revenue sharing between the North and South since 1900 buttresses the glaring facts of injustice. For instance, the period covering 1900 – 1913 shows that the South surpassed the North in revenue that, perhaps the amalgamation may have been done to enable the Northern protectorate overcome revenue deficit. During the said period, the Southern protectorate enjoyed revenue surplus hence, the North relied on the South for fiscal cash whereas the South relied of the north for edible crops and other agricultural produce. The annual reports of the colonies, 1914 lay credence to our foregoing claim as could be seen below:

Northern Nigeria Protectorate Revenue (Local) and Expenditure (1900 – 1913). See table 10, below

S/No.	Year	Local Revenue (in £s)	Expenditure (in £s)	Surplus/Deficit	% of Deficit Against Revenue
1	1900 -1	2,179.14	96,457.00	(94,277.86)	-98%
2	1901 – 2	4,424.02	298,519.60	(296,340.46)	-99%
3	1902 – 3	15,316.11	389,391.18	(384,967.16)	-99%
4	1903 – 4	53,726.17	498,986.41	(483,670.30)	-97%
5	1904 – 5	95,026.00	505,282.00	(451,555.83)	-89%
6	1905 – 6	110,544.11	498,259.16	(404,233.16)	-81%
7	1906 – 7	142,087.60	498,848.60	(356,761.00)	-72%
8	1907 – 8	143,005.00	498,302.00	(355,297.00)	-71%
9	1908 - 9	178,444.00	540,644.00	(362,300.00)	-67%
10	1909 – 10	213,436.00	566,843.00	(353,407.00)	-62%
11	1910 – 11	274,989.00	565,760.00	(290,771.00)	-51%
12	1911 – 12	348,366.00	827,939.00	(479,573.00)	-58%
13	1912-13	658,309.00	820,490.00	(162,181.00)	-20%
		1,158,240.00	2,999,488.00	(1,841,248.00)	-61%
		231,648.00	599,897.60	(368,249.60)	-61%

Source: Carland 1985, pp. 130 (Colonial Office and Nigeria, 1898-1914) and annual report of the colonies. Northern Nigeria, 1904, pp. 101, 135, 136 & 137, & Annual Report of the Colonies, Northern Nigeria, 1906-07, pp. 92-94.

Exports Having Their Source of Origin Wholly or Mainly in Southern Nigeria (1911-1913) Before Amalgamation, See table 9, below:

Export Products/Produce (in £)

S/No.	Year	Palm Kernels (in £s)	Palm Oil (in £s)	Cocoa (in £s)	Lint Cotton (in £s)
1	1911	2,574,405.00	1,696,875.00	164,664.00	66,935.00
2	1912	2,797,411.00	1,654,933.00	130,542.00	102,932.00
2	1913	3,109,818.00	1,854,384.00	157,480.00	159,223.00
		8,481,634.00	5,206,192.00	452,686.00	329,090.00
		2,827,211.33	1,735,397.33	150,895.33	109,696.67

Source: Annual Report of the Colonies, Southern Nigeria 1913.

Data Analysis:

From the Data on table 9 above, the main export earner for the south, was palm Kernel Contributing 59%, with a total value of £8,481.634.00.

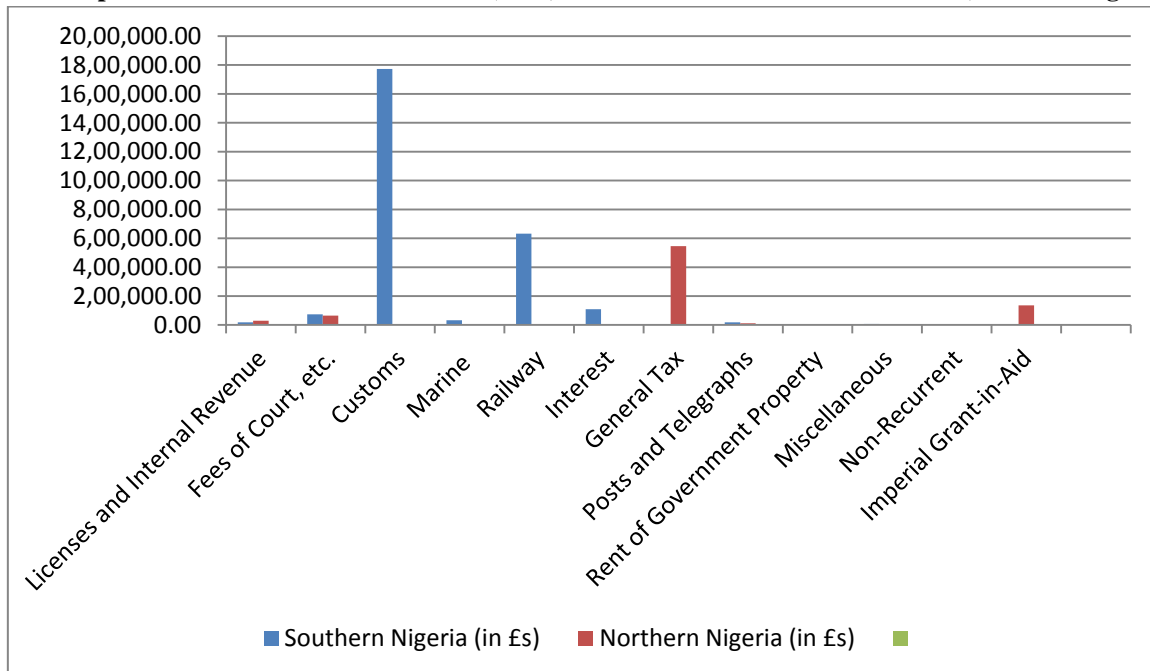
Comprehensive and Comparative Sources of Revenue for Year 1913 (Northern and Southern Nigeria) See Table 13, below

S/No.	Heads of Revenue	Southern Nigeria (in £s)	Northern Nigeria (in £s)	Total Amount (in £s)
1	Licenses and Internal Revenue	18,012.00	29,281.00	47,293.00
2	Fees of Court, etc.	74,168.00	65,029.00	139,197.00
3	Customs	1,772,619.00	-	1,772,619.00
4	Marine	32,129.00	-	32,129.00

5	Railway	632,130.00	-	632,130.00
6	Interest	109,544.00	-	109,544.00
7	General Tax	-	545,902.00	545,902.00
8	Posts and Telegraphs	18,651.00	11,566.00	30,217.00
9	Rent of Government Property	3,265.00	3,832.00	7,097.00
10	Miscellaneous	7,519.00	2,700.00	10,219.00
11	Non-Recurrent	160.00	-	160.00
12	Imperial Grant-in-Aid	-	136,000.00	136,000.00
Source: Annual Report of the Colonies, Nigeria 1914, pp 4.		2,668,197.00	794,310.00	3,462,507.00

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Chart 4: Comparison of All Sources of Revenue (in £s) between North & South as at 1913 (before amalgamation).



These statistics speak for themselves and their sources are indicated within them to avoid doubts.

Now, the intent of our argument is not to emphasize the advantageous position of any part of the country over the other but to show that the lost opportunity of harnessing complementary roles different parts of the country could have played in the making of a formidable Nigeria is chiefly responsible for the injustice that has given birth to Nigeria’s hydra-headed socio-economic cum politico-religious problems. It is consequent upon the foregoing state of affairs that the present Emir of Kano, Sanusi Lamido Sanusi, who was formerly the Central Bank Governor of Nigeria submits that:

Tribalism is not our problem. Tribalism and religion are artificial problems created by selfish leaders for their own personal interests. There are only two major tribes in Nigeria. The Elites and the Masses. Once you make lots of money, you belong to the elite tribe, when you are a commoner or suffering, you belong to the tribe of the Masses. If you are an elite, and you need more power, or elective position, you sow seed of tribalism and religion, among the masses, so as to sway their emotion for your personal victory. ...unfortunately, after the election when they have won and joined their "sworn enemies" to drink and party, the gullible masses continue to fight each other. (www.nigerianbulletin.com>threads).

Considering the foregoing, one can now personally adjudge whether the notion of "One Nigeria" has all the trappings of a dangerous supportive rhetoric or not.

b. Federal Character Policy

It was Margaret Fuller who once said that "Harmony exists no less in difference than in likeness, if only the same keynote govern both parts". ([wikiquotehttps://en.m. wikiquote.org>wiki>marg...](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Margaret_Fuller)). The ethnic, religious, cultural and language diversities and differences in Nigeria inform the quest for National integration, which M.L. Bello explains as covering "a vast range of human relationships and attitudes ... the integration of diverse and discrete cultural loyalties and the development of a sense of nationality; the integration of the rulers and the ruled and the integration of the citizens into a common political process" (5). In order to foster the much required unity of the federating states and peoples of Nigeria, the constitution drafting committee (1976), defined the federal character principle as "The distinctive desire of the people of Nigeria to promote national unity, foster national loyalty and give every citizen of Nigeria a sense of belonging to the National (notwithstanding the diversities of the ethnic origin, which may exist and which it is their desire to nourish and harness to the enrichment of the Federal Republic of Nigeria)" (Seelin. 14(3)).

However, the bracketed aspect of the foregoing purpose of Federal Character was substituted in the 1979 constitution hence, its section 14(3) spelt out the mode of operation of the Federal Character principles thus:

The composition of the government of the federation or any of its agencies be carried out in such a manner as to reflect the Federal Character of Nigeria and the need to promote national unity and also to command loyalty thereby ensuring that there shall be no predominance of persons from a few ethnic or other sectional groups in that government or any of its agencies (*The Constitution of The Federal Republic of Nigeria*1979).

To ensure the effectiveness and enforcement of this constitutional provisions, the Federal Character Commission (came to be established by Act 34 of 1996) with the aims of ensuring principles of fairness and equity in distributing public posts and socio-economic infrastructures among the various federal units of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Now, how this policy, which is meant to sustain the unity of the assemblage of ethnicities called Nigeria has been pursued with levity has become a grand divisive instrument in the hands of crafty politicians. This has rendered the entire policy, a support rhetoric. This rhetoric is directed to camouflage the oppressive inclinations of some ethnic groups over others. The consequence of this, is the birth of mutual distrust, unpatriotic attitude, hate speeches, inter and intra ethnic communal conflicts, sprouting of innumerable militant and agitating groups and the latest call for restructuring and/or disintegration of the ailing country called Nigeria. For want of space, we will cite an instance which betrays the utopic nature of the Federal Character.

"Nigeria is a country with an estimated population of 140 million people" (Bello 16). Otite reports that "Nigeria has a total of 374 ethnic groups... which are broadly divided into ethnic "majorities" and ethnic minorities. In such a country with 104 Federal 'Unity schools, "The Rising Sun" news of 29th March, 2017 report puts the cut off marks by states for 2017 admissions into Unity federal government schools thus:

Abia – Male(130) Female (130), Adamawa – Male (62) Female (123), Akwa Ibom – Male (123) Female (123), Anambra – Male (139) Female (139), Bauchi – Male (35) Female (35), Bayelsa – Male (72) Female (72), Benue – Male (111) Female (111), Borno – Male (45) Female (45), Cross River– Male (45) Female (97), Delta – Male (131) Female (131), Ebonyi – Male (112) Female (112), Edo – Male (127) Female (127), Ekiti – Male (119) Female (119), Gombe – Male (58) Female (58), Imo – Male and Female (138), Jigawa – Male and Female (44), Kaduna – Male and Female (91), Kano – Male and Female (67), Kastina – Male and Female (60), Kebbi - Male (9) Female (20), Kogi – Male and Female (119), Kwara - Male (123) Female (123), Lagos – Male and Female (133), Nassarawa – Male and Female

(58), Niger – Male and Female (58), Ogun – Male and Female (131), Ondo – Male and Female (131), Osun – Male and Female (127), Oyo – Male and Female (127), Plateau – Male and Female (97), Rivers – Male and Female (118), Sokoto – Male (9) Female (13), Taraba – Male (3) Female (11), Yobe – Male (2) Female (27), Zamfara – Male (4) Female (2), FCT Abuja – Male (90) Female (90) (<https://www.nigerianin>).

Similar discrepant allocation of cut off marks also hold true in admissions into Tertiary Institutions and Universities across the country. The 2017 Budgetary allocations to states and even the ratio given to states in Federal appointments are also open invitations to National disintegration yet, “Federal Character” is nominally harped about as Nigeria’s standard approved criterion for maintaining equity and fairness. These acts of discrimination, nepotism, oppression, subjugation, mediocrity, and democratic dehumanizations only prepare the ground for national disintegration.

c. The Call for Restructuring from Historical Perspective

Restructuring in the context of this paper entails organizing differently the political and economic situations of the nation. The call for restructuring championed by the former Vice President, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar and former Head of State, General Ibrahim Babangida shows that something is fundamentally wrong with the present structure of Nigeria. It is also a subtle proposal that plausibly seem to be suggesting a vent out of the present political imbroglio. However, a closer scrutiny at this call shows that it is at best, an interest serving ideology - which has been invented to ensure that the gold mine, Nigeria, from where the big miners draw their sources of opulence and ostentatious lives, remains intact for further exploitation and impoverishment of the already poor masses. If any true intent is involved in the call, it is only the avoidance of an all out war. That too, will to enable the benefactors of Nigeria’s economic woes cow their growing opposition and the agitators for secession into submission. The facts on the ground indicate that, without sheathing of the presently drawn swords, a bloody revolution or outright war may be imminent.

Without a tincture of bias, restructuring, which actually entails “effecting changes to our current federal structure (to bring it closer to what our founding fathers erected in order to address the very issues and challenges that led them to opt for a less centralized system), means devolution of powers to the federating units with the accompanying resources, and it would involve greater control by the federating units of the resources in their areas”. (*Premium Times* July 14, 2017). It is a call by Federalists and is embarked upon to address lopsidedness in governmental structure, which when left unattended to, may have grievous destructive backlashes. If there were elements of transparency in this call, it would have brought about true Federalism in Nigeria but the Nigerian senate, peopled by beneficiaries of the present unjust system is positioned against it.

Historically, however, Nigeria has had her share of fiscal restructuring, which more often than not, had revenue sharing as the pivot or veneer gear propelling such agenda. It could be recalled that, Lugard for reasons of politico-economic and administrative convenience restructured the different peoples of Nigeria into its present supposedly Federal State. An extract from the book, *Niger Delta: the Economic Life of Nigeria* reveals that: “Then in 1946 Hick Philipson’s Commission economically restructured Nigeria through the awarding of 46% of National revenue to the North, 30% to the West and 24% to the East. In 1953, Chick’s Commission version of restructuring differentiated between import and export duties and provided the criteria for sharing them. Besides, in 1958, Sir, Jeremy Raisman’s commission introduced Distributable Pools Accent (DPA) and included population, which now became one of the most novel criterion for regional revenue sharing. Then came Binns’ Fiscal Commission of 1964, which recognized the DPA, which is presently baptized and known as National Coffers or Sate Treasury. But in 1967, states were created hence, Decree 15, advocated that population be considered as a yardstick for sharing the National cake whereas that of the North be equally allocated among the six states of the North.

Again, Dina’s commission of 1968 was another attempt at restructuring which ended up establishing the offshore/onshore dichotomy. In 1977, Prof. Ayobade headed version of restructuring prescribed 60% revenue for Federal, 30% for States and 10% for Local governments. It could also be recalled that the Retired General and former head of state, namely, Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida’s Mobilization and fiscal commission (NRMAFC) in 1989 vested the power of vertical allocation formula on the National Assembly and considered equity of states, population, material revenue proceeds and social development factors as indices for allocation of revenue. This move happens to be one of the best Nigeria has ever seen hence, Babangida despite his many shortcomings, is still considered a political maestro.

From the foregoing, we can see that each of these commissions made attempts though differently and right from the Colonial through the Post Colonial era, to restructure Nigeria. Yet, the latest is a call for the reorganization of the same worrisome structure. What is sort for presently is definitely unclear at this point, is it fiscal federalism, which entails a partial restructuring or

true federalism, which would entail the total restructuring of the nation? In what seems like an answer to the above query, a renowned Nigeria Legal Luminary and Elder statesman, Aare Afe Babalole traces this call to a backlash or import of the system of government being run in the country. In his words, “people are agitating for the restructuring of this country... because what we have is called federal government but it is indeed a unitary government, where states only go begging for money at the end of every month and no development of any kind is taking place” (*Daily Post* July 31, 2017).

The former Vice president of Nigeria, Alhaji Abubakar Atiku outlining the advantages of restructuring in his article titled, “Restructuring Nigeria for National Cohesion and Good Governance” submits that: “Restructuring will ensure greater accountability, people are more likely to hold their states and local governments to account once those governments are no longer able to consciously blame the central governments for their shortcoming (Premium Times July 14,2017). It really seems that their suggestions tilt towards total restructuring of the country, which will usher in true federalism.

Now, with all these lofty ideas, which presently fill the air, one wonders why no serious attention has been given to this call. Ralph McJulius in his article “Restructuring Nigeria: Who’s afraid and Who’s Against, and Why” asks the question, “Why is it that with the plethora of support or endorsement pouring from both the Northern and Southern parts of Nigeria and lately from the ruling party, All Progressive Congress at the center, why is it that “everybody is endorsing restructuring, nothing is being done about it?”... Could all this support be just a lip service, a case of campaign and a political strategy to appeal to the sensitivity of proponents of restructuring in order to get votes and win election?” (9News July 13, 2017). Why is it that Chief Ahmed Bola Tinubu, a politician and former governor of Lagos State, who was prior to this period, a strong proponent of restructuring, now opposes the agenda? Why did he jettison the key and all important progressive philosophy of true federalism? The answer could be found in Prof. Ango Abdullahi’s misconceived and parochial argument that the agitation for secession and restructuring is absurd. He argues that “the whole agitation about restructuring is targeted at the North, describing it as nothing other than crass politics.” Nigeria is such that whatever that negatively affects the Abdullahis’ is discountenanced. As Emmanuel Wisdom in his “Nigeria Restructuring: An Outdated Hoax” observes, “restructuring is a term, whose meaning is as diverse as the diversity of those calling for it to the extent that smart politicians have capitalized on it to hoodwink gullible followers into supporting it...” (biafranews.blogspot.com.ng). With this mist clouding over restructuring, does one need a political avatar to tell us that all these are mere rhetoric?

The foregoing arguments support our thesis that the restructuring agenda is another dangerous supportive rhetoric, which should be carefully watched. All the definitive features of a propaganda are found around the restructuring agenda. Every supportive rhetoric as this presents another dimension of the theory of antidiological action, which is manipulative. As Friere avers: “It is not our role to speak to people about our own view on them, but rather to dialogue with the people about their views and ours” (Pedagogy. 68). Now, the restructuring agenda is not a negotiated proposal hence, it fails as a product of dialogue. Rather, it is prescriptive and every prescription is a strategy for manipulation, division and conquest. If it fails to ensure the entrenchment of the “status quo ante”, it becomes disagreeable with all opposing ideologies thereby metamorphosing itself into an imposition. Until such manipulative impositions and prescriptions of an utopian possibility in the Nigeria context is divested of its wooliness, its deceptive nature (as a supportive rhetoric) will hardly come to the fore and be seen for what it truly is.

2.1 Critical Consciousness as an Alternative paradigmatic Action For True Federalism and National Integration

In the context of the present politically polarized Nigeria, which is witnessing incessant calls for secession and restructuring, there arises the need to carry out a demystification of our national challenges, which seem to be shrouded in a web of politico-religious and economic supportive rhetoric and this is where philosophy comes in as a good servant. It is a historic truism that problems deferred have their ways of revisitation and in a more sophisticated manner, which more often than not, become difficult to solve. Hence, to fashion a formulae for national integration, which would engender patriotism in the citizenry becomes a task that needs urgently be done. In this wise, what is needed now is not much of theorizing but a praxis. To surmount this unjust oppressive situation, a pragmatic approach is needed which must uncover the disguises of this supportive rhetoric in order to expose, understand and embark on a transformative praxis, which makes for fuller equity and a humane national integration process.

The inhuman treatment of Nigerians by her leaders has so conditioned the citizenry to see their plight amongst the wretched of the earth as their best possible existential state. Paulo Freire was therefore right and asserts in his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* that; “Oppression is domesticating... to no longer be prey to its force, one must emerge from it and turn upon it... this can be done only by means of the praxis, reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it” (26). This paper therefore locates such praxis in our idea of creating initial critical consciousness in the citizenry. This approach is hinged on our belief that unless

national problems are identified in clear terms (just as laboratory scientists do diseases), their solutions may not come in handy and timely enough to prevent disintegration. This is what is called here, the raising or task of creating critical consciousness.

Our critical consciousness proposal is a praxis, which manifests in two stages. The first stage entails a recognition of the motives behind the suffocating monologues, sloganeering, propaganda, and all supportive rhetoric, which aim to domesticate the citizenry into submission to an unjust system. Our study reveals that, behind these tools of deception are the very causes of the unjust system, (which their beneficiaries go all out to hide. After the causes of the unjust system, (which informs the calls for secession and restructuring and the use of supportive rhetoric) are laid bare, the next stage, demands that the citizens themselves embark on a transforming action in order to create a new situation devoid of dehumanization and injustice.

However, to overcome Nigeria's unjust structure, is not a task that can be achieved in idealistic terms neither by brigandage. Rather, the citizenry must perceive the reality on ground not as a closed but an escapable world. To no longer be prey to injustice, one must emerge from it and turn upon it. This calls for the praxis of reflection and action upon such reality in order to confront and transform it. To confront this reality, the unjustly treated must critically confront reality and at the same time, objectifying and acting upon that reality. As Lukac's cited in Friere puts it "action is only human when it is not merely an occupation but also a pre-occupation, that is when it is not dichotomized from reflection" (28). To successfully bring about reasonable action that is a product of rational reflection, the process of conscientization must first take place. Conscientization involves thematic investigations into the causes of our national problems. It does not stop at a mere subjective level or perception of a situation but through subsequent actions, the citizens are prepared for action against the obstacles to their greater humanization in a justly ordered society.

The correct approach to a better structured Nigeria therefore cannot consist in a libertarian propaganda, neither can any leadership implant (forcefully by suppression or otherwise) in the citizens, a belief that all is presently well. All political actions at this stage must be authentically pedagogical, which necessarily entails humility on all constituent ethnicities of the country towards a national dialogue. This is no more a time to merely discourse on the present situation and abandon results of such pallies like the 2014 National Conference. It is not a time to provide people with programmes, which have peripheral impact on their socio-economic lives. It is a time to consider their common pre-occupations, doubts, hopes and fears. It is rather a time to realize that their views of the reality on ground counts. This demands that dialogue be established with all the ethnicities in Nigeria to reflect on the situation of the polity.

A critical analysis of this reality must help sieve out appropriate actions from inappropriate ones. The supposedly appropriate actions found to be unfeasible for the times, could be shelved and substituted with more pertinent actions, which scratch where it itches. Such pertinent actions must do away with any form of manipulations, sloganeering, depositing, regimentation, prescription and in fact, all strands of supportive rhetoric. All antidialogical ideologies must be replaced by reasonable actions. This researcher hopes that the time is now to create this critical consciousness in Nigeria citizenry, when that is achieved, we together and in solidarity with one another could go into the next stage of reasonable actions. That way, unnecessary bloodshed will be averted and national integration and cohesion ensured.

2.2 Conclusion

This study has to an appreciable length exposed different manifestations of supportive rhetoric in Nigeria context. Much of the slogans, which rent the Nigeria air on daily basis such as the "One Nigeria dictum", much fuss about "Federal Character Policy", and "the latest calls for national re-structuring", which should have been instruments of unity are found to contain features of propagandist disguises, which are described here as supportive rhetoric. These interest serving rhetoric are unleashed on the ignorant citizens in order to maintain the disequity in the polity by a calculated perpetuation of the "status quo ante".

Our paper therefore traces the calls for secession, disintegration or re-negotiation of our national unity, and the clamour for national restructuring as backlashes of our national socio-economic cum political disequilibrium. This paper therefore made a strong case for a critical consciousness re-orientation. This latest suggestion is considered as an instrument of praxis involving a careful reflection and subsequent action on the reality of the worrisome national imbalance, which is at the heart of the outcry for national disintegration. The researcher hopes that when a proper unmasking of these oppressive rhetoric are successfully carried out, governance will be decentralized, transparency, mutual trust encouraged and the spirit of patriotism engendered. These are however, the basic elements of not only national integration but also, the practice of true federalism.

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