

GOOD GOVERNANCE: AN ANTIDOTE FOR SUSTAINABLE PEACE AND SECURITY IN THE NIGER DELTA.

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and

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Abstract

Lack of good governance has been a clog in the wheels of Nigeria's move towards sustainable peace and security in the Niger Delta. One would have thought that the attainment of independence in Nigeria in 1960 would arrest the violence and political animosity proceeding independence. This was not to be as the crisis that followed independence climaxed in the Nigerian civil war (1967 – 1970). The intervening years of military dictatorship before and after the fall of the second republic unleashed violence on the people and many lost their lives in protests against harsh economic policies and marginalization. This made Nigerians to cry out for a return to democratic rule. The yearnings of Nigerians were met and Nigerians returned to democratic rule in 1999. However peace and security eluded Nigeria. The leadership became corrupt and reneged their electoral promises thus leaving the country under develop while they live in affluence. This led to agitations especially among the oil producing communities for resource control. Violent agitations has led to the killing of security personnel, taking of hostages and pipeline vandalization all in attempt to draw the attention of the government to the sufferings of the people. The position of this paper is that government has not done enough to restore peace in the Niger Delta. Only a visionary focused, unbiased and a disciplined leader who is not parochial can bring peace and security in the Niger Delta.

Key words: *Governance, Niger Delta, corruption, marginalization and security.*

Introduction

Lack of good governance has been one of Nigeria's major challenges in attaining sustainable growth and development, peace and security in the country Oyovbawe (1992) noted that leadership that is poor, uninspiring, corrupt, oppressive and sectional can only generate resentment, dissension and revolt. Such a leadership fosters an atmosphere in which the politicization of ethic, religious and ideological differences can grow and flourish. In that scenario there will be conflict. This is why, while other smaller and less endowed nations in Africa and beyond are matching on towards consolidating their socio-economic transformation, Nigeria is still being drawn into the vortex of social turbulence which manifests itself in the form of inter-ethnic rivalry, religious riots and the rise of ethnic militia, such as Oodua peoples Congress (DPC), Arewa People Congress (APC), Egbesu Boys, the Bakasi Boys, Niger Delta Frontier Force, Movement For the Survival of the Ogoni people (MOSOP) and the movement for the actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB). These groups are determined to fight against perceived injustice perpetuated against their people by the leadership. Thus rather than joins hands to build the nation, the various groups struggle for resource control and fight to secure political appointments to better the lives of their people.

The Problem with our Leaders.

The problem with Nigerian leadership is not because the leaders Lacked the initiative to influence public policies and make a difference to better the lives of the average citizen but most of the leaders assume leadership positions with wrong motives to emasse wealth for themselves and their families. The Nigerian society lack the political leadership that is determined to tackle the ills in the society. Both military and civilian administrations that ruled this nation in their policies appear to have

understood the problem of the Nigerian State. They initiate programmes aimed at finding solution to the problems but they have not been able to set up necessary institutions that would work towards the attainment of the goals of the programmes.

The General Ibrahim Babangida's Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) of the 1980's, the Abacha's vision 2010 and the Obasanjo's National Economic Empowerment Development Strategy (NEEDS) and the present seven point Agenda of president Musa Yar Adua shows clearly that Nigerian leaders understands the problem of the nation. The programmes they initiated were laudable but they failed because they were not able to awaken the intrinsic commitment of the citizens to attain their purpose. Nigeria's leaders are good at laying and shifting blame as they often surround themselves with political god fathers and sycophants who always agree with their policies even if they are not making a difference in the lives of the people. Consequently, the nations problem remain perpetually unresolved. (Dike 2009)

Akinola (2009) notes that, the leaders mismanage the economy and this results in the continuing manifestations of a dog-eat-dog ethos which has become a common feature of the society. This state of affairs has often made the people frustrated while seeking their political and economic goals. The people not being able to achieve these goals, resort to political assassination, thuggery and godfatherism. In Niger Delta area for example the struggle for resources control started in the early years after independence this course was championed by Isaac Boro when he demanded for compensation for the environmental degradation suffered by the people in the area as a result of the activities of the oil companies. Isaac Boro died without the leadership improving on the lives of the people. Ken Saro Wiwa took up the fight through the MOSOPR rather than look into the plight of the people, he was charged for treasonable felony with his campaign team and sentenced to death. They were hanged in what has come to be described, as an extra judicial murder without a right of appeal (Ogbogbo 2005).

Official Corruption

Despite the nations vast natural resources Nigeria still remains among the most impoverished nations of the world because of corruption. Ofili (2009) notes that corruption may be in form of bribery, gratification, nepotism, extortion, embezzlement, misappropriation, stealing or looting, inflation of contract value, falsification of official records, ghost workforce -- -- over -- invoicing of prices of goods and services, payments for work or supplies not satisfactory done or not done at all, abuse of tender process, award of contract to self, proxies or favoured relations, falsification of accounts -- -- money laundering, false declaration of assets, illegal acquisition of wealth, misuse of public fund. These vices are common in our nations leadership, and this has affected the quality of life of Nigerians and at the same time created instability in the country. Corruption has perverted the value system of the Nigerian society instability created by corruption as a result of bad governance in Nigeria has led to military intervention in the politics of the country.

It must be pointed out that since the attainment of independence, Nigeria has not been able to enthrone a government totally free from corruption. Giving reasons for the military take over in 1966, Isichei (1989) quoted Major Chukwuma Nzeogwu who said our enemies are the profiteers, the swindlers, the men in high and low places that seek bribe and demand ten percent -- -- the nepotists, those that make the country look big for nothing before international circles, those that have corrupted our society and put the Nigerian political calendar back by their words and deeds -- -- what we do promise every law abiding citizen is freedom from fear and all forms of oppression, freedom from general inefficiency and freedom to live and strive in every field of human endeavour both nationally and internationally. No one would have blamed the military for overthrowing any regime that is characterized by insecurity, tribalism, parochialism, thuggery, hatred, poverty ignorance, inequity and joblessness, if they had corrected the ills in the society. That is why I personally do not support military intervention because military administration has not been totally successful and free from corruption. It has not

thought our leaders any lesson. I will rather support a situation where the public will stage their own revolution.

Infact the Nigerian military has been a major source of political instability in Nigeria having staged eleven successful and failed coups since January 15, 1966. As Babatope (2008) has pointed out we are gladdened however with realization by the Nigerian armed force of today that coups all over the world have always been mere aberration that can never lead to profound changes in the socio economic lives of the people in society where they have occurred. The truth is that the era of military dictatorship is characterized by violence against the people of Nigeria. Some of their policies like the Structural Adjustment programme introduced by the Gen IBB administration brought untold hardship on the people of Nigeria. The anti-SAP riots that followed were all crushed by the military. That regime can also be remembered for the annulment of the June 12, 1993 presidential election results. General Abacha took over shortly after that regime and unleashed terror on Nigerians. According to Mordi (2005) the act of state terrorism reacted macabre proportions in Ogoni Land under military occupation led by Major Paul Okutima as head of an internal security task force earlier established by the Babangida regime. This army of occupation engaged in banditry, looting, burning, raping, maiming and killing of the Ogoni people. It must be pointed out that the struggle of the Ogoni people for resource control is a true reflection of the struggle of the entre Niger Delta people against their exploitation and marginalization by the government and the oil companies.

The return to democratic rule rather than restore peace led to the escalation of violence in Nigeria. Nigeria became a huge guerrilla jungle and a source of nightmare to her citizens and the international community alike instead of a democratic eldorado which the may 29,1999 hand over of power by the military presaged. Mordi (2005). Only the institution of good governance by a civilian regime will reduce if not eliminate violence and restore security to Nigerian state. This process is however marred by inequitable distribution of the nations wealth. Nigeria as a nation is very rich but her people are highly impoverished. The average Nigerian lives below average, while the wealth of the nation keep circulating among the top civil servants and politicians and the rest merely survives.

Apart from the few cities the country side remains under-developed. There is inadequate medical care leading to infant mortality and maternal morbidity. Despite the large government budget on education only about 20% of Nigeria's twenty – five million children are in school. Nigeria supplies other countries electricity but her citizens live in darkness. Our roads are in bad state. Most inhabitants of the Niger Delta region do not have pipe borne water, they rely on their rivers to fetch water for drinking, cooking and washing but once the water is polluted it affects all their means of livelihood. Politicians and top civil servants grow rich on meager salaries and almost everyone has his price you have to dash the receptionist to get a hotel room, the immigration official to get an entry permit at the airport, the doctor to get a bed in his hospital, 15% kickback on construction contract are standard practice and one British medical supply company set aside 50,000 fifty thousand dollars in its budget to cover annual 'dash' cost. Babatope (2008). Our leaders steal the common wealth to foreign countries and live very big there with big houses and expensive cars and come back after holidays with all their children in very good schools to live very big, here under our eyes while still plundering our common wealth.

Niger Delta Struggle

A major source of conflict and insecurity in Nigeria, is the way the Niger Delta problem is handled by the administration. The government's neglect, environmental degradation, hopelessness unemployment and the worsening state of poverty the people are passing through in the midst of the exploitation of their resources by the oil companies, has driven the youths into violence and struggle. As already mentioned elsewhere in this paper the struggle for the improvement on the lives of the people of the Niger Delta States began soon after independence in 1960. That is about fifty years in 2010. It is governments indifference that make the militants in the Niger Delta to target oil production

activities as a way of attracting governments attention to their grievances. As Okaba (2004) noted, owing to insincerity of government and lack of political will to address the issues at stake the Niger Delta conflict has escalated.

The Niger Delta is the treasure base of the country Nigeria. The area harbours over 95% of Nigeria's crude oil and gas resources which accounts for 90% of the country's foreign exchange earnings (Ogbogbo, 2005). The grievance of the Niger Delta people is that they benefit nothing from the numerous oil wells in their area except environmental degradation and economic marginalization. The people can thus be regarded as the proverbial golden goose that layed the golden egg which was later killed by the greedy owner. The people suffer environmental pollution because of oil exploration and this has adversely affected their means of livelihood. The reason for the struggle for resource control is the right of the states and communities directly concerned to have a direct and decisive role to play in the exploration, disposal and the marketing of the harvested resources. According to Douglas (2000), the Niger Delta people will insist on getting justice - - - and not just be used as hewers of wood and drawers of water - - - we want to control our resources. We want to keep whatever we have and contribute some to a central government that is not too powerful. Whether the people will employ violence, force, dialogue or litigation will be determined by the responses of the central government who - - - today is holding the oil resources of the people violently. This is why the people have adopted different measures ranging from pipeline vandalization, rig blockages, and hostage taking as a means of drawing the attention of the federal government to their plight. Government on its part do not respect treaties entered into with the militants in the area. Even the recent agreement reached between the government and the were granted amnesty by the federal government has not been fully implemented to the letter.

The Way Forward

The way forward is to enthrone good leadership in the country. For leadership in a country like ours to be effective, the leader must find solution to the problems confronting the nation. He must ensure there is stability in the state and guide the citizens towards the path of progress and prosperity. The leader must not be narrow minded or parochial. He must be a visionary, focused, unbiased, committed and a man of proven integrity in public life. The problem in the Niger Delta area has lingered on for too long. The government therefore must seek to address the peoples problem ones and for all. The people should be rewarded with political appointments. Modern social amenities should be provided in the area. And the youths in the area should be employed. These should be the joint effort of the government and the oil companies. Again the government should always, respect agreements reached with the people. The recommendation of the south-south governors that the practice of true federalism and natural law in which the federating units express their right to primarily control the natural resources within their borders and make agreed contribution towards the maintenance of common services of the government at the centre (The Guardian 8th April, 2001) should be implemented.

Conclusion

This study has revealed that the major problem Nigeria has to tackle in order to ensure sustainable peace and security especially in the Niger Delta area is to enthrone good governance. Nigeria today needs fearless, broad-minded and committed selfless servant leaders who are ready to take the bull by the horn in fighting corruption a dreaded cankerworm and obstacle to peace, security and development in the country. The current fight against corruption by EFCC and ICPC should be intensified. The agitations of the Niger Delta communities who suffer because of the environmental degradation and whose means of livelihood have been destroyed because of pollution accessioned by oil exploration and exploitation should be looked into and their demands considered on their merit. Adequate compensation should be paid to them as the constitution demands and their youths who constitute the militant group should not only be granted armnesty, they should be employed.

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