The Nigerian Economic Transformation Agenda: Religious and Security Factors

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Abstract

The Transformation Agenda is based on and draws its inspiration from vision 20 2020 and the first National Implementation Plan (NIP). The objective is to deepen the effects and provide sense of direction for the current administration's all inclusive development of Nigeria during its tenure. The agenda is a based on the set of priority policies and programmes which will transform the Nigerian economy to meet what current and future needs of our people. A country is classified as developed when she is able to provide qualitative life for her citizenry. Development or transformation is critical and essential to the sustenance of any nation. In spite of the huge human, material and natural resources in her possession, Nigeria in the last fifty two years have been battling with the problems of development. This paper has highlighted a perspective view of earlier similar efforts. A lot of factors have been involved. However, the paper dwells on religious tolerance and security as crucial vehicles in the current effort to transform the Nigerian economy. Religious value systems play very significant role in collective, self-awareness and identity, which draw together individuals, families and regions and pull them towards greater self-consciousness needed to build and animate a nation from within. In this context, security involves freedom from danger or threat to a nation's ability to protect and develop itself, promote its cherished values and well-being of its people. National Security is therefore a sine-qua-non for political stability and socio economic development of any nation. The paper has in detail discussed how the virtually absence of these factors is marring the current transformation of the present administration. Suggestions or recommendations are offered on how to promote religious tolerance and national security in order to achieve the transformation agenda and ensure that Nigeria is counted among the top twenty developed countries by the year 2020.

Key Words: Transformation, Religious Tolerance, Security.

Introduction

Rapid economic development and social well-being constitute the development imperative of developing countries of the world and indeed, remain the normative goal of the international community. This involves the attainment of sufficient levels of economic growth to allow for a progressive improvement in the material standard of living of the populace. However, for Nigeria and most African countries, the economies are in an abysmal state. The worsening economic conditions have been generating a mix of domestic, social and political tension.

We have had series of development plans in Nigeria. Nigeria is permanently hunted by the spectre of development. Its fifty three years of independence actually are rolling by daily in search of development. The myth of growth and development is so entrenched that the country's history passes for the history of development strategies and growth models from colonial times up to date. No term has been in constant flux as development. This seems the only country where virtually all notions and models of development have been experimented (Aremu, 2003).

Two years after independence, the first National Development Plan policy was formulated between 1962 and 1968 with the objectives of development opportunities in health, education and employment and improving access to these opportunities etc. This plan failed because fifty percent of resources needed to finance the plan was to come from external sources, and only fourteen percent of the external finance was received (Ogwumike, 1995).

Collapse of the first Republic and the commencement of Civil War also disrupted the plan. After the Civil War in 1970, the second national development plan 1970 to 1974 was launched, the plan priorities were in agriculture, industry, transport, manpower, defence, electricity, communication and water supply and provision

of social services (Ogwumike, 1995). The third plan, covering the period of 1975 to 1980 was considered more ambitious than the second plan. Emphasis was placed on rural development and efforts to revamp agricultural sector. The fourth plan 1981 to 1985 recognized the role of social services, health services, etc. The plan was aimed at bringing about improvement in the living conditions of the people. The specific objectives were an increase in the rural income of the average citizen. More even distribution of income among individuals and socio-economic groups, increased dependence on the country's material and human resources, a reduction in the level of unemployment and underemployment (Ogwumike, 1995).

During these periods, Nigeria's enormous oil wealth was not invested to build a viable industrial base for the country and for launching an agrarian revolution to liquidate mass poverty. For instance, the Green Revolution Programme that replaced Operation Feed the Nation failed to generate enough food for the masses. In the recent past, various strategies for development have also been tried with little or no result, among these were the Structural Adjustment Programme (SA)), Vision 2010, National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS), Creation of Development Centres etc.   There is indeed a great concern about the failure of previous strategies to achieve the desired effects on the development of Nigeria. Probable ineffectiveness in policy implementation inevitably caused the failure of previous efforts at repositioning Nigeria. The emergence of President Goodluck Jonathan in 2010/2011 set the background for a new order – a search for a strategy for the recreation of Nigeria. This undoubtedly necessitated the introduction of the Transformation Agenda.

The natural question to ask is what is the rationale for the establishment of the transformation agenda? The need for a qualitative and holistic development of the Nigerian state has therefore necessitated a strategy that would address this problem. The administration of His Excellency President Jonathan has since its inception, responded to this need in its Transformation Agenda.

It is important to underscore that the Transformation Agenda is based and draws its inspiration from vision 20 2020 and the 1st National Implementation Plan (NIP). The objective is to deepen the effects and provide a sense of direction for the current administration's all-inclusive development of Nigeria during its term. The agenda is based on a set of priority policies and programmes which will transform the Nigerian economy to meet the future needs of our people.

The prioritized policies programmes and projects as encapsulated in the agenda were properly scrutinized by a Presidential Committee inaugurated on Thursday 17 February 2011 under the Chairmanship of the Honourable Minister of the National Planning Commission (NPC).

The cardinal elements of the Transformation Agenda of the current administration include constitutional and electoral reforms and transformation of the budgeting process. Others will include overcoming the current security challenges through ensuring peaceful co-existence, tolerance, employment generation, poverty alleviation and job creation for our youths aside from determined focus on developing critical infrastructure and human capital development. There is an overriding push for effective planning, coordination and continuity of policies and programmes with creation of an enabling environment for private sector participation through Public Private Partnership (PPP). The administration is also poised to deliver good governance through tackling corruption, value re-orientation, accountability and transparency as well as monitoring and evaluation for all priority policies, programmes and projects. \

Other priority areas of the agenda include but are not limited to the following; Job creation initiatives, public expenditure management, good governance/rule of law, foreign policy and diplomacy, the legislature, human capital development, health and education, agriculture and food security, oil and gas sector, infrastructure development, information and communication technology (ICT), transportation and the role of government as a facilitator, monitoring and evaluation, the civil service, the sure programme etc.

Security involves freedom from danger or threat to a nation's ability to protect and develop itself, promote its cherished values and well-being of its people. This takes into account the significance of human well-being in the security considerations of a country especially in a developing country like ours.

In this connection, it is easy to establish a nexus between national security and development. Accordingly, it is meaningless to talk of development in the absence of national security. In other words, insecurity in a nation is a threat to development.

National security is a sine qua non for political stability and socio-economic development of any nation. Religion is one of the recognized factors that can enhance or destabilize the security of any nation at any given period of history. Religious value systems play very significant role in collective self-awareness and identity, which draw together individuals, families and regions, and pull them towards greater self-consciousness needed to build and animate a nation from within.

How can Religious Tolerance and National Security enhance the Development of Nigerian nation? Putting it differently, can there be any meaningful progress and transformation within the backdrop of religious intolerance and national insecurity?

Religious Tolerance and Nigerian Economy

Tolerance as the ability to bear with one another inspite of differences either in opinion, belief or knowledge is an indispensable factor for any meaningful progress and development of any nation. To a keen observer of the daily happenings in Nigeria, religious tolerance is more than a topical issue because of its relevance to the survival of the Nigerian nation. It is a fact that the fear of religious intolerance seems to grip the Nigerian nation as a fear of an epidemic. It is not that the problem is restricted to Nigeria, as other countries of the world have had or are having their fair share of this ugly malady. However, the Nigerian situation is peculiar, regarded sometimes as worst considering the spate and unpredicted nature of the phenomenon.

Religion therefore has a great role to play in the social, political and economic development of Nigeria. The need to take religion into proper account is even more acutely felt when it is realized that religion is a double-edged sword. It can be a very good tool for fostering national unity and development when properly or positively handled. On the other hand, it can also be a disruptive instrument and a viable tool for crisis and war. Incidentally, Nigeria happens to be one of those counties where religion has wrecked much havoc on the advancement, unity and prosperity of her citizens and the development of the nation as awhole. Daily and every moment religious issues of religious conflict confronts us in aways that threatens our very existence both as individuals and as a nation

According to Iwe (2000:25) "Religious intolerance is conterminous with religious extremism and may be descriptively defined as…

An irrational attitude to religion which leads the religionist to the practice of religion beyond the bounds of reason and therefore without moderation. Those who perpetuate intolerance in the practice of religion are fundamentalists and they come as sects and fashion out extreme literal myopic and selfish interpretation of their scriptures to justify or give credence to their radical and often violent religious activities"

We agree with Ekwunife (1997: 40) in Ophoke (2006: 13) that religious extremism is blind refusal to understand and respect others views, a blind and fixed attitude which most often are repugnant to others cherished belief and practices.

The mere existence of Boko Haram as an Islamic violent movement is a tension breeding and conflict generation activity that negates national survivability and security. This is demonstrated by the spate of violence perpetuated by the group since its emergence. For instance, according to Onuoha(2011) and Jando(2011) in June 11,2009 at Bauchi there was clash between members of Boko Haram and the police; in July 2009(26-30) there was another   religious violence unleased by the Boko Haram sect; by September 2010 at Bauchi there was attack on central prison with arson and sect members released from custody; by 28 January 2011, there was another at Borno ,on May 20119(9-31) at Borno and Bauchi, there bomb blasts, ; again another by 2011(1-16) at Borno, Abuja and Yobe there was explosion at St Patrick's Catholic church, police station, police headquarters beer parlour and the chairman of Ijere LGA and others were shot dead; on 27 August 2011 at Abuja, there was the bombing of the United Nations building.

According to Isdore (2012) the bombing of United Nations building shows that it is a politically motivated suicide group. According to Roggio (2011) cited by Okwueze (2012) among the series of killings and bombing by the Boko Haram group are the attacks on police headquarters, churches and mosques in the town of Damaturu, Yobe state capital that led to the massacre and killing of more than 90 persons in November 2011. The sect also hit Christians very hard on 25th December 2011 when it bombed St. Theresa's Church Madala and in this singular attack scores of people died. (Yusuf et al) cited by Okwueze remarked that more than 25 people were killed, 13 cars were burnt and nine apartments shattered at the frontage of the church.

On January 20, 2012, the group carried out bomb attacks and gun battles in kano City and Police barracks and this led to the death of 186 people. Also, according to Osborn (2012) cited by Okwueze (2012), another Catholic Church in the city of Jos was bombed in February 2012 leaving two people dead and many others wounded. The sect also attacked nine churches in Damaturu and more than 90 people were killed in both Damaturu and Potiskum. There is un-ending bombing and gunning activities of the sect. The media houses are not spared, banks, schools and even market places are their targets since the beginning of 2012, there is no Sunday that news of bomb attack in one church or the other was not heard.The latest attack was on the 7th of March,2013 when fifty two(52) members of the sect and two soldiers were killed at Borno state. The anger of the sect was probably provoked following the refusal of the President to grant their demand for amnesty on the ground that amnesty cannot be granted to ghosts.

Security and Nigerian Economy

Like peace, the concept of security has undergone fundamental changes in the last two decades. Security has been defined as the condition or feeling of safety from harm or danger, the defence, protection and preservation of core values and the absence of threats to acquire values (David, 2006). But since the end of the cold war, there is the desirability to shift from a sate and elite focused view of security to one that places the individual at the centre of the security equation thereby bringing in the concept of human security which

combines elements of national security, economic development and basic human rights (Nicole and Fayemi, 2004).

When a nation posses the ability to prevent tension from deteriorating into armed conflicts, by maintaining an atmosphere of stability, preventing chaos and widespread violence then one can speak of national security.

That national security is essential for the pursuit of core values of national well-being as such socio-economic and human resource transformation, among numerous others is a pointer to its expedience, despite the importance of National Security, its measurement can only be spoken of in relative terms. For Akpuru-Aja (1999: 33), national security can be measured through the level "of freedom from fear or threat of aggression or subversions from within or outside and where unavoidable, the state should be able to prevail in battle". At the domestic level of human interaction in contemporary pluralistic societies, especially in Nigeria, the central challenge to national security has been the nation's inability to appreciate and manage its multiple pluralities for a viable and prosperous nationhood.

According to Ehi (2009), national security must include the capacity to provide the citizens with social, economic and political conditions conducive to happiness and relative prosperity. Thus, tranquillity and well-being of a society are necessary components of national security. According to Professor Al-Mashal, national security should address "the physical, social and psychological quality of life of a society and its members both in domestic setting and within the larger regional and global system".

Our nation can only be strong as our security services are vigilant, reliable and swift in action. That is why the Federal Government as a matter of policy preference, has decided to vest in the capacity of our security agencies and armed forces. It has assured the nation of the capacity and flexibility of our security agencies to respond to multiple levels of threats. We … so in the hope that you can optimize that investment through increased interoperability and burden sharing within security agencies.

Factors against Religious Tolerance and National Security

The following factors encourage religious intolerance and insecurity in Nigeria;

(i) **Disregard to others beliefs**: Okwueze (2001: 42) subscribes to the belief that religious extremism in Nigeria centres around intolerance, aggravated by inability of Nigerian leaders and the led to accommodate others not of the same faith. Onah (1996: 53) similarly admits that most religious fanaticisms in the country stem from ignorance, over indoctrination and disregard from others religious beliefs and practices. Njoku (2004: 193) links religious extremism in Nigeria to diverse interpretation of doctrines within the same faith or misinterpretation of others faith and practices. The assertion or superiority claim by some religious sects to make new disciples of people they refer to as infidels or unbelievers are provocative enough to cause religious incitement.

(ii) **Failures on part of the government**: it is the inability of the federal, state and local government authorities to play fair and neutral roles in religious matters and in the provision of basic life necessities that tend to exacerbate ethno-religious rivalry and politics leading to conflicts in the country. This is more in accord with the Nigerian milieu. The fundamental objectives and directive principles of state policy under the 1999 constitution of Nigerian contain many social, economic and political rights which, if fully implemented, would go a long way towards ensuring national security and development. These rights are comparable to the economic, social and cultural rights adopted by the United nations General Assembly in 1966. Failure of the Nigerian State, despite availability of resources, to take necessary steps to give effect to these rights account in part, for the intractable conflicts in the country today. Government has not provided enough essential services, nor built the social and physical infrastructure in large parts of the country, necessary to ensure a minimum acceptable level of the rights to health, education and access to drinking water, and an adequate standard or living. The lack of realization of the economic, social and cultural rights affects all sections of the society.

(iii) **Ethno Religious Plurality and Conflict**: The ethnic and religious composition of Nigeria and its manipulation by the political elite has posed a lot of challenges to governance and security in Nigeria. This has been aggravated by the failure of the state to perform its core duties of maintaining law and order, justice and providing social services to the people. For instance, the failure of the state has led to the emergence of ethnic militias in several parts of the country such as the Odua People's congress (OPC) and Bakassi Boys.

In the Nigerian enclave, ethnic and religious pluralities are gradually becoming the centre of tension generation and insecurity because they are the primary source of identity formation. Nnoli (2006) noted

this harsh reality when he disclosed that current security discourse has shifted from its state-centeredness to other consideration related to satisfaction of basic needs and the protection of cultural and religious identity. Conflicts within states now supersede conflicts between states especially now that the state is no longer the sole and potential source of tension generation or conflicts from an inter-state perspective. Rather, militant religious groups who are actually civilians or as Nnoli (2006: 1) puts it "uncivil society" are the primary source of conflicts from an intra-state perspective.

(iv) **Corruption:** Bribery and corruption are now so endemic in our country nowadays to require any definition. This includes all dishonest and illegal acts in return for money or personal gain. Since 1960, corruption has been an essential tool in the hands of the ruling class in Nigeria, for the accumulation of wealth and for the seizure and sustenance of political power. Unable to organize a productive economy, generally unconcerned about productive generation of wealth, lacking a sense of historical mission, our rulers have used state power essentially as a base for leading a style and standard of living that cannot be sustained without helping themselves to the treasury. The history of our country, both during military dictatorships (1966-79; 83-99), and the civilian regimes (1963-66, 1979-83, 1999-date) is, in a major way, a history of progressive development of the culture of corruption". Thus, despite the existing laws and the presence of anti-corruption agencies like the ICPC and EFCC today, bribery and corruption strive in our nation. Indeed, allegations are rife that some officials of these agencies have been compromised either by the ruling class or by those being investigated to the point that they are recording little or no success in the fight against corruption.

(v) **Unemployment:** Unemployment problem is similarly compounded by corruption. The majority who are unable to pay the price unemployed, while those few who have enough political power and means get jobs. Thousands of graduates from the university and other educational institutions are sent to the labour markets yearly without buyers to swell the number in the unemployment industry. Government campaign promises to create employment in many cases has yet to be fulfilled and where attempt has been made at all, it is both selective and only a tip of the ice-berg. A great number of these embrace crime and criminality out of frustration.

(vi) **The Sharia Question:** Another issue of national importance which seems to border on religious intolerance is the sharia question – the sacred law of Islam governing all aspects of Islamic life and behaviour. Since this law regulates the total life of a Moslem, should it be placed side by side with the secular laws of the state? In addition, should non Muslims be bound by it especially in areas of Muslim domination in a pluralistic country? In short, the problem seems to be one of divided loyalty to the National Constitutional Laws of the state and loyalty to the religions of the nation. According to Eke (2012), the introduction of sharia in the northern part of the country compromised the interest and infringed on the right of Christians in those sharia states because they are in the minority. This gave rise to protests and scores of people were killed across the country.

(vii) **Electoral Violence:** Electoral violence is any act of violence perpetuated in the course of political activities, including pre, during and post-election periods, and may include any of the following acts: thuggery, use of force to disrupt political meetings or voting at polling stations or the use of dangerous weapons to intimidate voters and other electoral process or to cause bodily harm or injury to any person connected with electoral processes. Electoral violence can be physical violence manifesting in physical attack resulting into assault, grievous bodily harm, disruption of meetings/campaigns and death or psychological violence in the form of tearing of posters, intimidation, use of media, reckless driving by those in procession to campaign rallies.

Electoral violence is usually a reaction to electoral abuses, rigging of election and falsification of results, elections in Nigeria have been marked with violence from the general election of 1959 and 1964 which led to massive violence in Western Nigeria leading to the coinage of wild west to the announcement of Akin Omoboriowo of the NPN as the winner of the election in Ondo State in 1983 to the pockets of violence that followed the direct capture of the peoples mandate in 2007.

(viii) **Sectarianism:** The various religious dominations in Nigeria are also guilty of religious intolerance towards each other. Such attitudes have led to open denials of basic political, economic, educational, social and religious rights. Methods used to whip-up religious intolerance include: derisive songs against each other; indoctrination of members on the weakness of each other's religious systems; ex-communication technique, denial of spiritual benefits and so on.

(ix) **The Niger Delta Crisis:** The Niger Delta had slipped into crisis as a result of the political economy of oil characterized by destruction of the environment, crisis of governance, unjust revenue allocation formula, infrastructural decay, poor regulation of the oil and gas sector with its attendant vulnerability and human suffering (Igbuzor, 2008). This led to the amnesty programme announced by the Federal Government on 25th June, 2009 to all militants in the Niger Delta to surrender their arms and unconditionally renounce militancy. The amnesty period lasted for 60 days from 6th August to 4th October, 2009 at the end of which 20,178 militants registered and 2,760 weapons, 18 gun boats and 287,445 rounds of ammunition were collected. The success of the amnesty programme has been commended by all the demobilisation and transformational training (which is part of peace education) is going on in Obubra in Cross River State. The achievement of sustainable peace however will depend on effective re-integration.

(x) **Socio-**Political-**Selfish Motives:** According to Bala (2007:15) certain uprisings in Nigeria should be seen as an organised struggle for political power with an Islamic religious overtone. In other words, behind the overt intention of the executors of this uprising – purification of distorted Islamic faith and life – was a covert fundamental reason: the snatching of political power from the present incumbent in order; perhaps, to impose an Islamic state on the whole nation. In his very words:

> …in reality, however, the Maitatsine unrest is a religious phenomenon, Islamic in nature both from the points of view of its participants and of historical trends. Like all other major religious uprising, however, it is basically a power struggle, employing the mass mobilization potential of Islam in Nigeria for the purpose…

The manipulation of religion by politicians can also cause acts of intolerance. For instance, Buhari called on Moslems to ignore and not to vote for non-Moslems in the 2011 election. This statement was not taken kindly by the Christians and it was responsible for the mayhem that followed 2011 election.

Others view the whole problem in a wider context. For them, these uprisings are being sponsored by barons, who, as Dan Agbese (1991:34) rightly pointed out manipulate religion:

> …for all sorts of personal, sectional and group interests that have little or nothing to do with religion itself or the right of the individual to worship who or what he believes in, where and how… They are the puppeteers who pull the strings that make their misguided followers engage in atrocities that severely strain the mission of religion as a unifying force in the service of man and his soul…

Other factors include inadequate funding of police and security agents and high level of poverty.

Implications to Nigerian Economic Transformation

Religious extremism and high rate of insecurity are evils that blow no one any good. They leave behind trails of woes and sorrows on individuals, families and the national economy generally. According to Ezeme (2007: 311) "they are in every case negatively far reaching". Let us examine some of the impacts.

Under religious tolerance and the Nigerian economy, we cited various cases of Boko Haram from 2009 to 2011 according to Onuoha and Jando (2011). The attack by July 2009 at Bauchi, Borno, Kano and Yobe involved the killing of 700 persons, 3,500 internally displaced, 1,264 children orphans over 392 women widowed and severally property destroyed ,17 members of the sect were killed. In September, 2010 at Bauchi, a prison was destroyed and some prison officials killed. By January 2011 at Borno, an ANPP governorship candidate, Modu Fannami and six others were murdered. By June 2011 at Borno, Abuja and yobe core government institutions, prominent leaders and social recreational and relaxation centres were destroyed. By July of 2011 at Abuja, the United Nations building was bombed and a lot of persons killed and others wounded. All these are economic losses. These have seriously diverted the attention and fund of the government from economic transformation agenda to payment of compensation and visits to the affected individuals and families.

Religious intolerance and insecurity bring about exodus of people from the troubled area to a safer place. Naturally, no one will want to be a victim of any crisis, every one values his life, when trouble breaks out in any part of the country, people leave the troubled area enmasse. The case of Maiduguri, Kano, Bauchi, Damaturu, Kaduna, Joes etc is obvious because a lot of people have left for safer places. In situations like this, these refuges cannot engage in any meaningful economic activities.

The major consequence of religious intolerance and insecurity is that if it degenerates to riots, there will be loss of lives and destruction of hard earned properties. The case of College of Education, Kafanchan in 1987 can be recalled. This crisis in which Islamic fanatics killed over 30 people and destroyed properties worth millions of Naira attracted national attention. The sharia riot of year 2000 took its toll on the life of their innocent

people with the attendant losses in properties. This list is endless. This is a drastic reduction of the Nigerian labour force which affects the economic negatively.

According to Iwe (2000), the intolerant spirit of religious fanatics have often led to religious totalitarianism which seeks to impose religious conformity and uniformity on the society by force and other questionable means. This attitude is capable of plunging the country into a religious war that will paralyze the economic activities of the country for a very long time.

In an environment where there are religious crisis and high level of criminality as a result of intolerant attitudes, investors will relocate. No investor wills want to risk a business in a war ridden area. Private school owners in places like Damataru and Maiduguri had to wind up and relocate, many industrialists in Kano and Kaduna could not bear the state of insecurity in these places due to occasional bomb blasts and activities of gun men. The tendency was to wind up there rendering the states economically dead.

The Human Development report 2007/2008 stated that Human development is about people. It is about expanding people's real choices and the substantive freedoms the capabilities that enable them to lead lives that they value. Choices and freedom in human development mean something more than the absence of constraints. People whose lives are blighted by poverty, ill health or illiteracy are not in any meaningful sense free to lead the lives that they value. Neither are people who are denied the civil and political rights they need to influence decisions that affect their lives (UNDP, 2007).

Suggestions/Recommendations

Nigeria needs social integration and harmony to be able to consolidate the economic transformation agenda. The more Nigerians experience these unrest, the more the unity of the nation cracks. We therefore offer the following suggestions for the successful implementation of the laudable agenda:

Leaders of various religious groups should conscientize their numerous followers on the great value of religious toleration in a pluralistic religious country. They should match words with examples. They should denounce religious intolerance in any form by upholding the positive values and functions of religion. Some of these values are: peace, unity, harmony, forgiveness, love and toleration of others. These great virtues and values of religion should be interpreted in the context of national unity and progress. For example, in modern Nigeria, it is envisaged that Moslem leaders should constantly remind the followers of the prophet Muhammed of the true meaning of Islam – which is peace.

The Nigerian government should, at the federal, state and local levels adopt an open and uncompromising neutral attitude towards religious organizations in this country. Neutrality does not mean indifference in the sense of not caring about aberrations in religion which threaten peace and stability of the Nation. Rather, it means that anyone in the position of power in a country with various religious groups should not allow his own religious inclinations to over-ride common interests. In short, neutrality demands that the present and future political leaders of Nigeria should guard against partisanship to any religious group in matters regarding proper governance of the Nation. The common good of all Nigerian citizens demands an altruistic, open-minded, self-effacing and large-hearted leader in religious matters, a leader who would recognize in practice the value of religious pluralism in a heterogeneous society like Nigeria; a leader who will always encourage and promote the positive elements in all religions and discourage negative ones. Such positive elements include love, justice, peace and good neighbourliness.

Religious and security education can make a lot of contribution not just to avoiding violent conflict but in producing a culture of peace characterized by respect for the dignity of the human person, respect for life, liberty, justice, solidarity, tolerance, human rights and equality between women and men. It is therefore incontrovertible that religious and security education is a critical factor for sustainable peace and national development.

Additionally, the need to reform electoral process is imperative for socio-economic and political transformation. Electoral fraud is one of the banes of Nigeria's transformation. The role of leadership in economic transformation cannot be overemphasized, all efforts towards transformation must be coordinated and directed by the leaders, therefore, the leaders must be development conscious, have genuine interest for development and the political will to propel such tranformation. The leaders must also have the cooperation of the people because it is the people that develop a nation.

Nigeria in transformation must be a stable nation that provides security for all citizens, a nation that develops it social capital and delivers life more abundant to all. To build such a nation, we need democratic inclusion, relationships of care, loyalty and mutual obligation between the state and the citizen and greater harmony between and within all people in the federation.

To transform, we need synergy within the institutions of state and between the state and all constructive political, civic and social forces. Thus, our unity will be built on a strong political culture with the requisite values and attitudes. It is only then that our collective and individual conducts will combine to unleash our full potentials. But if we do not create those synergies, we run the risks of wasting even more generations, unfulfilled national aspirations, unnecessary hardships and sub-optimal living standards for too many of our citizens.

Transforming Nigeria must resonate very deeply with all genuine patriots. We all can see the distant goal, but the terrain between where we are and where we want to be will not be easy to navigate. We are not under any illusions that all the things we plan for will be accepted or accomplished just because they are reasonable policies. But at the very least, we can immediately discern two critical factors for a successful transformation. The first is that Mr. President and the government will need the support and continued understanding of everyone. That support will enable the correct political and social atmosphere for the nation to get the best out of the citizenry.

Next, we need the commitment and best efforts of the entire nation. Even those that will from time to time disagree with the government must be seen as playing a role so long as they disagree with methods and through the means acceptable to the law. It is our wish that everybody should define and play their sector specific and individual roles in the transformation process. Without these two critical inputs, the first from the national leadership and the next from individual citizen, transformation will be hard to achieve.

The sooner we address these issues positively, the better for our rapid socio-economic and political transformation and the human well-being of the citizens as envisaged under the 1999 constitution. Wisdom dictates that we give these issues the serious consideration they deserve otherwise our national security and development will continue to be in jeopardy. "A stitch in time saves nine".

Conclusion

This paper has highlighted and commended the laudable economic transformation agenda of the present Nigerian government. It also listed antecedents of development efforts of the past governments. The paper points out that for the past, present and futuredevelopment efforts to be successful, we need stable and sustainable security and religious tolerance in the country. As a way of emphasizing their relevance, the paper has examined the past and present security and religious intolerance, discussed their immediate and remote causes and offered some suggestions or recommendations geared towards successful economic transformation of the country.

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