

CONCEPTS OF 'GIANT OF AFRICA' AND 'ONE NIGERIA': NOMENCLATURES OF CONFLICT AND DECEIT IN ENTREPRENEURIAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

Nigeria which is the largest black nation in the globe is referred to as the 'Giant of Africa'. Nigeria was branded so by the British Colonial Officers due to its size, population and resources. It was the availability of these three factors, large size, large population and abundant resources that propelled the colonial agents to forcing this very large area inhabited by different peoples with different cultures and religions into one entity called Nigeria. Not quite long these peoples were made to know that they have become one people problems started, some taking religious and some political dimensions. These problems, of course, were inimical to entrepreneurial development. To continue to hold influence over this large area for continued diversion of resources by the British, the concept of 'One Nigeria' was launched. This paper reveals that these two concepts, 'Giant of Africa' and 'One Nigeria' are sources of conflict among the Nigeria people which have been used to deceive one group by the other. Using historical method and secondary data, the paper maintains that it is high time Nigerians sat down to make policies that would eradicate conflict and deceit among them so as to promote the giant size and good spirit of oneness among the people; and by so doing enabling environment would be created for entrepreneurship to thrive. The paper also made some recommendations.

Key words:Giant of Africa, One Nigeria and Conflict

Introduction

Nigeria is the largest populated country in Africa. Its largeness is seen in the areas of land mass, population and the availability of energy and material resources, which are essential for entrepreneurial development. Economically, Nigeria was in recent time marked as the biggest in Africa yet it does not translate into adequate employment of the population (Ottuh, 2015, 41). Nigeria, the 'Giant of Africa', no doubt, is a failing country. According to Oyewumi (2010), Nigeria's large population, extraordinary talent and resources are evidenced by its accomplishment in imaginative crime, its abundant resources, and its vast regional and possibly global potentials. Supporting Oyewumi, Roosevelt (2004) wrote thus:

I see a great nation, upon a continent blessed with a great wealth of natural resources. I see a United States which can demonstrate that under democratic methods of government, national wealth can be translated into a spreading volume of human comforts hitherto unknown, and the lowest standard of living can be raised far above the level of mere substance...

Roosevelt wrote further thus:

In this nation, I see tens of millions of its citizens, substantially part of its whole population, which at this very moment, denied the greater part of what the lowest standard of today calls the necessities of life. I see millions of families trying to live on income so meager that the fall of family disaster hangs on them day by day. I see millions whose daily lives in cities and on farms continue under conditions labeled indecent by so called polite

society half century ago. I see millions denied education, recreation and the opportunities to better their lots and the lots of their children...

Roosevelt's statement during his inauguration was to the American people, but it tends to fit in very well for the African situation in general and Nigeria in particular. Larger part of Nigerian citizens are still living in abject poverty in the midst of abundant wealth, the gap between the rich and the poor is still very wide, everything seem to be in disarray and the Nigerian leaders have done nothing less than loot the wealth of the nation, deceive the people and incite the populace against one another. This of course, is a display of the highest level of lack of objectivity on the part of the leaders (Uhere and Okpara, 2016). This attitude of some leaders in Nigeria has sparked off violent conflicts that have led to loss of lives and property on one hand while on the other hand, the slogan of 'One Nigeria' has also been chanted to deceive some Nigerians who decided to stand up and protest against the poor state of affairs in Nigerian, through agitation for independence on the premise that Nigeria is not really one.

A pertinent question here is, is Nigeria really one? This takes us to citing Ahmadu Bello who, while addressing his northern brothers shortly after independence in 1960 asserted thus:

The new nation called Nigeria should be an estate of our great-grandfather, Uthman Dan Fodio. We must ruthlessly prevent a change of power. We use the minorities of the North as willing tools and the south as a conquered territory and never allow them to have control over their future.

But the same Ahmadu Bello was among the Nigerian leaders who maintained that the unity of Nigeria was not negotiable when Chukwuemeka Odimegwu Ojukwu declared the entire Igbo land

Republic of Biafra in 1967 to mark the Igbo exit from the estate of Bello's great grandfathers.

The aim of this paper therefore, is to point out that the terms 'Giant of Africa' and 'One Nigeria' are sources of conflict and deceit. This paper argues that giant of Africa stand of Nigeria is a paradox of the Nigerian true situation as quality of life in the country has continued to remain lower as the days pass by and the inability of the government to maintain peace and security within Nigeria is made manifest in the incessant armed conflicts that have continued to be recorded at one time and part or the other in Nigeria thereby causing serious setback for entrepreneurship development, while Nigeria takes the leadership role to bringing peace in other parts of Africa that are in crisis. This paper challenges all Nigerians to imbibe good spirit and sense of objectivity in everyday life so as to do the right things that will make the 'Giant of Africa' and 'One Nigeria' slogans to be felt very positively within and outside Nigeria so that the potentials of the 'Giant of Africa' can be fully harnessed for entrepreneurial development.

Conceptual Clarification

For proper understanding of this essay, some concepts need to be clarified. According to Encarta (2009), the term giant means "very tall imaginary creature, somebody or something larger than usual, somebody whose talents or achievements are particularly outstanding among others". In this paper, the term 'Giant of Africa' is carried to mean that Nigeria is a country bestowed with enormous human and material resources. By implication, this has put Nigeria at the forefront of matters of concern to the entire African continent.

Another term to be conceptualized here is 'One Nigeria'. The term 'One Nigeria' means Nigeria is united. That means that the different groups that make up Nigeria have become one and they see themselves as such. By implication, there should be no divide

among them in every ramification. The good question to raise here goes thus: Is Nigeria really one? In an attempt to finding an answer to the question, one finds out that the concept of 'One Nigeria' is more rhetorical than realistic.

The last term to conceptualize in this study is conflict. Conflict by definition, according to Francis (2009), "is an intrinsic part of human existence". In the words of (Burton, 1993), conflict is the pursuit of incompatible interests and goals by different arguments, tension and violent conflicts that ensue between and within states. Although, conflict is often seen as a threat to peace, it does not really represent a threat to any type of peace. Therefore, suffice to say that it is negative of peace. Adejo (2002:243) sees conflict as "a struggle over values or claims to status, power and scarce resources in which the aims of the conflicting parties are not only to gain the desired values but also to neutralize, injure, or eliminate their rivals." This is the situation in Nigeria as the people have remained in the struggle over the available resources and power.

The Giant in the Giant of Africa and Oneness on the One Nigeria

The "geopolitical expression called Nigeria" (Awolowo, 1947) was in existence before colonial administration in Africa. It was the amalgamation of the Northern and Southern protectorates in 1914 that brought Nigeria into existence as one nation under the British colonial administration. Nigeria therefore, is the product of the merging of quasi-independent and divergent nations with different historic-cultural ancestry. (Eme, 2001). These cultural groups are the Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba forming the major tribes. There are between 250 and 300 different language groups in Nigeria and a population of over 160 million people. Nigeria, by virtue of that fact is a giant in Africa when considered on the basis of geography, numerical strength and available resources. But in the real sense of it, is Nigeria a giant in Africa? Attempts at providing an answer to

such perturbing question takes us to trends of events in the polity called Nigeria.

In October 1960, self-rule was launched in Nigeria, thereby marking the exit of the British colonial administration. Not quit long after, the young Republic was plunged into what is today referred in history as the Nigeria/Biafra Civil war. It has to be noted that the secession of the East and declaration of Republic of Biafra was necessitated by the unilateral abrogation of a negotiated settlement known as the "Aburi Accord" by Yakubu Gowon; continued massacre of the Igbo in the North with the Nigerian government doing nothing to stop it; the leaked Northern Muslims' programme of extermination of grown up males and females of Eastern Nigeria locally referred to in Hausa as 'Yamiri', leaving out only the suckling in the land among others. Internationally, people knew that some of the objectives in the programme have been implemented (Ezeani 2013:53). The giant, however, failed in the area of providing security for lives and property in a part within itself. It is good to know that before the crisis that greeted Nigeria's independence, the Igbo had traveled wide making and advancing in their entrepreneurial exploits. While in the refugee camps during the civil war, the Igbo still exhibited their entrepreneurial skills as they engaged in crafts, making mortars/pestles, earthen pots, weaved baskets among others which they sold to their host communities. (Uhere 2011). The Civil war and other factors ranging from corruption, poverty, group marginalization and exclusion, lack of objective leadership and government inactiveness, all have conspired and miniaturized the giant of the Nigerian nation and constituted serious bane to entrepreneurial exploits.

When the people that were faced with annihilation decided to be independent so as to protect their own lives and property and save themselves from being wiped out of existence, the British and Nigerian Governments connived and forced them to capitulation

on the ground that the 'Giant of Africa' which is the largest British colony must be saved, while the Nigerian Government came up with the slogan 'One Nigeria'. After the Civil war, the Federal Government of Nigeria siphoned them of their little savings through the 3R programme, thereby making the handicap to carry out their entrepreneurship exploits.

Aside the Civil war experience, other ugly situations have also preceded it. The situations include political crises cloaked in a religious gab and specific religious crises. These crises are on record to have occurred in Aba, Onitsha, Jos, Kano, Kaduna, among others. Agbese (2002) and Tagbo Ugwu (2009:518) have written that "Kano and Kaduna as metropolitan cities in Nigeria are 'the two hot beds' constantly generating religious crises of high magnitude". The Kano and Kaduna States experiences tend to be confirmed by Kraemer (1938:393) who has written that "the age we are in is the age of perpetual conflict and turmoil". These incessant crises are no doubt, engendered by ethnic and religious factors courtesy of the giant size of Nigeria.

The causes of these conflicts are factors ranging from governmental support, long standing disagreement, unfounded rumours aggressive and chauvinistic ethnicity, distortion of history and group disagreements bothering on needs and valued judgment to poverty (Bur, 2002) and equitable distribution of resources. Supporting Bur, Adejo (2002:248) wrote that "each conflict does not just happen, there are rooted in some basic dissatisfaction or grievances which await detonation at the slightest opportunity".

The bringing of the large parts under one administration hence the creation of the 'Giant of Africa' called Nigeria cannot be exonerated when causes of these crises are being looked upon, as it brought together different groups of people, who had no problem in their inter-group relations because they saw themselves as different peoples that have come together to transact business and

retire to their different places of abode to which they were indigenes. A critical look at the elusive nature of Nigerian history has revealed that the moment these different people were made to know that they have become one people under one administration, problem started. That accounts for the conflict ravaging the sharing of resources and power among them because they have never seen themselves as one people. (See Ahmadu Bello's statement in page 3).

According to Tagbo Ugwu (2009:521), One of the principal and outstanding factors fanning the embers of religious crises in [Nigeria] and especially that has continued to fuel it in Kano and Kaduna States are deeply motivated by the colonial government's support and favouritism. Right from Lord Lugard's regime, and that of Donald Cameron, the policies appeared to have favoured the northern part of this country more than the south.

This false and deceitful stance of the British colonial administration deceived the south and favoured the north. It is no doubt, for fueling crises in Nigeria as the north have continue in the fight to retain their colonial favoured status against the southern strive to balance it.

Another factor that has put the giant status of Nigeria in doubt is the economic situation of the Nigerian nation. The potency to fend for itself in all areas is a major feature of a giant. This, of course, is lacking in Nigeria. The economy of the country is in disarray. There is very poor infrastructure, standard of living is very low, and unemployment is high among others. All these factors have compelled the giant, Nigeria, to go on her knees begging for survival. A giant that should have everything working for it, has known poverty and backwardness, because the leaders have tended

to servicing ethnic jingoism and playing lip-service to the oneness of the country.

In the area of securing lives and property, the giant is found wanting. Chukwuemerie (2013) has written that Nigeria was regarded as the giant of Africa due to her huge natural and human resources, coupled with her overwhelming population, and also her efforts in dousing tension in other countries within the continent, but today, the reverse is the case. There are agitations everywhere especially in the South, Boko Haram has continued to detonate explosives in the North East while the Niger Delta militants have continued to cause the nation economic cold feet through oil pipe lines vandalism. The instability the result from these, however, constitute serious barrier to entrepreneurship development as many are displaced from their homes and business places.

Conclusion

Most of the people living in the area called Nigeria had knowledge of their neighbours with whom they had socio-economic contact before colonial rule, hence, their ideology of character that informed their view of relating as neighbouring groups. But the unholy merging in 1914(the amalgamation) brought them together as one. This of course, was a tool of deceit of the entire Nigerian people by Britain, aimed at enabling their continued exploitation of the material resources abundant in the area.

Consequently, following the independence of Nigeria in 1960, there emerged political parties that were ethnic based, especially in the first republic to cater for the political interests of the different groups and not the entire nation. This of course, was made manifest by the violence and irregularities that characterized and still characterizes elections in Nigeria even in this 21st Century. Now that the treaty of this unholy alliance has expired with the passing of December 31st, 2013, it is our recommendation that the Nigerian people and government should critically review these two

concepts, 'Giant of Africa' and 'One Nigeria' and conduct a plebiscite for the ordinary Nigerians to decide whether to uphold them or throw them to the wind and face their future as different peoples, in order to have enabling environment for entrepreneurial advancement, because the circumstances inherent in Nigeria have put the validity of the two concepts in a serious doubt.

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