



Article

Nation-building and the Nigerian state: Problems and Prospect for National Development.

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Abstract

This paper examined nation building in Nigeria with particular attention given to the impediments of realizing a strong and prosperous nation (Nigeria). The paper made use of ex-post factor research design, documentary method of data collection, content analysis as its method of data analysis and adopted Elite theory as its framework of analysis. After rigorous analysis, the paper observed that in spite of the enormous natural resources Nigeria is blessed with, it remains poor and underdeveloped hence the ability to build the nation has always been the country's major setback. The paper noted among others that certain factors are militating against nation-building in Nigeria which include ethnic sentiment, leadership problem, religious sentiment, political instability etc. To this end, the paper recommends that Nigerian leaders should avoid the politics practiced with regard to subjective factors and primordial loyalty to one's place of birth, social connection and group affinity. The paper concludes that building a nation is a task that needs skills, industriousness, and creativity among leaders and the led.

Keywords

Nation-Building, State, Development, Impediments, Underdevelopment.

Introduction

Nigeria is a country richly endowed with monumental geographical and diverse natural resources ranging from crude oil to gas (natural), coal, gold, bauxite, among others, and possesses potential market ability for rapid economic development. However, in spite of these obvious resources and their advantages, Nigeria remains poor and underdeveloped hence the ability to build the nation has always been the country's major setback (Aluko, 2009). Nation-building is an assertive, deliberate and calculable decisions as well as attempts and actions undertaken in order to develop a nation or put a nation on the part of industrialization. Where no assertive attempts and decisions are taken for the purpose of this, then the process will be daunted. Assertiveness means sitting down to think, deliberate on your thinking,

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making calculable decisions on the cost for Nation-Building and then taking off (acting) to build. It is unfortunate for Nigeria because these processes are lacking in our bids to build a strong and viable nation. However, upon African decolonization in the 1950s and 1960s, social scientists were concerned about the need for what was then called Nation-Building in societies with multiple ethnic, religious and racial cleavages (Binder, 1964; Coleman & Rosberg, 1966; Zolberg, 1967). The imperative of nation been part Of modern society cannot be overemphasized. This is predicated on the fact that historically, the world used to be divided into empires and kingdoms. In the modern period, nations or nation states have replaced empires as the basic unit of human organization. As an integral part of the modern world, therefore, one might ask, is Nigeria rightly, concerned about nation-building, why is nation-building matters, are we on course for building a nation of our dreams, what are the challenges of nation-building in Nigeria?

Flowing from the above argument, this assignment is set to unravel the impediments to the realization of nation-building in Nigeria. To intellectually arrange the work in such a way that it will be structurally elegant, the paper is organized into sections; we examine the concept of nation building, consider the theoretical framework that will help us understand why Nigeria is still not built as a nation, X-ray a portrait attempt by the military on nation-building, consider the impediments to the realization of nation-building in Nigeria, and we finally offer recommendations for the way forward.

Nation-Building: Towards Conceptualization

The concept of Nation-Building cannot be boxed into a unilateral acceptable definition. Attempts by scholars to mono-conceptualize it have always ended into contradictory intellectual nullity. However, to understand the concept of nation-building, one needs to have some definitions of what a nation is. Nation generally connotes a stable, horizontally developed community of people with a territory under a single government with distinct culture and language. Nation-Building according to Elaigwu (2011), can be viewed in two main dimensions of identity. One closely linked to state-building, refers to the acceptance by members of the polity of a legitimacy of a central government with the central government as a symbol. Secondly, nation-building involves the acceptance of other members of the civic body as equal fellow members of a corporate nation, a recognition of the rights of other members to a share of common history, resources, values, and other aspects of the state. According to Walker (2011), nation-building is the most common form of a process of collective identity formation with a view to legitimizing public power within a given territory. This is an essentially indigenous process which often not only projects a meaningful future but also draws on existing traditions, institutions, and customs, redefining them as national characteristics in order to support the nation's claim to sovereignty and uniqueness. A successful nation-building process produces a cultural projection of the nation containing a certain set of assumptions, values and beliefs which can function as the legitimizing foundation of a state structure (William, 2010). So far, this has happened essentially in societies with substantial elements of "social modernity". Among the elements which distinguish such societies from pre-modern ones, are: an open system of stratification allowing and encouraging social mobility, the state as an impersonal form of government, the pursuit of economic growth, and a cultural system establishing collective meaning and identity for all envisaged members of society.

To Mylonas (2012), "nation-building" came into vogue among historically-oriented political scientists in the 1950s and 1960s. Its main proponents include such leaders of the American academic community as Karl Deutsch, Charles Tilly, and Reinhard Bendix. Nation-building theory was primarily used to describe

the processes of national integration and consolidation that led up to the establishment of the modern nation-state as distinct from various form of traditional states, such as feudal and dynastic states, church states, empires, etc. Nation-building is an architectural metaphor which, strictly speaking, implies the existence of consciously acting agents such as architects, engineers, carpenters, and the like. However, as used by political scientists, the term covers not only conscious strategies initiated by state leaders but also unplanned societal change. In the apt phrase of Dobbins (2007), the concept of nation-building became for political science what "industrialization" was to social economy: an indispensable tool for detecting, describing and analyzing the macro historical and sociological dynamics that have produced the modern state. At one stage, nation-building is referred to the efforts of newly-independent nations, notably the nations of Africa but also in the Balkans to reshape territories that had been carved out by colonial powers or empires without regard to ethnic, religious, or other boundaries. These reformed states would then become viable and coherent national entities. Nation-building includes the creation Of national paraphernalia such as flags, anthems, national days, national stadiums, national airlines, national languages and national myths. At a deeper level, national identity needed to be deliberately constructed by molding different ethnic groups into a nation, especially since in many newly established states colonial practices of divide and rule had resulted in ethnically heterogeneous populations.

In the words of Smith (2012), Nation-Building is the conscious and focused application of our people's collective resources, energies, and knowledge to the task of liberating and developing the psychic and physical space that we identify as ours. It involves the development of behaviors, values, language, institutions, and physical structures that elucidate our history and culture, concretize and protect the present, and insure the future identity and independence of the nation. Nation-Building thus is the deliberate, keenly directed and focused, and energetic projection of national culture, and the collective identity. Nation-Building refers to the process of constructing or structuring a national identity using the power of the state. This process aims at the unification of the people within the state so that it remains politically stable and viable in the long run. Nation-building can involve the use of propaganda or major infrastructural development to foster social harmony and economic growth. In a much broader view, nation-building could be seen as a strategic task, which supports entities to reach the level of the western state model (i.e., the Westphalia model). Conflict is not a necessary precondition for this approach.

Much of the literature on nation-building involves when people transfer their commitment and loyalty from smaller tribes, villages or petty principalities to the larger central political systems (Toffler ,1990). For our purpose, nation-building does not involve the transfer of commitment and loyalties from narrow or parochial levels of ethnic groups to larger political units such as Nigeria. That you are Tiv, Idoma, Yoruba is a matter of identity. You cannot transfer it. You cannot cease being Tiv or Idoma simply because you so declare, For us, it involves the widening of horizons of identity of parochial units to include larger units such as the state.

In a broader view, nation-building is a strategic task, which might cover the support for modern forces within an entity, the creation of a certain educational level, the promotion of women, the improvement of the societal role of women, the support in creating modern infrastructure, the support for a democratic landscape of political parties, the support for free elections, the support of a freely elected government, a peaceful regime change from inside.

Key dimensions are security policy (e. g. demilitarization and reintegration of combatants; reformation of the armed forces; peaceful conflict resolution; redefinition of civil military relations; reconstruction of social services, regulations concerning war criminals and crime against humanity, reconstruction of the law system and law enforcement; questions of justice, trust, confidence, amnesties, reconciliation; reintegration of devoted people etc.); social policy and economy (transformation of a war economy into a sustainable peace time economy; creation of jobs, reintegration and job provision particularly for young men who show a higher potential for violent action etc.); psychology (restoration of neighbourly trust and social networks; reintegration of refugees and traumatised people etc.).

National Development

It is apt for us to define the concept development before understanding what national development is. Development as a concept has suffered a unilateral acceptable definition. However, attempt has been made by erudite scholars to conceptualize development. Gboyega (2003) defines development as an idea that embodies all attempts to improve the conditions of human existence in all ramifications. This implies improvement in material well-being of all citizens, not the most powerful and rich alone, in a sustainable way such that today's consumption does not imperil the future. As a result, it seeks to improve personal physical security, livelihoods, and expansion of life chance. National on the other hand, implies a phenomenon that embraces a whole nation. National development according to Ola (2011) is overall development or a collective socio-economic, political, as well as religious advancement of a nation. This is best achieved through development planning, which can be described as the country's collection of strategies mapped out by the government.

Theoretical Framework

Despite the efflorescence and profundity of writing on the challenges of Nation-Building in Nigeria, virtually very little has been done in the area of extending theoretical postulations to the study of the challenge of nation-building in Nigeria. Indeed, attempts by scholars and practitioners to evolve universally applicable theoretical framework in the explanations of challenges of nation-building have always ended in contradictory intellectual nullity and barefoot prognosis. However, for an in-depth explanation and understanding of the challenges of nation-building in Nigeria, we utilize the elite theory as our framework of analysis.

This theory has become a framework of discussion and understanding society through efforts of scholars like Wilfred Pareto, Geatano Mosca and Robert Michels, among others. Pareto's submission assumed a structural configuration of society; he believes that, every society has the ruling minority those possess the qualities that afford the access to full social and political power (Bottomore, 1960). Every society is headed by those that are the best in such societies. Bottomore (1960) further maintains that elites from different occupations and strata of society, generally come from the same class; those who are wealth, intelligent and have all other skills to rule. To him, each society consists of two broad classes. The higher class, which again is divided into governing elite and non-governing elite, and the second or, lower stratum, which is non elite (Ikyase & Egbert, 2015). To Wright mills, each society has power elite that controls the political system and maintains its dominant position through social school and family relationship. Pareto argues that the ruling elite rules by what he calls the combination of conning with force.

This theory is vital to this work because since the country got her independent from the British colonial masters, the country had witnessed the desperate bid by some cabals with vested interests in the country whereby personal interest supersede national interest. Some of these stakeholders engaged in all forms of malpractices that are inimical to nation-building such as ethnic sentiment, religious and political grudges, personal interest etc. This in turn affects building a nation which the elites in Nigeria have done and are still doing.

Why does Nation-Building Matter?

Nation-building matters to intractable conflict because of the theory that a strong state is necessary for building an integrated national community which is important in the building of a state, and that there may be social and economic prerequisites or co-requisites to the building of an integrated national community.

Further, when nation-building implies democratization, there is the further hypothesis known as the democratic peace hypothesis. Originally explicated by Immanuel Kant in the 17th century, the democratic peace hypothesis says that perpetual peace can be achieved by developing a federation or league of free republican nations. Representative democracies, organized in an international organization, would bring peace. Political scientists who have explored this hypothesis have focused on one of two versions: democracies do not make war against each other, or democracies do not initiate war at all. There is certainly evidence of the former, and some evidence of the latter.

In conclusion, nation-building may sometimes be simply another name for external intervention and the extension of empires. If it can be said that failed states are the cause of national, regional, or world security problems, or that human rights abuses are so extensive that the need to overcome them in turn overcomes the traditional sovereignty rights of states under international law then intervention in the name of nation-building can be seen to be justified. Sometimes, nation-building may simply be used as a justification for the expansion of imperial control. So, nation-building matters, but what is meant by nation-building matters eve-more.

Nation-Building: A Portrait of Military Attempt

Nation building is an assertive, deliberate and calculable decisions as well as attempts and actions undertaken in order to develop a nation or put a nation on the part of industrialization. Where no assertive attempts and decisions are taken for the purpose of this, then the process will be daunted. Assertiveness means sitting down to think, deliberate on your thinking, making calculable decisions on the cost for Nation-Building and then taking off (acting) to build. It is unfortunate for Nigeria because these processes are lacking in our bids to build a strong and viable economy by our political leaders.

The military men though not in their traditional role to rule, made some appreciable achievements. This is not to say we should eulogise them. The following enumerated achievements are ways through which the military regimes contributed to Nation-Building:

First, in terms of state-building, the command structure of the military made centralization of the polity quite easier than under civilian rule. But a few factors contributed to the strengthening of the federal centre at the expense of the states or sub-national units. Concerned that the structural imbalance of Nigeria had led to a lop-sided federation, successive military rulers created additional sub-national states, Gowon created 12 states out of 4 regions in 1967; General Murtala Mohammed increased the number to 19 states out of 12 in 1976; Babangida made the structure 21 states in 1987 and 30 in 1991. General Abacha added

six additional states in 1996, thus changing the federation to a structure of thirty-six states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Abuja. These reduce the prospects of sub-national threats of the central government (Ikyase & Nwanfo, 2015). The second issue of relevance made by the military in nation-building was the increased bureaucratization of the political process. Here we are referring to not just rationalization of the country's civil service (as done by the Murtala regime) but also the usage of public bureaucracy to promote rapid economic development especially under the Gowon and Muritala/Obasanjo regimes (Ojiako, 1980). Eventually, these regimes leveraged on the experience of crops of senior administrative officers together with their professional and technocratic counterparts in the initiation, formulation, planning and implementation of the country's post-civil war objectives of reconstruction and development. Allison Ayida is a good example. He was a super permanent secretary in the Gowon regime and played his part well in the public bureaucracy, partnering with the military regime to accomplish set goals and objectives.

In addition, the military has also impacted on the Nigerian state by its policy of national integration through the circumstances abandonment of its old quota system in an attempt to achieve some measure of internal cohesion and homogenization. One measure in this regard is the introduction of National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) by General Gowon. The scheme which is still operative seeks to inculcate in Nigerian youths the virtues of useful service to the nation, a disciplined outlook, spirit of self-reliance, sense of common belonging and patriotism. This policy of NYSC has been sustained till date with its objectives enshrined in the relevant sections of the Nigerian constitution emphasizing national integration (Osaghae, 2002).

Furthermore, General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida was able to release many political detainees. The detainees were former civilian governors held in detention by the Mohammed Buhari administration without trial. Alhaji Lateef Jakande of Lagos, Alhaji Barkin Zuwo of Kano, Chief Bisi Onabanjo of Ogun State and Alhaji Sule Katagun the former chairman of the Federal Public Service Commission were all released. Some journalists include Buka Zarma the editor of the New Nigerian, Lawrence Folu Olamiti the editor of Sunday Tribune and many other politicians in Buhari's detention, were also released. General Babangida also set up two party system for Nigeria to replace the multi party system which contributed to the demise of the first two Republics. He also held elections into Local Government Councils where new chairmen and councilors of the councils formed the new threshold to national democracy and created more local government areas. The National Republican Convention (NRC) and the Social Democratic Party (SDP) were formed and used to that effect.

In addition, General Yakubu Gowon had the following testimonies to his credit as (Elaigwu, 1986) who wrote on Gowon observed one way in which Gowon contributed to the process of state building and to political stability was the relative correction of the structural imbalance among sub-national units in the federation and their relationship with the federal government. Gowon was responsible for the retirement of generals with full benefits in appreciation for what they did for the nation. This could be as a result of their contributions in executing 1967-1970 Civil War to success. Other events of Gowon's regime can be enumerated easily as: the creation of states; the execution of the civil war; the three Rs - Reconstruction, Reconciliation and Rehabilitation; indigenization of the economy and the takeover of the oil industry; initiation of 1973 census though aborted; the establishment of the Universal Primary Education (U.P.E); the launching of the Giant Third Plan; and in foreign affairs, the first five years of the 1970s led Nigeria to assume a radical image on the African continent which culminated in the signing of a treaty in Lagos

to establish the Economic Community or Organization of West African States (ECOWAS) just two months before the coup that deposed him. At the end of the civil war, Gowon issued a nine-point program to include the reorganization of the Armed Forces, the implementation of the Second National Plan, the adoption of a new constitution, new revenue allocation formula and the development of political parties among others.

Impediments to the Realization of Nation-Building in Nigeria

It is apposite to state here that copious reasons abound for the challenge of nation-building in Nigeria. Social scientist, commentators and practitioners have remarkably expounded on the failures of building a (strong, formidable and reliable) Nigeria. To Gambari (2008), five basic challenges face nation-building in Nigeria. They include inter alia, the challenge from our history; the challenge of socio-economic inequalities; the challenges of an appropriate constitutional settlement; the challenges of building institutions for democracy and development; and finally the challenge of leadership. While accepting with Gambari on the aforementioned challenges of nation-building in Nigeria, we will also examine other notable challenges that affect nation-building in the country.

Ethnic Sentiment - one of the factors that democratic leaders have promoted to destabilize the nation building made by the military is ethnicism. Ethnic sentiment is a strong factor militating against building a nation. In the word of Egwu (2006), Nigeria is a multi ethnic nation with a lot of cultural variances. Nigeria alone has more than 350 ethnic nationalities with diverse cultural backgrounds. Over the years, Nigerian politicians have used this ethnic diversity to create and consolidate their political support. This is evident in the First and Second Republics even in this Forth Republic, political parties NCNC, AG, NPC, APGA, AD won election only in their respective areas. The military after encouraging national integration through nation-building the political leaders have now destabilize it through ethnic sentiment which causes a lot of unrest in the country.

Maladministration - Maladministration is yet another index that has constituted a major challenge to nation-building. Those who are either elected or appointed into public offices with the hope of meeting the yearnings and aspirations of the masses they represent soon forget about their plight. As these leaders become self-centred and pursue personal and selfish goals, the expectations of the masses turn to day dream. Nwangama (2009) captures correctly the condition of the electorate when he said, "The dream of the governed is turned into nightmare of despotism, enslavement, murder of political opponents and the constant political bickering and rancor". Public funds meant to improve the living standard of the people by provision of social amenities which are ingredients of nation-building are siphoned into private pockets, living the poor masses to languish in their deplorable state of living.

Political Intolerance and Violence - An Indepth assessment of the history of democratic development in Nigeria shows that political violence and intolerance has been a common feature. Bologun (2009) succinctly observes that the first democratic rule between 1960-1966, when Nigeria adopted the parliamentary system was short-lived because of the spate of violence that characterized it. The military had reason to intervene on 15th January, 1966 to save the nation from total collapse. The same political violence was witnessed in the Second Republic 1979-1983, another political violence happened after the 2011 elections. An assessment of political climate in Nigeria by Happiness and Enechojo (2003), shows that the spate of political thuggery and killings is on the increase. As noted by Egwu (2006), the issue which has generated crisis in some northern states is as a result of the growth of political Islam and

political Sharia. The question is how long shall the political leaders come out of this trend and continue the nation-building done by the military.

The Rise of Militant and Rogue Groups - Nigeria is infested most with militant and rogue groups in a democratic era. These groups derive their legitimacy and support from their ethnic groups. Almost every ethnic group has a youth arm which serves as its unofficial army for the pursuit of their interests. The explanation for ethnic irredentism in Nigeria is located in the quest for survival and insulation from group exploitation in a despotic civilian regime. The Boko-Haram insurgency, the Niger-Delta militants, Fulani herdsmen are good example of this group and their emergence has a root from notable political leaders who promise to change their lives, a promise which is hardly fulfilled. The implication of this on nation-building abound hence notable and capable hands who are suppose to take this country to a greater height are killed by this group thus proving the destruction of our nation by the political cabals.

Lack of strong judicial Institution - There is no doubt that the judiciary is one of the fundamental institutions in a democratic society, hence it is essential to the functioning of a market economy. The judiciary adjudicates upon disputes between the various levels of government, between government and dozens, and among citizens as well as among private sector agents. Given its pivotal role in national stability and economic prosperity, some of the major features of good institutions noted earlier are particular relevant (Gambari 2008).

In recent times, the Supreme Court, which is the apex court in the country, has inspired much public confidence and respect because of the quality of its judgement, especially in some political sensitive cases. However, there are some elements of bias in judiciary. This is evident in some quarters where most Nigerians have shed much blood in the past due to the futility of elections disputes and the judgment made by the appropriate courts. The judiciary needs not to be bias in its judgment, otherwise, it leads into chaos and anarchy which are elements of destroying the nation.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper has painstakingly expounded on the impediments to nation-building in Nigeria. It highlighted some of the issues that are hindering nation-building in the country, some of which include maladministration, political intolerance and violence, the rise of militants and rogue groups, ethnic sentiment and lack of strong judicial institution. Against this backdrop, the paper has set forth the following recommendations.

First, Nigerian democratic leaders should avoid the politics practiced with regard to subjective factors and primordial loyalty to one's place of birth, social connection and group affinity. Consequently, voting pattern has been ethnic-based. Democratization is always directed towards consolidation of ethnics. Campaigns are not issue-based and election victory is a function of level of intimidation, thuggery and rigging. Sub-national consideration has displaced national interest and mediocrity took preference over merit and competence in the election of national leaders. The unfolding events in Nigeria evidently point to a departure from the commitment to nation-building.

Secondly, Nigerian leders should shun politics of sectionalism. Politics in Nigeria has been described as sectional politics where denial of rights takes priority in the distribution of and access to national resources. The segregated politics of the governments at all levels creates primordial ethnic loyalties where groups jostle for the "national cake" in a way that could inhibit the continuity of the Nigerian State. Ajayi (1995) recaptures this assertion when he opines that "politics and political parties were ethno-

centralry based. Sub-national considerations overshadowed national interest. Primordial politics and the syndrome of the "son of the soil" took preference over merit and competence in the choice of national leaders. All these are factors of nation destruction.

Moreso, our political leders should embrace each other; the culture of intolerance that leads to denial of rights to participate in politics has made individual to think and believe that fighting for the national interests is a perversion and in contrast, fighting for individuals and groups is 'an acceptable norm' in Nigeria. Hence, this leads to destruction of lives and property which is not healthy for nation-building. Politics and political behaviour in the country are soaked in the "miry clay of zero sum" where tenacity of office has become a rule rather than exception.

Onyeoziri (2002) emphasizes the evil of denial of rights when he warned that by subjecting the minority nationalities to the domination of the majority nationalities and also subjecting the entire Nigerian edifice to the domination of one of the regions, regionalism questioned the legitimacy of the Nigerian federation. The inherent inequality in the latter also fostered hostility and competition among the component units of the nation state. This in turn excited subunits nationalism against nationalism for the Nigerian nation-state.

Furthermore, Nigerian political leaders should strictly utilize the electoral reforms hence it will completely eliminate political violence, sit-tight syndrome, corruption and ineptitude and improve political participation. Reform is also capable of bringing about good governance, as meritocracy rather than mediocrity determines who occupies what position. The inseparable synergy between politics and economy makes reform in electoral processes a matter of necessity. Political stability creates economic stability. To evolve robust economy, therefore, it is desirable to have electoral reforms geared towards political stability.

Finally, we need to emphasize the democratic participation of people within the nation. It means development of human rights - political, civil, economic and social, and the rule of law. It also means development of sewer systems, roads, and jobs. Most importantly, it involves the development of education. Nation-building must allow the participation of civil society, and develop democratic state institutions that promote welfare. Democratic state-building is an important part of that. This is a multi-faceted process that will proceed differently in each local context.

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