

Nation-Building and National Integration in Nigeria: A Historical Study

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ABSTRACT: One of the most persistent problems confronting African states has been that of nation-building, especially national integration. As the case of Nigeria clearly shows, this problem became more pronounced after independence. This is not to say, however, that the issue of nation-building and national integration was absent, per se, under British colonial rule. In all honesty, the amalgamation of 1914 brought the hitherto heterogeneous peoples of Nigeria together under one administrative framework. Trying to integrate all these groups into a united country has remained a herculean task. This study seeks to historicize this phenomenon to serve as a guide for finding sustainable solutions to its lingering consequences. In so doing, the historical/descriptive approach is adopted, informed, as it were, by the very nature of the topic. Thus, content analysis of relevant literature was employed and the topic analyzed thematically. The finding is that political stability is imperative in any attempt at resolving the crisis of nation-building and national integration in Nigeria. There is a need for a paradigm shift with regard to some of the official policies which have tended to exacerbate rather than diminish the crisis of nation-building and national integration in Nigeria.

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I. INTRODUCTION

It could be safely argued that nation-building in Nigeria started with attempts by the colonial government to hammer out a nation, so called, from the disparate peoples of Nigeria. Such attempts may have been motivated by the British colonial designs of an effective economic exploitation of the country. Nation-building and national integration at that time was essentially aimed at reducing local oppositions to British colonialism.

However, the scope of this study is limited to between 1945 and 1979. Some factors informed this choice. Firstly, it was the end of World War more than anything else that influenced nationalist sentiments in Nigeria. It was to stem the tide of nationalist torrents in Nigeria that the colonial government in 1946 promulgated the Richards Constitution. Its successor, the Macpherson constitution of 1951 was an improvement which sought to pacify the prevalent political mood in the country.

It was also the provisions of these constitutions that accentuated the ethnic biases in Nigeria's first political organizations. This development did no justice to nation-building during the period immediately leading to independence. The situation was not helped by the ugly events of 1966 and the concomitant Nigeria-Biafra war of 1967-1970.

Since the end of war in 1970, there appears to have been renewed emphasis on nation-building, especially national integration. Efforts adopted to bring this into fruition include the establishment of more Unity schools, the National Youth Service Corps programme, and the principle of federal character, among others. But it is one thing to identify a problem and another to find acceptable solutions to it.

In the case of Nigeria, ethnicism and the apparent inequitable distribution of the so-called 'national cake' appear to have frustrated most attempts to achieve national integration. It is not enough to blame the failure to attain national integration on the elite as some writers have consistently done. (Okwudibia Nnoli, 1981, 166-188; T.A. Imobighe, 1989, 1-10). Most importantly, the genesis of disunity has to be investigated, and this should involve a sustained analysis of post-Civil War in Nigeria.

To this end, 1979 was chosen as the terminal date because that date marked the beginning of the Second Republic. Also, between 1960 and 1979, Nigeria had witnessed both civilian administrations and military regimes. It is, therefore, considered expedient to examine the problems of nation-building and national integration against the background of both civilian and military experiences.

In as much as the present work does not seek to pre-empt any value judgments on this issue, it is

important to stress that socio-economic inequalities, political victimization and instability, as well as economic stagnation and military coups have all contributed to some small measure to making the idea of nation building and national integration a mirage. Until these problems are effectively tackled, and the so-called Nigeria elite cleansed of its aggressive selfishness, 'the country might continue to grapple with this monstrous problem for a long time to come. It should be understood that the Nigeria elite is itself a victim of circumstance in the sense that it is more or less a production of the colonial system; a system that bequeathed to it the urge to recognize personal ascendancy over national well-being and pride. This is a fact which many writers, especially those of Marxist persuasion, have failed to acknowledge. They tend to treat the elite or bourgeois class as an independent variable, ignoring the circumstances that have combined to shape its perception and orientation. That notwithstanding, only scant attention is paid here to class formation and differentiation as factors in nation-building. Similarly, it is not to be argued that ethnic diversity in Nigeria has been antithetical or disintegrative. Rather, it is observed that the positive aspects of ethnic diversity have not been positively utilized to achieve national integration.

Lastly, in the course of the analysis, attempts shall be made to find definitions for some of the concepts that are employed here.

NATION BUILDING UP TO 1950

Nation-building as a concept may not have an agreed and precise definition. Suffice it to say however, that from whatever angle it is viewed, the idea should involve a sustained attempt to aggregate the interests of ethnic and other principalities within a nation, and the harnessing of such interests to fortify the foundations of the nation. Put succinctly, nation-building could be seen as the sum total of all policies and efforts devoted towards bringing the disparate constituents of a given nation into one sovereign state. This must of necessity include the identification and possible eradication of the central problems of socio-economic inequalities, social and geographical immobility, political victimization, economic stagnation and political instability, among others.

Viewed this way, nation-building up to 1950 that is during the colonial era, was concerned basically with the preservation of the Nigeria state for the achievement of British imperial designs. Indeed, according to one source, "British enterprise in Nigeria was motivated to a large degree by the economic forces that gave rise to imperialism" (Arthur N. Cook, 1964, 276). By implication, the notion of nation-building in colonial Nigeria does not fit into our definition of the concept since the British colonial officers saw nation-building as a political imperative for economic exploitation. The trend did not change significantly until formal political independence in 1960.

Admittedly, nationalist movements were inspired by the doctrine of national self-determination which had become the vogue in Asia and Africa between 1945 to 1951 (J.S. Coleman, 1986, Ndabaningi Sithole, 1979, 47). But it is difficult to ascertain objectively whether or not in the real sense there was a Nigerian nation prior to political independence. This problem arises in the main because the concept of nationhood has defied attempts to give it a singular and agreed definition. (Basil Davidson, 1977, 41). In the African situation for instance, there are some conceptual problems relating to the definition of 'national' units because African states are the creations of European colonialism. The retention of the continent's boundaries established at the time of independence has been influenced by African's poor political tradition. In the final analysis, it is obvious that national loyalty has not succeeded in eradicating or at least reducing ethnic loyalties.

One reason for this, as Basil Davidson has rightly observed, is that the European model of nation-state does not exactly fit into the African model which has no clear-cut division of society based on socio-economic circumstances. (Davidson, 1977, 44). However, since there was no question of 'unscrambling Africa, the colonial legacy was accepted as the basis for the new political developments in Africa.

In Nigeria for instance, prior to 1945, ethnic affiliations among the nationalists appear to have been slightly devalued in favour of a new principle that took the territory created by British colonialists as the framework for political association, and as the basis for the state even when it cuts across these affiliations. This perhaps accounts for why it was relatively possible to 'integrate' ethnic nationalism into a wider territorial consciousness and political purpose. A caveat must be added here, and that is the formation of political organizations in Nigeria and in particular their activities in the 1940s and upwards mortified the idea of uniting and integrating Nigerians into a nation whose members would place loyalty to the group as a whole over any other conflicting loyalties (Dankwart Rustow, 1972, 7).

In effect, nation-building viewed as the subjugation and aggregation of sub-national loyalties towards the achievement of nationhood in the modern sense of the word, would appear to have undergone some stages in its evolution in the Nigeria. The idea of nationhood itself began, as earlier stated, after the amalgamation in 1914. In the inter-war years, nation-building in Nigeria had a more purposeful orientation in the sense that nationalist movements were united in their efforts at realizing the idea of self-determination for the country. In as much as ethnic loyalties were inevitable, there was a commendable level of identification with the hopes and aspirations of the Nigerian nation.

Conversely, in the period after World War II and the achievement of political independence,

nation-building received only scant attention. This was the period when ethnic loyalties assumed supremacy over national interests. In the colonial era, the British sought to attain what might approximate nation-building through the construction of railway lines which connected various Nigerian communities and indeed enhanced inter-communal interactions. But such developments led to, among others, what has been described as enclave urbanization, a situation where urbanization was centered along the areas of colonial economic activities (Claude Ake, 1982, 44-67). By 1946 following increased nationalist struggles and Britain's moral obligation to show gratitude for Nigeria's support during World War II, the colonial administration embarked upon economic planning. The first plan was for a ten-year period of 1946-56, and in addition to improving the colonial economy, it sought to raise the level of performance and increasing infrastructural facilities like roads, schools and hospitals. It also provided some modest stimulation to the economy for the export promotion.

Thus, in as much as colonial development planning made noconscious effort to ensure mass involvement, it did somehow try to plan for Nigeria as one political unit until 1950 when regionalism was introduced. In addition to schools and health facilities, road, urban electricity and water supplies were marginally improved. That notwithstanding, some Nigerian political leaders, namely Obafemi Awolowo and Abubakar Tafawa Balewa in 1947 and 1948 respectively, still felt that 'Nigerian unity was a fallacy that served essentially to ensure British exploitation of the economy and people of the area called Nigeria' (Coleman, 1986; 320). However, the mere fact that the colonial government developed a common administrative system, established a common communication network, introduced a common currency, a lingua franca, and an educational system, and recruited some Nigerian clerks and artisans who viewed themselves as Nigerians, all point to the fact that the colonial regime at least pursued a policy of nation-building. This may not exactly correspond to the modern conception of nation-building. For one thing, the idea was to make the Nigerian society peaceful for colonial exploitation and for another, the nationalist leaders felt somehow that the colonialists were reaping more than they sowed. To them, what was important was the rapid transformation of Nigeria into a modern and united state. However, this could not have been possible had the British not been able to bring all the peoples of the area now known as Nigeria into one administrative set up. It was this incorporation of the peoples that compelled them to cooperate as Nigerians.

In all fairness therefore, in the period up to 1950, the colonial government sought to unite the various groups in Nigeria into one. But their intentions were viewed differently by the nationalists.

CONSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT, ETHNICISM AND NATION-BUILDING: 1945-1970

There is no doubt that the constitutional development of the 1940s up to the 1960s greatly affected the course of nation-building in Nigeria. Both the National Council for Nigeria Citizens (NCNC) and the Action Group (AG) were eager to have full independence granted to Nigeria as early as 1956 while the Northern Peoples' Congress (NPC) opposed the stand. In addition, as far back as 1944, Ahmadu Bello had expressed the view that there was no basis for Nigerian unity when, in reaction to a West African students' Union memorandum, he argued that the southerners who were desirous of a united Nigeria should first embrace Islam. (Coleman, 1986; 361) Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, who was later to become the first Prime Minister of independent Nigeria, had at the March 1948 budget session of the Nigerian legislative council also spoken forcefully against a united Nigeria. In his words:

Many (Nigerians) deceive themselves by thinking that Nigeria is one... This is wrong. I am sorry to say that this presence of unity is artificial and it ends outside this chamber (Coleman, 1986; 361).

It would therefore, not be out of place to argue here that between the mid-1940s and the 1950s, the idea of nation-building among Nigerian nationalists no longer received a priority attention. The three major political parties were formed essentially along ethnic lines, (H.S. Morris, 1972; 167-168, Nnoli, 1981; 5-9; Burton Benedict, 1962; 1235-1246), though the N.C.N.C and the Action Group were doubtlessly more nationalistic in outlook than the Northern People Congress. All the same, ethnic affiliations and loyalties became the major concerns and considerations of the leaders and members of these political parties. Indeed, none of the parties appeared to have paid much attention to national unity except in as much as it would serve to project their ethnic and/or religious interests (Coleman, 1986; 346-347, 361). Thus, while there was a sort of concerted, though tenuous effort on the part of the nationalists to win independence together between the 1920s up to the mid-1940s, the political parties introduced cleavages which frustrated this noble dream, as it were. Among the factors blamed for the injection of ethnicism into Nigerian politics and the subsequent decline in the tempo of nationalists' collaboration are the colonial urban setting with its characteristic socio-economic competition, and the colonial policy of the divide and rule (Nnoli, 1981; 35-36). This situation was exacerbated by the regionalization of national wealth and the inter-ethnic struggle for political power which the Richards and Macpherson constitutions of 1946 and 1951 respectively introduced (Francis, Adigwe 1975; 187-198). These constitutions also effectively regionalized the civil service, and thus one of the strongest uniting links among Nigerians was cut. The Macpherson constitution was indeed the one guilty of this.

It has been noted that there was no provision in the Richards constitution to justify the belief that it was a

clear example of the British colonial policy of divide and rule (G.O Olusanya, 1980; 528). The reason for arguing this way is that the regionalization of Nigeria which the constitution was accused of doing was in reality not introduced by it because way back in 1939, the former protectorate of Southern Nigeria has been split into the Eastern and Western provinces, each with its own Lieutenant-Governor. The belief is that it was the Nigerian nationalists who were guilty of creating the schisms that very nearly destroyed the country.. As has been argued, "it was the Nigerians themselves who made the regions created for administrative reasons political and permanent when they were called upon to work out a constitution for their country in 1950/51" (Olusanya, 1980; 528).

Of course, based on the purpose of the constitution which sought to promote the unity of Nigeria as well as to satisfy the desires of the diverse elements within the country, the argument appears sound. But the nationalist leaders, especially those of the N.C.N.C, vehemently opposed it on the ground that, among other things, the establishment of Regional councils was a threat to the unity of the country. Moreover, there was the fear that the Central council might not be able to exercise effective control over the regional bodies. Infact, later developments in the political scene were to prove the fears of the nationalists, for when Nigeria gained independence, the regions became so powerful that they posed threats to the unity of over, there was the fear that the Central Council might not be able to exercise effective control over the regional bodies. At various points, the leaders of the western and Northern Regions threatened to pull their regions out of the federation and in 1967, the Eastern region made bold attempts to secede, a situation that resulted to a bloody Civil War.

Although the Macpherson constitution could by implication be blamed for introducing the North-south dichotomy in the body politic of Nigeria, its predecessor cannot be absolved of the same blame. Infact, it could be said to have brought to limelight what the Richards constitution tried to hide, namely, that Nigerian nationalists were mutually suspicious of each other. For instance, whereas the Richard constitution did not give any legislative or executive functions to the Regional House of Assembly which it created, so to say, the Macpherson constitution empowered the Regional Governments to legislate on some specific matters. Regional executive powers were extended to all the matters covered by the legislative power of the Region. The constitution made the regions more dependent on the central government, but the regions were allowed some measure of freedom on which the regional political parties were later to capitalize. Moreover, because none of the three major political parties had its leaders in the House of Representatives, the Federal Ministers identified more with their regions of origin than with the central government, a situation that often gave rise to inter-regional squabbles. Perhaps and rather unfortunately, the 1951 constitution's most remarkable contribution was the ushering in of an era of ethnic nationalism and regional divisions as demonstrated by the emergence of the Action Group and the Northern Peoples' Congress. The regional arrangement under the constitution was such that each of these parties had adequate regional base, more so when ethnic nationalism was at an all-time high and little feelings attached to national unity.

The rise of ethnicism in Nigeria politics could be traced to the crisis that engulfed the Nigeria Youth Movement (NYM) following the Akinsanya-Ikoli case of 1938. Prior to this date, most organizations were fond of referring to "Nigeria", and the spirit of nationhood was obviously there until the conflict between two prominent members of the Nigerian Youth movement. The quarrel was initially between Nnamdi Azikiwe and Ernest Ikoli, but later translated into a more bitter ethnic mudslinging in the succession dispute between Samuel Akinsanya and Ernest Ikoli over the presidency of the movement made vacant by the exits of Dr. K.A. Abayomi. Azikiwe and most Igbo members of the N.Y.M backed Akinsanya but when the lost out to Ikoli, this group left the movement which, after 1941, came to be made up of mostly Yoruba. This action, more than any one else, introduced a new dimension of ethnicism into Nigerian politics and it has infact affected in one way or the other all efforts to achieve national unity till date.

Perhaps the best manifestations of this new strand in Nigeria politics would include the events that culminated in the Nigeria-Biafra war of 1967-1970. From 1964, the Nigerian nation was placed in a very tight corner as inter-regional conflicts and strife threatened to tear it apart. First, there was the 1964 census fiasco, followed by the equally disheartening election crisis of the same year. And towards the end of 1965 there was the western regional crisis. Then followed a period of unbridled ethnicism, nepotism and corruption of official and unofficial quarters. The root cause of these included selfishness on the part of Nigerian politicians and their desires to project their regional interests at the expenses of the nation. The corrupt politicians have been accused of involving the specter of ethnicism to cover up their misdeeds. (Muhammadu and Haruna, 1988; 26). This perhaps explains why there was so much intolerance during the First Republic, especially on issues relating to the well-being of the constituent parts of the nation. It has further been posited that the failure of Nigerian leaders to stem the divisive tendencies and evolve minimal nationally shared values was the prelude to the disastrous events of 1966 to 1970 (Panther Brick, 1970).

However, this work shall not concern itself much with the causes and courses of the 1967-1970 war. Instead, attempts shall be made to point out those factors in the cause of the war which had their origins in the political set-up of Nigeria up to 1966. Without doubt, the parochial out-look of Nigerian nationalists, especially after independence, was among the root causes of the catastrophes that engulfed Nigerian between 1966 and

1970. The nationalist leaders in each region tended to perceive their needs and interest as unconnected with those of their contemporaries in the other regions.

Thus, there was basically no sustained national out-look in Nigerian politics which would have led to the achievement of national unity. Admittedly, the N.C.N.C and its predecessor the N.Y.M. were exceptions, especially in the early phases. However, other political associations which could not exert the same political influences resorted to using ethnicity and regionalism as convenient avenues for the establishment of political bases.

The Nigeria-Biafra War and National Integration, 1970-1979

It is not enough to blame the civil war, or more appropriately, the Nigeria-Biafra war of 1967-1970 on ethnicism and regionalism and leave it at that. This indeed has been the major fault of most works on the war (Stremau, 1977; 4). On the contrary, efforts should be made towards finding the reasons why ethnicism was introduced into Nigeria politics. In as much as attempts have been made in this direction and blames heaped on the British colonial economic system, the usual practice of basing the argument on the class structure of society ought to be reviewed.

This is not to suggest that the present approach is not relevant. What is being suggested instead is that the scope should be widened. While it is true for instance, to argue that the educated elite who were disfavoured in the colonial set-up capitalized on national and indeed ethnic sentiments for their selfish ends, it is equally true to argue that the British colonialists introduced ethnicism, nay regionalism to frustrate any concerted effort to unseat them.

They did this by whipping up ethnic sentiments in the Northern region against the southern regions. For one thing, the British political officers in the North enjoyed an unparalleled position of easy and comfortable life without any form of critical public opinion. Moreover, they readily established a rapport with the Hausa-Fulani oligarchies which made their work and life there one of almost uninterrupted idyllic pleasure (I.M Okonjo, 1974; 319-320). In addition, the Islamic religion which more or less support absolutisms in political affairs contrasted sharply with the prevalent mood in the southern part of the country. Indeed, the eastern region acquired a reputation of ungovernability in British colonial circles, and this accounted for their preference for the way of life of Northern Nigeria.

Thus, when nationalist activities started in Southern Nigeria, the British shielded the North from all possible contacts with the south especially between 1922 and 1950. Bryan Sherwood Smith, one-time Governor of Northern Nigeria was particularly fond of pursuing divisive and regressive policies towards the south. It was largely through his effort that the Northern Peoples' Congress (NPC) was formed in 1951, ostensibly to forestall southern domination after independence, but more importantly to ensure a favourably political climate for the economic exploitation of Nigeria by Britain.

More than anything else, this explains the rationale for the British transfer of power to Nigerians in 1960, and indeed why practically all the terms of political settlement under which independence was granted to Nigeria had to be so designed as to favour the North against the south (Okonjo, 1974; 219-320). It was such British support that encouraged Northern political leaders, especially the premier, Ahmadu Bello, to exhibit contempt for, and intolerance of Southern views. While Azikiwe did not react sharply to Ahmadu Bello's attitudes, Awolowo and the Action Group spared no efforts in retorting and reacting against such behaviour. It could be argued that it was in the attempt to contain Ahmadu Bello's political posture that Awolowo resorted to whipping up anti-North sentiments. He was later to use such sentiments against the Eastern Region. This explains why he has been labelled the architect of ethnic politics in Nigeria, and why the Action Group has been accused of being founded on, inspired, and nourished by ethnic chauvinism and regional parochialism (Nnoli, 1981; 155).

Whatever the case, it was British colonial policy of preference for Northern Nigerian political elite that introduced ethnicism into Nigerian politics. It is not fair to see Awolowo as having cashed in on the prevailing circumstances to boost his political ego and aspirations. He may have been less tactful and less comprising than Azikiwe, but he was reacting to the British conspiracy of framing Nigeria's political map to favour the North. It does not matter much that the North eventually achieved dominance in the electoral and administrative processes of independent Nigeria and has continued to sustain this position by insisting on land-mass as a basic criterion for political negotiations.

Apart from taking a look at this aspect of the origins of ethnicism in Nigerian politics, this work also holds the view that whereas nation-building was the major problem between 1960-1967, national integration as an aspect of nation-building, has been the major concern of the federal government since 1970, alongside the intractable problem of economic development. But first, what do we mean by national integration? As used in this context, the concept implies, or at least connotes, a national oneness, a sentiment of loyalty to a central government (Dov Ronen, 1974; 578). It contemplates the creation of higher loyalties that supersede parochial loyalties to sub-national communities, ethnic group, language groups or region (Richard Sklar, 1967; 3). One way of bringing this about is to impress it on the citizens that their national territory is their true homeland to which

their own identities are in part of defined with.

National integration does not necessarily have to be accomplished through forcefully holding together the composing groups. On the contrary, the peoples involved must have the will to live together under one sovereign nation. Such a will could be sustained by a common history, especially the memory of common suffering, and the sharing of a common culture and identity. This is much more relevant in communal integration, a situation in which the political institutions are genuinely national and are generally identified by the citizens as theirs. At other times, integration could work out fairly well among peoples who do not necessarily share a common integration (Ronen, 1974; 579-580), and the groups here are held together by interests, agreement of one type or another, and so on. The people may not readily identify with the political institutions, though they may be accepted or tolerated so long as they fulfill the functions which the members regard as appropriate.

In the Nigeria case, the country at independence was a collection of groups and factions with no great consciousness of nation and nation-building. Thus each group preferred instead to pursue its parochial goals with little regard for the overall well-being of the nation. Loyalty was embedded in the various regions, and the capture of the federal government meant the transfer of these loyalties to the centre, a situation which the other regions were set to frustrate at all costs. Thus, when the British withdraw, the various political groups within the country sought to consolidate their positions and to seize control at the centre. To this end, they embarked on a series of expensive and ethnically-based coalitions which were at best to prove progressively disruptive and untenable, (John Stremau, 1977; 4). These were the conditions under which the first military coup took place in January 1966.

However, since the end of war in 1970, a number of steps have been taken to achieve national integration. Foremost among these was the rehabilitation and "integration" of the now defunct Biafran citizens into a wider Nigeria. Others include the establishment of more unity schools (Federal Government Colleges) in most States of the country, and the compulsory one-year National Youth Service Corps programme, among others. By implication therefore, Nigeria has adopted the functional approach to integration, probably because of the failure to bring about communal integration in the 1960s and also because of the experiences of the Civil War. The creation in 1976 of seven more states and the greater dependence of the states on the Federal Government have boosted functional integration in Nigeria, though this is a contestable statement (Strenmau, 1977;4). In any case, the performance of attempts to achieve national integration in Nigeria may best be evaluated when such efforts are examined against some set standards. These include, inter-alia, balancing political power, achieving regional economic parity, ensuring relevant education and language policy (D.R Smock and Bentsi-Enchill, 1976).

One of the key elements in balancing pluralistic pressures against the end for national unity is the distribution of political power. By this is meant a situation where the component ethnic, religious and socio-economic groups are all represented in the nation's highest political institutions. The impact of this arrangement lies in the fact that such groups shall be under implied obligations to identify with the nation, since their own interests are predicated on the stability and well-being of the country. It is usually easier to achieve this objective in a democratically elected government since election manifestoes might serve to influence voters' opinions. Conversely, by the very nature of military dictatorships, national integration through balancing political powers is much more difficult to attain under a military regime. The reasons are not far to fetch: while the freedom of expression is more tolerated in a civilian administration, this is usually muzzled in a military dictatorship. Also, while political power could be much more easily balanced in a civilian set-up, the top hierarchy in a military regime could be drawn essentially from one part of the country. This appears to have been the case in Nigeria. For instance, prior to 1967, most of the military officers in the military were from the former Eastern and Western regions (Bill Dudley, 1997; 39).

In the same vein, the military top hierarchy since 1970 has come to be dominated by the former Northern region. By implication then, the major political decisions in the country have been greatly influenced by opinions from those at the helm of affairs. But a government is supposed to draw its legitimacy from the entire country, otherwise, allegiances continue to be paid to sub-national institutions, and these frustrate attempts at national integration.

Moreover, in a situation where the political elite and top military personnel are drawn from a particular area of a country, there is the possibility that the achievement of the nation's economic goals might be compromised to the advantage of one area over the others. In Nigeria, up to 1967, the regional governments were very autonomous and could afford to carry out development programmes without consulting with the central government. But since the central government has today become more powerful than the state governments and since the states now depend on the centre to carry out development programmes, it is reasonable to suggest that it is a *sine qua non* for the central government to encourage regional economic parity. In the Nigeria situation, disparities in regional economic development have tended to make certain groups within the country feel impoverished and neglected, especially since such groups do not think that those who are favoured have been proved to have contributed more to the national treasury (Oyediran and Olagunju, 1988; 196). It is developments like this that gave rise to militancy in the Niger Delta and the formation of ethnic militias like the Movement for

the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP).

In a civilian government, such grievances could be channelled to the appropriate authorities through such political institutions as the parliament. But in a military dictatorship, demands for a review might be rejected, as was the case in 1975 when the Rivers and the then Mid-Western states demand for a review of the revenue allocation principle was rejected by the military administration (Oyeduran and Olagunju, 1988; 196).

Equally important in ensuring national identity and integration is the effective utilization of the educational system. In the nursery and primary schools up to high school levels, the foundations should be laid for inculcating a sense of patriotism in the young ones. One way of doing this is to make sure that the History syllabus of the country exhibits a national character which should emphasize ethnic tolerance and common identification with national heroes. The military regimes have made commendable strides in this regard, especially through the building of more unity schools and the introduction of the National Youth Service Corps programme. Both have helped in increasing ethnic tolerance by making it possible for students to study and serve in other parts of the country other than where they come from.

Lastly, there is no doubt that the overwhelming proportions of linguistic diversity in Nigeria have created problems for effective national integration. However, except of late, there does not seem to have been much sustained effort to tackle this problem. It is not advisable to impose a particular language as the national language or lingua franca. Instead, a shared language like Pidgin English, should be developed to fit in appropriately into the national culture. This could be done through a conscious injection of the language into the educational curricula of our schools.

II. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Without doubt, there is a positive correlation between nation-building and development in most countries, Nigeria included. In the colonial era, whatever attempts that were devoted to nation-building were essentially to ensure the exploitation of Nigeria. The nationalists between 1922 and 1945 were fully aware of the problems likely to be posed by the failure to ensure a sense of commonality among the peoples of Nigeria. But the British policy of divided and rule effectively injected divisive tendencies into Nigeria politics. However, the import of national unity was not lost to the politicians. Thus, soon after independence, fully aware of the problem but to grapple with it and other associated national ills, the politicians were overthrown by the military. Then followed a three year period of one of the bloodiest civil wars in modern history.

Since the end of the war, successive military administrations have tried different measures to ensure nation-building, especially national integration. But these have not been entirely successful because the military which held power for many years does not seem to have borrowed and inculcated the pre-1946 nationalist values of society. Moreover, the military elite has always had easy access to power and thereby threatened the fragile fabric of civilian democracy. Indeed, as Billy Dudley has rightly observed, the military has more often than not posed as an obstacle to sociopolitical change rather than as an agent of national cohesion (Dudley, 1976; 35). A similarly view has been expressed by Amos Perlmutter who has argued that the military is not the most desirable model for nation-building (Amos Perlmutter, 1977; 129). One reason for this is that the military, by its training and orientation, is not meant for civil action and political interventions. Its political outlook is at variance with that of a civil society and its intrusion into politics has created a sour relationship between it and the politicians.

Since political stability is a prerequisite for nation-building especially national integration, and since there is no nation that can live in peace, happiness and harmony if there is mutual misunderstanding and fear. (Ntieyong Akpan, 1976; i-ii) the following measures are suggested for effective nation-building. First and foremost, the basic human and material needs of vast majority of Nigerians especially food, shelter clothing, adequate and relevant education, adequate medical care and political participation should be ensured. Secondly, political power should be balanced to ensure that one part of the country does not monopolize it. One way of ensuring this is to avoid the intrusion of the military into politics. In fact, the military should have a defined role in peace time. Also, the citizens' right to participate in taking political decision that affect their lives through democratic elections should be institutionalized.

Religious bigotry has introduced a new dimension to national politics. To avoid any unpleasant occurrences, efforts should be made to ensure religious harmony. The secular nature of the Nigerian state should not be compromised to favour any religion. Also to be played down on are the vexed issues of federal character, quota system, indigeneship, and state of origin. These concepts and policies which have outlived the purposes for which they were meant, should be abandoned in preference for policies that would ensure a full and complementary interaction of the component parts of Nigeria. Otherwise, the idea of a united Nigeria might remain a mirage.

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