FACTORS FOR NATION BUILDING AND DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Recent violence in the country clearly showed that Nigerian leaders promote ethnic separation rather than building the nation. This study investigated factors for nation and development in Nigeria. The theoretical framework used in analyzing the study is the Relative Deprivation theory. The study revealed that sentiments, poor justice system, bad leadership, poor legislation and corruption are the factors that retard nation building and development in Nigeria. It is recommended that regional, religious and ethnic sentiments should be discouraged as it affects the process of nation-building in Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

"To build the nation where peace and justice shall reign" are words from the second stanza of the Nigeria's national anthem. The word anthem was first used in a church, where a song of praise was sang to the honour and glory of God. When sovereign nations started emerging, the world over a song of praise was developed by every sovereign nation to praise the leaders and the nation among others. The national anthem is a song of inspiration. It is strictly a song of loyalty to a country. It is not just for entertainment. Of course, peace and justice is something that everybody cherishes but can Nigeria build a nation where peace and justice shall reign? Recent development in the country shows that majority of Nigerians (individuals, religious groups, regional groups, ethnic groups, political groups and labour union) are crying out for justice. These lamentations resulted to protests and violent blood shed across the country leading to the formation of various resistance and counter resistant organization (movements) that threatens the nations peace, stability and unity. Nigeria therefore is a country that lacks a national sense of purpose. Otu (1999:104) laments that "government policies promote rather than deescalate ethnic separation". Thus, a unified political and social philosophy which shapes the thinking of all Nigerians is not there (Ejiofor, 1980). What answers Nigeria is a political society held together by legal and geographical ties. The emergence of regional militia movements such as Odua Peoples Congress in Yoruba land, the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger-Delta in the South-South, the Sharia Development in Zamfara, the Kaduna Riots and Aba Reactions, and the recent activities of Boko Haram in Northern Nigeria have brought to the fore the problem of nation building and development in Nigeria. The logical implication is that most of these grouping are not only yearning for the welfare of their people but against what they called "marginalization". In recent times, Nigerian politicians used these groups to divide and rule. Such sentiment as "the southerner should support a fellow southerner", "all Muslims should vote for all fellow Muslims", all Christians should support a fellow Christian", are responsible for Nigeria's underdevelopment because the nation loss honest and competent persons that would contribute to the country's development if given the opportunity. Abanyam (2012:167) points

out that the issue of corruption in the judiciary with its attendants effect of "tempering justice with money and mercy" threatens nation building and development in Nigeria. The judiciary is said to be the last hope for a common man but recent court rulings in Nigeria indicates that "might is always right". The question is: would the judiciary ever become the hope for a common man in Nigeria? In other words, can justice reign in Nigeria? We are all living witnesses to the recent happenings at the election petition tribunals, "where cases were manipulated and strike out on technical grounds without looking at the merits. Cases were strike out on the ground that, the one hundred and eight days (180) set aside for the Electoral Petition Tribunal to determine cases expired. The questions that quickly calls to mind are: is it the petitioner that disrupted (delayed) the court settings for the stipulated time to expire? Where does the problem comes from? Who is to be blame? It is bad leadership (governance) or bad legislation? When would people be allowed to select their leaders freely? When would we stop playing politics with sentiments? When shall we stop rigging elections? Can a common man get justice in Nigeria? Or can Nigeria build a nation where peace and justice shall reign? What is happening to subsidy removal funds meant for the country's development of infrastructure? Since subsidy removal come into effect, there is no development of infrastructure. The country roads still remain as bad as there where. The country is still facing the problem of electric power supply which supposes to generate employment for millions of Nigerians. On different occasions, the country had a huge budget to address the issue but trillions of Naira ends into the packets of few politicians. Employment in the country is strictly who knows who (i.e. connection) is not on merit, even in our institutions of higher learning. This may partly account for the falling standard of education in Nigeria. The Nigerian legislature turns their constitutional rights of impeachment to a weapon of making money from the executive arm of the government. All these problems retard nation building and development. This study therefore is set to investigate factors for nation building and development in Nigeria.

Conceptualization of Nation Building and Development

The concept of nation has been quite difficult to define and has become quite controversial especially as it relates to nation building. Emerson (1960) points out that, there is no real agreement as to what a nation is. A nation may be defined as "traditionally fixed on a well defined territory, speaking the same language and preferably a language of its own, possessing a distinctive culture, and shape to a common mold of many generations of shared historical experience" (Emerson, 1960). According to Tamir (1995), individual may share a territory and even historical memories without seeing themselves as members of the same nation. For example, Israel and Palestine. From the above definition, Nigeria may not qualify to be called a nation. Rather we can say that Nigeria is only a notion not a nation. However, Irele (1999) defined nation building as "the process whereby people transfer their commitment and loyalty from smaller tribes, villages, or petty principality to the larger central political system". For the purpose of this study, nation building can be defined as a process of bringing of diverse groups together to develop their common land.

Development

Todaro (1981) sees development as many-sided process involving changes in structures, institutions and attitudes, as well as the acceleration of economic growth, the reduction of inequality and the eradication of hunger and poverty in a given society, while Pearson (1970) used the concept of development to mean the participation of people in the determination of their development. Development therefore can be defined as the process of economic, social, political, scientific and technological and cultural advancement which enables people to determine and realize their potentials, build self-confidence and leaves lives of dignity. For this study, development may be defined as a process of initiating progressive changes in the environment with the view to developing "the minds and understanding of people" (Nyerele, 1974:28).

Theoretical Approach

Relative deprivation theory will be employed in this study. Relative deprivation may be defined as the conscious experience of a negative discrepancy between legitimate expectation and anticipated actuality. It is the discrepancy between the "ought and is". The theory of deprivation is traceable to Karl Marx who held that the capitalist exploitation leads to the progressive impoverishment of the working class. He pointed out that the suffering of the under-class (what he called the lumpen proletariat) can be so intense and their alienation so massive that all social and revolutionary consciousness are deadened. Modest scholars of deprivation school are Robert Gurr, James Davies and James Geschewender. The basic proposition of the theory is that every individual has certain essential needs or wants. There are different degrees to which that need can be fulfilled. The fulfillment of the needs can be divided into two categories: actual or expected, where actual refers to the real extent to which the need is fulfilled, expected refers to the anticipated extent to which one feels justified in fulfilling the needs. To the degree that there is a gap between actual fulfillment of the needs and anticipated fulfillment, relative deprivation occurs. People who are relatively deprived begin to feel unhappy after a while. Under the right circumstances, these deprived people can become actives recruits to social movements. They become convinced that their feelings or irritations are the result of some problems in the society.

Thus to reduce their cognitive dissonance they become actively involved in a movement to rid themselves of tensions and to fight for their rights. The theory of deprivation to some extent, attempts to explain that government failure to provide basic needs, denial of justice, exploitation of the poor, marginalization of other ethnic groups and regions, bad legislation, bad governance, political sentiments, etc are factors that retard development in Nigeria. This theory also seek to explain the origin of social movements that threatens security in Nigeria, that is, collective and organized attempts to bring about prompt, large scale change by non institutional means. Furthermore, the theory of relative deprivation gives (produces) socio-psychological reason why people join such movement like the Boko Haram, Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger-Delta (MEND), Odua's Peoples Congress (OPC), etc.

Factors that enhance Nation Building and Development in Nigeria

The process of nation building and development in Nigeria could be facilitated and enhanced through the following factors:

i)   Existence of common values, beliefs and rightful behavioural attitudes among Nigerians. Feelings of ethnic superiority that usually accompanied with such beliefs that political and economic domination by ones own group is natural, morally rights and is in the nations best interest and perhaps God's will should be discouraged. Such image can retard nation building and development in Nigeria. Ebong (2006:13) laments that:

> In Nigeria, the mirror image phenomenon is a common place behaviour. The Northerners, for instance, sees himself as hard working, warm-hearted, accommodating and easy-going, whereas the Southerner sees himself as civilized, intelligent and hard working as opposed to the dominating, crafty, noisy Northerner.

The implication here is that when a sense of self-respect of an individual is hurt, he fosters hatred and disgust for other groups and individuals and forms prejudice against them. Nigerian leaders should foster a sense of togetherness among all Nigerians irrespective of their ethnicity or religious background. If such mechanisms are put in place tensions will deescalate. For instance, the recent escalation of violence perpetrated by Boko Haram may have a political undertone and ideological differences. Political leaders have remained defiance to negotiate for fear of giving out their position. For Nigeria to build a strong and viable nation, politics must not be accompanied with sentiments such as "Muslims should vote for fellow Muslims", "Christians should vote for fellow Christians", "Southerners must vote for fellow Southerner", "all Northerners must vote for fellow Northerner". Such acts retard not only development but also the process of nation building. Agi (1999:109) warns that if such sentiments (centrifugal nationalism) occurs "and when if the principle of national self-determination is applied by every ethnic group or nationality in a state. Then the authority of the central government would be so weakened that the existence of the state could become questionable".

ii)   Effective and efficient leaders that are capable of overpowering aggression (both internal and external), protecting the lives and properties and providing democratic dividends to all Nigerians irrespective of their ethnicity or religious background. The problem of nation building in Nigeria is traceable to leadership. Achebe (1983) attributes the problem of Nigeria to "failure of leadership". This may be partly because most of the leaders (i.e. inexperienced and corrupt leaders) are imposed on Nigerians by the ruling political party that controls the state machineries. Locke (1964) observes that nothing can make government legitimate except the consent of the governed. And for the consent, to be genuine, must be personal, deliberate and free. By this submission, the source of authority lies with the people who appoint the government. It is merely a means for carrying out people's will. The supreme power must lie with Nigerians who should be allow to elect (appoint) government and remove the government if they find its act contrary to the trust reposed on it. If

inexperienced and ineffective leaders are imposed or voted into office on sentiments, the process of nation-building and development will be retarded.

iii)   There must be a strong will for all Nigerians to live together as a nation and to tolerate one another. This can serve as a vehicle (explosive force) of establishing a single political community which may provide a unique powerful basis of allegiance instead of disintegration (Agi, 1999).

CONCLUSION

Nigeria can build a strong and viable nation if and only if there is an existence common values, beliefs, attitudes, effective leadership and a will to live together as a nation. Such transformations must allow every group to participate in the economic, political and the social spheres of the nation. Social justice should form the basic principle of nation building. This study has exposed the effects of sentimental politics as its affect the process of nation building and development in Nigeria. The study is an eye opener to all Nigerians, especially those that are usually deceived by politicians. Regional, religious and ethnic groups that plays politics of sentiment should reverse this trend as it retard nation building and development of the nation. There is therefore an urgent need for all groups to make serious efforts to integrate, while Nigerian leaders need to continue making reforms and policies that can promote integration and nation building. All well meaning Nigerians must join hands to build a prosperous nation where peace and justice shall reign.

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