

## **State Process of Formation, Nation-Building and Development in Nigeria**

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### **Abstract**

**T**his study on State, Nation-Building and Development focuses on the practical task of building or strengthening State Institutions, and the character of relations between a citizen and his State. It is the contention of this paper that building a functioning State is a pre-requisite for effective nationhood. This paper argues that active citizenship is a vital ingredient for building a coherent national community. Thus, the Political Development Theory of nation-building was found handy for analysis. This study equally adopted the documentary analytical method for discussion. The study observed that State formation, nation-building and development throughout much of what is now called the developing world followed a very different trajectory to that of the original European model. It further revealed that the manner in which these states were initially created has contributed greatly to the challenges they have faced since gaining independence. Also, it showed that Nigeria is engulfed with primordial issues, undemocratic forces, corruption and dictatorial leadership that manifest detrimentally to its development. The paper concludes with the suggestions that: enhancing political participation is necessary for nation-building, and active citizenship is a vital ingredient for building a coherent and progressive national community.

**Keyword:** *State, Nation-Building, Development, Citizens, Political Participation*

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### **Background to the Study**

The state represents the organized embodiment of political processes within society. The means by which decisions are made and social life is directed and regulated (Goldstone, 2000). The state arises in human societies because of the need to provide a credible threat to force the creation of public goods. Such a threat requires the organized and monopolised the use of organized coercion which is legitimate.

The essence of the state is that it claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within its boundaries. As such, the ability to exercise political power rests, in part, on the beliefs of those subject to that power. Authority, therefore, exists where there is willing compliance of a group of people to the directive of the superior. The state, therefore, represents the system for the organization of power, and politics creates the platform where persons strive for the exercise of political power either as a means in serving other aims, ideal or egoistic or as power for its own sake. Political power here represents power exercised within a group which occupies a relatively well-defined territory by a person or sets of persons responsible for maintaining the order and integrity of the group as a community and whose commands are supported by the use of legitimate force.

In today's world, skills, industriousness, productivity and competitiveness are determinant factors of national development and not the size of its population or the abundance of its natural resources. Thus, the real wealth of a nation is its people and their capacity to engender productivity, creativity and industriousness (Eghareuba & Iruonagbe, 2015). Therefore, nation-building is the most common form of collective identity formation with a view to legitimizing public power within a given territory. The term nation-building came to possess both a general and a restricted sense. In general, the term nation-building referred to the policies and projects by which newly independent states would purposively effect the transition from tradition to modernity. This quest or transition entailed a total and massive effort of social engineering in which all elements of a modern state were assembled. These elements included the administrative, legal, extractive, and coercive organizations recognized by Weber as the core of any state.

The crucial element for establishing a modern state, however, was the establishment of an independent political apparatus distinct from any individual ruler and which indeed the ruler had a duty to maintain. Thus, in its more general sense, "nation-building" implied and encompassed "state-building". Thus, a critical component required for the attainment of nation-building would be the inculcation of the spirit of nationalism which is a vital ingredient in the drive for national development. In the context of this discourse, this study examined the relationship between state processes of formation, nation-building effort and national development in Nigeria.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Inter-regional inequalities, intense competition for political power by the elite, weak state, politics of repression, exclusion, marginalization, widespread mismanagement, rampant corruption and democratic governance deficits provoke discontent at the centre which

ultimately breeds resistance, violence and civil unrest on the periphery. All these forces undermine nation-building, undercut state building, hinder national development and vitiate state fragility.

## **Conceptual Framework**

### **State**

The state is a political community formed by a territorial population which is subject to one government. A country usually refers to a state's territory and population, rather than its government. Most importantly, the state claims not just the capacity but also the right to employ force. Weber (1864 – 1920) wrote that a state is a human community that (successfully) claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory (Gerth & Mills, 1948).

Olson (2000) stated that states are stationary bandits' rather than roving bandits and they behave better as a result. Equally Alapiki (2005) defined state as “the organized aggregate of relatively permanent institutions of governance”.

### **Nation Building**

Nation – Building according to Akpan (2003:140) is “a process of creating an integrated society inhabited by a contented people”. This, we believe is not only possible but a necessity in a heterogeneous society like Nigeria. This study is about building a nation out of a state, as it is the case in most developing countries of the world. The nineteenth century Europe and other developed countries of the world appear to be in the opposite direction. That is creating states out of nations and vice versa respectively (David, 2014).

Nation-Building is, therefore, a product of conscious statecraft built by men and women with vision and doggedness, and not mere wishful thinking. Nation-Building is always a work in progress, a dynamic process in constant need of nurturing and re-invention. Nation-Building is about building a common sense of purpose, a sense of shared destiny, a collective imagination of belonging (Gambari, 2008).

### **Emergence of State and Post-Colonial State**

The state emerged from the embers of medieval Europe (c. 1000-c. 1500). In the middle ages, European governance had been dominated by two institutions, the Roman church and feudalism, which together left no room for monarchies to develop into sovereign states. (Hague & Harrop, 2004). The church formed a powerful transnational authority placed above mere monarchs. Kings within the Christian commonwealth were considered to be secular agents of the church's higher authority (Figgis, 1960). So strong were these external limits on monarchs that some authors who believe that global forces are constraining today's rulers describe this process as “the new medievalism” (Slaughter, 1997).

Further, within their nominal territories, kings were further constrained by feudal noblemen who exerted extensive authority over men of lower rank. In this decentralized national setting, the king frequently learned that he needed them (Strayer, 1965).

We are at this point not going to border on how European states shake off medieval restraints to become the defining political units of the modern world or explain how modern state emerged from the dual configuration of the church and feudalism. For our purpose, the post-colonial state shall be examined.

The state was born in Europe and then exported to the rest of the world by colonial powers, notably Britain, France, and Spain. Opello and Rosow (1999) write, "It is impossible to understand the development of modern states without taking into account the way European states constructed an interconnected global order by means of conquest, trade, religious conversion and diplomacy". Of all Europe's exports, the state is perhaps the most important.

Most states in the world (including, of course, the USA) are former colonies. Countries without a history as a colony, leaving aside the ex-colonial powers themselves, are few and far between. They include Japan and Thailand in Asia, Ethiopia in Africa and Iran in Middle East. In addition, a few former empires – notably Russia and China – have redefined themselves as states to fit the demands of the current state-based international system (Okesenberg, 2001).

While the state formed may have been successfully exported from Europe, its substance has rarely followed. In many post-colonial countries, the state has been superimposed on traditional ethnic, regional and religious division. Often, the state becomes a prize for which the traditional leaders of such groups compete, resulting in a lack of autonomy for the state from social interests. In these circumstances, the state is more a resource to be fought over than an actor in the fight.

Government institutions are fragmented and the state as a whole lacks the coherence and drive of its European forebears. This contrasting role of the state is the key political contrast between European and post-colonial countries. How then colonies emerge into statehood? Described by Crawford (2002), as the largest single change in world politics over the last five hundred years, this process took place in four waves spread over two centuries. The retreat from empire by European powers after 1945 was certainly the largest of these waves but by no means the only one.

In respect to this study, we will only discuss the third wave. The third and largest wave of state creation occurred after 1945, with the retreat from empire by European states diminished by war. The exemplary was Indian independence, achieved in 1947, many other colonies, in Africa, Asia, the Middle East (including Iraq) and the Caribbean, followed suit. This wave of decolonization grew into a veritable tsunami. Over 90 newly independent states were created between 1944 and 1984, around half the world's current total (Derbyshire & Derbyshire, 1999). As a result, about one in two of the world's countries have existed as independent states for less than a century. It is in this group of states that the colonial legacy is most pronounced, with ethnic groups strengthened by imperial classification battling to control the resources of the government. Once the contest is won, the dominant group or individual sees the state as a mine to be exploited. The victor distributes resources to its supporters, often copying the

coercive ruling style of the departing power. The result is governance far removed from that found in western states (Werbner & Ranger, 1996).

Overall, then, the contrasts between west European parent states and their post-colonial progeny are deep-rooted. Post-colonial states rarely possess the hard edge which their European forebears acquired during their own long and violent development. This contrast can be seen in the treatment of borders. While European states were keen to mark off their own frontiers, they invented borders for their colonies which bore little relation to natural or social features. For instance, almost half the boundaries of African states today contain at least one straight section and many national borders are treated with indifference by government and people alike. Some are completely unguarded, hardly the sign of a state concerned to demonstrate its sovereignty over a defined territory. Sovereignty remains important as a title of statehood, securing international recognition on and access to aid while deterring some invaders (Sorensen, 2004). But the title's significance rests largely in its symbolic value.

Internally, too, the rulers of many post-colonial state-particularly in Africa found that their penetration through their territory is limited. Control may not extend far beyond the capital, with government outputs falling under the influence of local strongmen. This is not so much a coherent actor as an arena in which groups and individuals jostle for control over particular ministries and local offices (Migdal, 2001). The authority of political rulers is sometimes subject to further competition.

### **Theoretical Framework**

#### **Nation – Building Theory of Political Development**

The Nation-Building theory of political development forms the analytical framework of this study. This postulation is associated with historically oriented political scientists in the 1950s and 1960s. Its proponents included such leaders of the American academic community as Karl Deutsch, Charles Tilly and Reinhard Bendix (Friedrich, 1963).

Nation-building theory of political development 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 forms of traditional states, such as feudal and dynastic states, church states, empires, etc. as used by political scientists. The term covers not only conscious strategies initiated by state leaders but also unplanned societal change.

An indispensable tool for detecting, describing and analyzing the macrohistorical and sociological dynamics that have produced the modern state. The traditional, pre-modern state was made up of isolated communities with parochial cultures at the “bottom” of society and a distant, and aloof, state structure at “the top”, largely content with collecting taxes and keeping order. Through nation-building, these two spheres were brought into more intimate contact with each other. Members of the local communities were drawn upwards into the larger society through education and political participation. The state authorities, in turn, expanded their demands and obligations towards the members of society by offering a wide

array of services and integrative social networks. The subjects of the monarch were gradually and imperceptibly turned into citizens of the nation-state. Sub-state cultures and loyalties either vanished or lost their political importance, superseded by loyalties toward the larger entity, the state.

### **Nation-Building from a Development Perspective**

The object of “Nation-building” from a development perspective can be said to comprise three related elements. Firstly, the development of an effectively functioning state that is accepted - that is, accorded legitimacy - by the bulk of its citizens. Central to this are the functions of securing a monopoly of force, guaranteeing security for the population and neighbouring countries, the rule of law, and the provision of public assets. These are fundamental attributes of statehood and although not the full story-constitute a necessary foundation for nation-building” (Dinnen, 2006).

Secondly, “nation-building” also requires a physical, social and communications infrastructure that is shared by the entire civil society. These assets must be accessible for all groups of the population and be used by them for transactions and communication. It is difficult to build a sense of nation in a country containing regions or areas whose inhabitants are effectively cut-off-physically and socially - from the rest of the “national population”.

In addition to these conventional “state-building” components, “nation-building” further presupposes a socio-cultural structuring and integration process teaching to shared characteristics of identity, values and goals. It is not so much the homogeneity of these characteristics that is crucial, rather it is the acceptance and toleration of heterogeneity and the facilitation of inclusion.

According to Dinnen (2006), the subject of “nation-building” is the community of citizens that together wants to form a nation and assume responsibility for this process. Nation-building cannot be built solely from top-down but requires the active participation of ordinary citizens in the shaping of a common political will. It is the citizens who must provide the necessary legitimacy to the new state. Commitment to the common good and to a shared community are essential because effective collective decision-making often entails imposing on various participants sacrifices for the common good (e.g to protect the environment for future generations). If these sacrifices are not backed up by shared values and bonds, the key elements of community, they will not be treated as legitimate and hence will either have to be brought about through force or will not be effectively achieved.

Citizenship is another critical foundation that sustains the modern nation-state. The working of key institutions such as, for example, the justice and political systems, is largely dependent on individuals accepting and understanding their status as citizens with the rights and responsibilities that this entails. Citizenship provides the basis of the social contract binding individuals to a particular nation-state and vice versa (Dinnen, 2006). Where individual identities and allegiances are founded primarily on membership of ethnic and other highly localized groups, these can weaken or undermine the sense of membership

of a larger political community. Loyalties to ethnic group, tribe, or clan, remain deeply embedded in many places and in some, such as the Melanesian countries, are often more important to rural villagers than membership of the modern nation-state. Where states have never functioned effectively or have ceased to do so, the appeal of sub-national identities is likely to persist or even be strengthened, in the process weakening efforts to build a sense of national community.

### **Building National Communities through Active Citizenship**

Building national communities requires effective states that, in turn, require empowered citizens (Dinnen, 2006). Donor policy should strengthen the role of active citizens. More active engagement by citizens with the state can help make it more accountable especially to disadvantaged groups. Donors can help build state-citizen relationships in diverse country contexts by giving careful thought to the aid instruments they use, what they fund, and how they deploy staff.

### **Categories of Citizen Action**

- a. **Citizenship awareness:** Leads to better-informed people who can understand their rights and are able to constructively and effectively claim them through collective action and political processes.
- b. **Citizenship participation in civil society organizations:** can contribute to critically (self) reflective democratic and accountable CSOs that are responsive to the rights, values, aspirations, interests and priorities of the constituencies.
- c. **Citizen participation in local development and service delivery:** results not only in better services but can also serve as a learning ground for new forms of cooperation between state officials, politicians and citizens.

### **State, Nation-Building and Development in Nigeria: An Evaluation**

In the contemporary period, there is substantial agreement among analysts regarding the importance of the state as the focus for the institutionalization of central power. However, there has been no consensus on the meaning of the growing salience of state agencies. The fact remains, however, that a substantial agreement exists in recent literature on the definition of the state as “the organized aggregate of relatively permanent institutions of governance” (Alapiki, 2005). Accordingly, the state is seen as a set of associations and agencies claiming control over defined territories and their populations.

The prevailing perception of the state is based on three main approaches. The organic approach which views the state as the critical factor in the public arena, directly influencing social and economic processes and affecting outcomes. The configurational approach, suggests that the state apparatus provides the main framework in which social groups form and in which certain types of political actions are made possible and others are circumscribed. The interactive approach seeks to understand the character of the state with regard to how transactions between social groups and state institutions are carried out, and how these, in turn, alter the nature of public institutions as well as of social formations. (Alapiki, 2005). As such, the primary function of the state is to preserve internal order, make life predictable and secure.

The state also exists to provide the collective good of external security and all other goods which its members could not individually provide for themselves, such as basic infrastructure, healthcare, education etc. In other words, the state is responsible for providing the common defence, ensure domestic tranquility, establish justice and promote the general welfare of the people it governs. However, the greatest of all social dilemmas with respect to the state lies in whether those who control the means of coercion or domination (power) will act in their own interest rather than for the public good particularly in the way economic goods and services are distributed and used. It is within this context that one can begin to understand how the failure of the state to perform its statutory functions to its citizenry can trigger off incidences of unrest, insurgencies etc.

State failure occurs when public institutions fail to deliver positive political goods to citizens on a scale likely to undermine the legitimacy and existence of the state (Rotberg, 2003). State failure exists in respect to a wide range of political goods, of which the most important ones are the provision of security, a legal system to adjudicate disputes, provision of economic and communication infrastructures, the supply of some form of welfare policies and increasing opportunities for participation in the political process. The degree to which individual states are capable of delivering those political goods significantly influence their relative strength, weakness or failure, there is a great variety of causes of state failure.

In addition to those already mentioned, economic underdevelopment, failures made by the formal colonial powers in general and the drawing of arbitrary post-colonial borders in particular, lack of democratic values, widespread poverty, problematic economic policies and programmes instituted by the IMF and world bank (Crocker, 2003). Therefore, the structure of the Nigerian state from colonial time as well as the nature and conduct of its operations by the national political elites during the post-colonial era can be fingered as mainly responsible state failure that ultimately undermines the nation-building and development. Nation-Building as a policy to promote state-building in societies with multiple ethnic and religious cleavages is critical in Africa that is characterized by issues of underdevelopment, political instability, conflict of various dimensions and human development challenges (Miguel, 2004). Thus, an internally driven, dynamic and developing process of good governance would underpin successful nation building, state construction/building and development in Nigeria. Lack of good democratic governance, conflict and underdevelopment has therefore continuously weakened nation building, undermined state construction and subverted socioeconomic development which continually undermines the people's well being and degrade human condition in most Nigeria and Africa in general (Andebrhan, 2004). Hundreds of millions of people in Nigeria are poor, they struggle for a living, competing for increasingly scarce resources and conflicts everywhere. It is in the light of this concern that it is important/necessary to interrogate what nation building is and how it contributes to national development why nation-building matters as well as the challenges associated with it.

Nation-building is all about promoting the collective well-being of the people through meeting their needs, interests and aspirations (Agbese et al, 2007). Its hallmarks would be the

pursuit of liberty, social justice, progress and prosperity for the people by government and its institutions. “Nation-building” is evolutionary rather than revolutionary social process. This perspective recognizes that as well as a functioning state, nation-building, also requires nurturing a sense of community where none previously existed, or shoring up one that was not firmly or properly constructed, or whose existence has been undermined by war or internal conflict.

Nation-Building has many important aspects. Firstly, it is about building a political entity which corresponds to a given territory based on some generally accepted norms, rules, and values, and common citizenship. Secondly, it is about building institutions which symbolize political entity-institutions such as the bureaucracy, an economy, the judiciary, universities, civil service and civil society organizations. Thirdly, the quality of leadership anchored on transparency, accountability and openness is critical to building a viable and prosperous nation. Nigeria since independence has taken the tasks of nation-building seriously over other tasks including economic development. Most of the policies on national integration have always centered on such issues as changing of the state name, capital city or currency, postage stamps, identity cards etc whose effects on national formation has been considered subtler rather than unimportant (Alapiki, 2005). A cursory look at the implementation of these nation-building policies by various administrations in promoting national integration and its effects on national development has been varied. Research has shown that many of these nation-building policies were merely seen as a smokescreen to advance the interests of the government in power; for other societies, it led to more conflict than integration. Also nation-building policy such as land nationalization has led to more increasing inequalities as locals saw their land increasingly occupied by migrants, in communities where oil is extracted such as the Niger-Delta, conflict has often arisen with national government and multi-national corporations over local complaints that the community does not adequately reap the benefit of such resources or suffer – excessively from the degradation of the natural environment (Eghareuba & Duonagbe, 2015).

Therefore, Nation-building is the most common form 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 a nation containing a certain set of assumptions, values and beliefs which can function as the legitimizing foundation of a state structure.

A critical component required for the attainment of nation-building would be the inculcation of the spirit of nationalism which is a vital ingredient in the drive for national development. Nationalism, therefore, entails loyalty or devotion to a nation. It is synonymous with patriotism which must reflect wholly in the attitude that members of a nation have about their national identity, including the attainment and sustenance of self-determination.

### **Findings of the Study**

- i. The manner in which the states were initially created has contributed greatly to the challenges they have faced since gaining independence.
- ii. Also, the study revealed that Nigeria is engulfed with primordial issues, undemocratic forces, corruption and dictatorial leadership that manifest detrimentally to its development.
- iii. The study indicated that state failure occurs when public institutions fail to deliver political goods to citizens on a scale likely to undermine the legitimacy and existence of the state.
- iv. The study revealed that the structure of the Nigerian state from colonial time as well as the nature and conduct of its operations by the national political elites during the post-colonial era is responsible for state failure and ultimately undermine the nation – building and development.
- v. The study observed that lack of good democratic governance, conflict and underdevelopment has continuously weakened nation – building, undermined state construction and subverted socio-economic development which continually undermines the people well-being.

### **Conclusion**

It is obvious that given the nature and character of the colonial state and interests, the colonial territories were kept disorganized instead of integrated. In Nigeria, we had the British policy of “Divide and Rule” which laid the foundation for some of the problems of national unity and development. Nigeria and its people have been struggling with different approaches to build the state and set on the path of political, cultural, social and economic development. Over time, the country has tried different political systems, implemented numerous economic measures, adopted various educational policies and evolved variety of transformation efforts to facilitate the process of nation-building. Yet Nigeria has remained a nation seized by the drawbacks of development in the form of increasing poverty, conflict, corruption, poor governance, materialism, weak institution, political misbehaviour, general indiscipline and infrastructural weakness, among others. The growth and development level of the country have continuously failed to correlate with the quantum of resources allegedly expended over the years. Arguably, the very slow progress being experienced in the nation's nation-building process being related to factors mentioned above including disregard for ethics and morality in governance, leadership impurity, disrespect for agreements, bureaucratic dishonesty and self-centered attitudes. Such unethical behaviour and negative values have exerted serious consequences on the country's reputation in the community of nations. Consequently, after many years of independence, the country is far from the point where trust confidence amongst and between the people of Nigerian define and drive relationship and interactions at all levels in the country. As a result state, nation-building and development is an issue that must take place. This is where leadership and governance are centered and institutions are built to drive the vision, values and objectives of nation-building and development.

## Recommendations

Following the discoveries or findings highlighted in this discourse, the following have been recommended:

- i. The concept of nation-building should necessarily incorporate a form of revolutionary ideas (marked departure from the old absolutism of rulers and subjects or maintenance of status quo ante bellum) to a new ideology of cooperation, integration and partnership as the art of statehood between the leader and the led such that the governors and the governed are seen as partners in the national project of governance and societal development.
- ii. Enhancing political participation is a pre-requisite for building a coherent national community. This can be done structurally by decentralization aimed at enhancing access to the state and making it more responsive to local needs.
- iii. Building national communities by actively engaging the citizens with the state. This can help make it more accountable especially disadvantaged groups.
- iv. Lastly, supporting civil society will promote access to information, freedom of expression, developing pro-poor associations. They play a critical role in developing the social and political capacities of the poor, increasing the effectiveness in influencing governance institutions and making the latter more responsive to needs

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