

## GOOD GOVERNANCE: A VARIABLE TOOL FOR NATION BUILDING IN NIGERIA

**\*Akinlade, M. T.**

**Igbalajobi Muiliu**

*Political Science Department*

*College of Education, Ikere-Ekiti, Ekiti State, Nigeria*

*\*E-mail: orbitalguzue@yahoo.com*

### ABSTRACT

*An alarming and recurrent theme in the political system of Nigeria is pluralism. The pluralistic nature of Nigeria is as a result of colonialism and the eventual fusion of various independent nations. Serenity and harmony have since taken their flight thereby giving way to discord and crises among the different ethnic groups that make up the country. The divides of the society are often used for the identification of those to be lynched, hence ethno-religious consciousness becomes the beginning of wisdom in Nigeria. The thrust of this paper therefore, is an historical account of the reasons for the fusion, the attendant usage of differences for unhealthy rivalry by Nigerians, identification of efforts at nation building with a submission that good governance would surmount such rivalries and make Nigerians see one another as siblings or belonging to the same nation irrespective of place of origin.*

### INTRODUCTION

The Nigerian state is undoubtedly a composition of many ethnic groups. Interest have increasingly developed on the need for mutual understanding and harmonious relationship among the various ethno-religious groups, especially as their attitudes now exemplify hostilities. It appears as if there is no hope in sight to the lingering and unhealthy rivalry that have since held the country hostage. The cankerworm has its origin in the colonization of Nigeria but ably complemented by our political elites. Almost forty-nine years after Balewa declared on the occasion of Nigeria's independence that "now we have acquired our rightful status, and I feel sure that history will show that the building of our nation proceeded at the wisest pace, it has been thorough and Nigeria now stands well built upon firm foundation" (Balewa, 2003).

Unfortunately, Nigeria is yet to acquire its rightful status as envisaged by Balewa and the nation of Nigeria has not been built as one can see without spectacle the spate of murderous offences against humanity in the name of inter and intra ethnic crises as well as political violence in different parts of the country and the unwillingness of individuals to live in part of the country other than theirs. The destruction of lives and property in the name of ethnic differences call relentlessly for nation building. Thus, a new person that attach little or no significance to ethno-

religious colouration but see beauty, pride and great pleasure in himself as a Nigerian, other person who parades himself as the same and every thing attached to Nigeria within and outside the country's territory can be made. Omoniji (2005) puts it that a nation consists of people living in the same territory, having the same language, with the same consciousness and the same culture. Anifowose (1999) has made us to understand that, Dankwart Rustow noted that there are both subjective and objective dimension of nationhood. Our concern here is the objective dimension which Anifowose (1999) observes is concerned with those factors as common history, common territory, common language or literature, common culture and similar characteristics. Drawing from the above, the view of Bamgbose (2000) is uphold that Nigeria is not a nation but a multi-nation state. Ogunbemi (2008) also believes that Nigeria is an heterogeneous entity with over 250 indigenous ethnic groups. Therefore, we can assert that Nigeria consist of over 250 nations.

Nation Building involves the psychological reconstruction of individuals, a process of infusing into the people of new independent territories who differ widely in language, religions and values with a new sense of common belonging and share identity (Adekanye cited by Otelaja 2008). According to Omoniji (2005), nation building involves the building of the individual and the structuring of his environment, the creation or recreation of a political community with a relevant economic system and the search for it, of a cohesive and enduring ethos capable of making the individual identify with the political community. Taking a clue from Adekanye citing in Omoniji (2005), we can assert that, nation building implies the building of spirit of patriotism, solidarity and understanding among the large ethnic that make up a country, where every one becomes loyal to the country and stop subordination of national interest to regional interest. The ethno-religious crisis implies the breakdown of understanding between people of different cultural and religious background which results into physical and psychological unrest within a country.

Babawale (2006) points to the fact that World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) refer to Good Governance as the exercise of political power to promote the public good or the welfare of the people. Ndulo (2006) argues that good governance entails first and foremost a government that lives up to its responsibilities by ensuring effective delivery of public goods and services, the maintenance of law and order and the administration of Justice. Babawale (2006) further cited Nwabueze (2002) to have written that, public goods embrace within its ambit, the norms or values of free, just ordered and law governed society as well as those of happiness and the good life. From the foregoing, we can state that good governance is inseparable from democracy and that it entails welfare or economic satisfaction of the people. Probably, good governance is perhaps the single most important factor in eradicating poverty and promotion of development (Manning, 2006). The Nigeria state was of British making and its nomenclature was suggested by a Briton, Miss Flora Shaw who later married Lord Lugard. Akinboye and Anifowose (1999) agree with this, when they say that what we now know as

Nigeria started to evolve in 1861 following the annexation of Lagos as a crown colony and as a result of the gradual incorporation of the contiguous area and people into the British. After the gradual incorporation had been achieved, Britain then sought for administrative convenience and the climax of that; the November 1913 order-in-council which led to the January 1914 amalgamation of protectorate of Northern Nigeria with colony and protectorate of South by Sir Lord Frederick Lugard. It has to be noted that, the Selbourne committee set up in 1898 by the secretary of states for the colonies, Joseph Chamberlin had earlier recommended the union of North and South as soon as communication network was established (Ige, 1999).

***The major force behind the amalgamation and administrative convenience:*** It is obvious that the Southern part of Nigeria was economically viable while the North was not and it was the desire to make South shoulder the financial burden of the North coupled with lack of willingness of Britain to secure huge cost on her colonies that made the amalgamation a necessity (Olaiya and Awe, 2004). Akin (2000) agrees with this assertion when he observed that Southern Nigeria was rich in agricultural and mineral resources notably palm oil, palm kernel, cocoa and timber. There was also the fact that large custom duties accrued to the southern administration. Southern Nigeria was self-sustaining while the Northern province was still supported with grants. For instance, in 1912, the south had a revenue of two and a quarter million pound sterling with a surplus of one million pounds while the North had only half a million pounds of local revenue including a grant-in-aid from the British of seventy thousand pounds (Olaiya and Awe, 2004). Drawing from Akin's (2000) view one would be on the good side of history to write that, the amalgamation of Nigeria was purely in the interest of the colonial power and not the colonized. Also, record did not show any effort made by Britain to unite the people. Hence, we conclude that administration or geographical entities were amalgamated in 1914 and not the people of Nigeria.

***The Use of Ethnicity by Nigerians:*** There is no doubt that the British introduced regionalism ethnicity by poisoning the blood stream Nigerians against one another so as to keep them under perpetual exploitation and subjugation. Nigerians, especially the ruling elites effectively complemented and manipulated it to the fullest thereby bringing everything in the country into disarray. Our political elites have continued to use ethnicity to their own political and economic advantage but to the peril of the vast majority. Babawale (2006) in his beautifully analyzed argument observes that there are two levels at which ethnicity has been used in Nigeria electoral politics. The first he wrote has been used by the elites to keep themselves in political office by playing on the fears of the poverty-stricken majority of their exploited people. He went further to say that the elite use the ethnic factor to remain themselves in office as political leaders or directors of transnational corporations by making false claims of representing their ethnic groups. In reality, these people fail to contribute to the quality of lives of their people. The second level according to Babawale (2006), is

that the politicization of ethnicity has made many Nigerians to have less confidence in the Nigerian state than they have in their ethnic or communal association. Today in Nigeria, tribalism had covered the rank and file of the country. Ige (1999) traced tribalism in Nigeria to politics' and wrote on how Azikiwe consciously or unconsciously contributed to it as newspapers before Azikiwe started the west Africa pilot hardly ever mentioned the ethnic origin of who ever they reported on. As at that time Ige (1999) noted that "tribal" politics had begun in earnest. Tribalism later led to crisis between Ernest Ikoli and Samuel Akinsanya and crisis led to the breakup of Nigeria Youth Movement. James Coleman cited by Bamgbose (2000) said it was the first major manifestation of tribal tension that affected all subsequent efforts to achieve unity. We can further discuss tribal politics in Nigeria under two heading of pre 1966 and post 1966 rivalry.

Though, the pre 1966 tribalism set the stage in motion for post 1966 tension, but one unique feature of pre 1966 was that tribal sentiment was blown not for selfish reasons as exemplified in post 1966 era but for regional development. The regionalization of political NPC, AG and NCNC amplified the sound of regionalism and the eventual humiliation suffered by Northern leaders from Southern citizen at the time of parliamentary meeting where Sir Ahmadu Bello amended Anthony Enahoro's motion for self government on 1st April, 1953 with the phrase as soon as practicable, has a severed consequence on the unity of Nigeria. The Kano riot of 16th May, 1953 where as Oyediran et al (2002) put it, at least thirty-six people were killed and 241 wounded was its direct consequence.

Tribalism became chronic and took a militant dimension with its devastating effects in 1966 and post 1966 days. The January 15, 1966 military coup led by Chukwuma Kaduna Nzeogwu in which 7 top Northerns, 2 Westerners, 1 person from Mid-west and 1 from Eastern Nigeria were killed and the consequent Decree 34 as well as the eventual counter coup and civil war astronomically heightened tension among the various tribes despite the fact that Nzeogwu said, we seized power to stamp out tribalism, nepotism and regionalism (Ojiako, 1982).

Since then, tribalism has degenerated into bloodshed. The post 1966 political, religious elites and military rulers have manipulated it to visit untold hardship in form of crisis due to inciting message on Nigerians and this is purely for selfish or personal purposes. Ordinarily between 1999 and 2004, Adeogun (2006) listed seventeen different ethno-religious motivated crises in Nigeria.

#### **EFFORTS AT NATION BUILDING**

Different effort have been made to ensure nation building or unity in Nigeria. For instance Bamgbose (2000) discussed how Tafawa Balewa formed the national government in 1957, and the resistance of Awolowo to join NPC and NCNC coalition government. Bamgbose (2000) observed that Irosi's unification decree aimed at nation building while Murtala addressed the constitution drafting committee that the constitution should discourage institution opposition and encourage consensus

politics. Meanwhile, he equally pointed to how NPN invited other parties to form a national government which they resisted with the exception of NNP that joined only for fifteen months. Ogunbemi (2008) cited some authors such as F. M. I. (1979), Bozimo and Kwumeln (1999), Falade (2004) and Afolabi (2006) listed some of the national symbols as well as the policies of subsequent governments as complementary efforts at achieving unity and integration in Nigeria. The symbols include the National pledge, National Anthem, Coat of Arms, National Flag and National passport. Others are the introduction of National Youth Service Corps (NYSC), the Nigeria Constitution, the Quota system, Federal Capital Territory, Nigerian Army and Nigerian Police Force.

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Nigerians are desirous of good governance and it would be the most veritable tool for nation building in the country. If good governance can be achieved, Nigerians would live in unity and it is the believe of Nigerians that some individuals can help enthrone good governance and unity in the country and this conviction made all and sundry to vote M.K.O Abiola, a Yoruba man against Bashir Othman Tofa, a Northerner even in the North on 12th June 1993 as the president of Nigeria. Shoyinka (2009) captured it when he says, "a candidate- I please remain you? With a mandate across the national landscape, unambiguously defeating his opponent. That contest was universally adjudged to be impeccable fair.

The aspirant to the mantle of state subdued his opponent even in that this did not resound like the starting-pistol of a nation race, a marathon of course," Abiola was as president that never was because Ibrahim Gbadamosi Babangida, the then military president of Nigeria annulled the "general will" of Nigerians. All nation building efforts were frustrated and tribal or regional loyalties increase despite the bold entrenchment in section 15 sub-section 4 of the 1999 constitution of Nigeria that loyalty to the federation should override regional loyalties. It has been so because the efforts failed to give priority or primary to the most fundamental (good governance) upon which other efforts should rest. The tenets of good governance briefly discussed below will immeasurably ensure nation building in Nigeria.

**Reduction of Poverty:** How can we explain that United Nations Development Programme rated Nigeria as one of the poorest countries of the world in 2003 with 70% (over 91 million Nigerians) living below the poverty line which is one dollar per day. It must be noted that the condition remains the same today and this means that 127,403223.2 going by the population result released by NPC in 2007, live below one dollar per day in Nigeria. Therefore, economic empowerment must be the first command at any serious step at nation building in Nigeria. This will reduce violence, increase tolerance, reasonabilities and increase consciousness due to knowledge or education among Nigerians and make the rate at which the elites use the masses as cannon fodder reduce.

**Full Employment:** Critical to the above is full employment opportunities. The rate



of unemployment is alarming to the extent that between 1999 and 2002 unemployment rate in Nigeria was 16.0% (Olaiya and Awe, 2004). After that period, railway, textile industries and banks sacked enmass. Therefore, to address this dangerous problem, the following must be done:

- a Aggressive infrastructural development in term of good and access roads.
- b Provision of constant power supply against epileptic present situation
- c Adequate supply of portable water
- d Good health facilities and well equipped security outfit and reduction of interest rest.

The above will spring up investment which will lead to full employment in the country.

**Reduction of Cost of Living:** Food items, building materials, petroleum products etc must be regulated to the extent that people are able buy them at cheaper prices. Also our schools should be accessible and less expensive. These will make people feel comfortable and also feel important to the Nigerian project.

**Rule of Law:** This can only be guaranteed in a genuine democracy. The underlying values of democracy according to Dye and Zeigler (2003), is the individual dignity. A striking yet sobering feature of Nigerian democracy is electoral fraud. The governorship elections of April 2007 in Ekiti, Ondo, Edo and Osun corrected by the law courts readily attest to this. How do people enjoy dignity under the present "democratic" dispensation? It is by a wholesale reformation of the electoral process in such a way that neither the chief executive officer nor the legislature would be in charge of appointment of electoral officers as well as the finance of the body. Also, the judiciary should be insulated against the executive so that they can continue to be the beacon of the common man. A vibrant press and civil society which include non-governmental organizations, trade unions, religious bodies, students and youth groups must be allowed to flourish. These people will ensure political education of the people and act as watch dogs to the government.

When the above are achieved, political elites would have little influence or control over the psyche of the masses in their regions because the intrigue of blaming the poverty state of the people on other regions would have no value before the masses. Also, ethnic crises is on the steady rise because of the large scale poverty and unemployment army who are readily available for riot at the recipient of ridiculous token from the unscrupolous rich people in their society.

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