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دورية علمية محكمة

المجلد العاشر (العدد التاسع عشر، يناير 2025)

The Challenges of State-building in Nigeria ⁽¹⁾

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⁽¹⁾ تم تقديم البحث في 2024/7/3، وتم قبوله للنشر في 2024/10/7.

Abstract

The work is the analysis of both the various nation-building challenges that have confronted Nigeria since independence. The dream of Nigeria since independence in 1960 is to turn itself into a viable and cohesive nation. This has become an impossible dream however due to a myriad of challenges. Nigeria is a multi-ethnic society with over 250 ethnic groups. Each of these ethnic groups also have religious and economic issues that separates them from one another. Nigeria's diversity has been a major obstacle in its drive to become a global and responsible player in the international community. By using the qualitative research methodology, the work identified various challenges, such as leadership, corruption, inequality and distribution that have been the major barriers to the creation of a viable polity. The style used in the study is also historical, descriptive and analytical. Crucially, the study also used the concept of nation-building as its Theoretical Framework.

Keywords: State-building, nationhood, separatism, nationalist agitations, insurgency

تحديات بناء الدولة في نيجيريا

المخلص

تتطرق هذه الورقة البحثية لموضوع التحديات المختلفة لبناء الدولة التي واجهت نيجيريا منذ الاستقلال. إذ إن حلم نيجيريا منذ الاستقلال في عام 1960 هو تحويل نفسها إلى دولة مستقرة و متماسكة. لقد أصبح هذا الأمر حلاً مستحيلًا بسبب عدد كبير من التحديات، أبرزها أن نيجيريا مجتمع متعدد الأعراق - يضم أكثر من 250 مجموعة عرقية - ولكل من هذه المجموعات العرقية قضايا دينية واقتصادية تفصلها عن بعضها البعض، ولطالما كان التنوع في نيجيريا يمثل عقبة رئيسية في سعيها إلى التحول إلى لاعب إقليمي وفاعل مسؤول في المجتمع الدولي. وباستخدام منهجية البحث العلمي، حدد العمل تحديات مختلفة لموضوع بناء الدولة في نيجيريا، مثل مشكلة القيادة والفساد وعدم المساواة والتوزيع، والتي كانت بمثابة العوائق الرئيسية أمام إنشاء نظام سياسي مستقر. ولمقتضيات الضرورة العلمية، تم استخدام المنهج التاريخي والمدخل الوصفي والمقرب التحليلي. والأهم من ذلك، أن الدراسة استخدمت مفهوم بناء الأمة كإطار نظري لها.

الكلمات المفتاحية: بناء الدولة، القومية، الانفصالية، التحريضات القومية، التمرد.

Introduction

Nigeria as a country has been defined more by its fault lines or weaknesses over the years, and this underscore the need for state building. Two of Nigeria's post-independence leader in various discussions on Nigeria pejoratively asserted that the country is a "mere geographical expression" and that the "mistake of 1914 has come to light" respectively. At the heart of, or perhaps underlining, these averments are the absence of a national consensus and political legitimacy in governance among other issues, which constitute the National Question in Nigeria.

The Nigerian question boils down to fear of being dominated and grievances about being exploited. This narrows the problem to that of power relations between the ethnic nationalities and distribution of resources from the nation-state or central government. It is deductible therefore that the National Question centers on re-ordering the socio-cultural, economic and geo-political imbalance and configuration of Nigeria which comprise many nations and nationalities. Some of the basic issues constituting the national question include: federal structure which is overbearing or a dominant center; the application of federal character principle; national integration evidenced by absence of loyalty to the federation; the minority question/resource control agitations which translates to an appropriate formula for sharing resources to the detriment of resource generation, religious differences (Sharia), insurgency and terrorism.

It is pertinent to note that it is not the presence of many nationalities in the nation-state that poses the challenge called the Nigerian Question; it is the management of the power relations between them that forms the crux of the matter. The character of the state, the leading personnel of the state and public policy output are crucial to the resolution of this question. Some state-building initiatives have been devised and implemented by successive central (military and civil) governments in Nigeria, which include: regionalism; state creation; federal character principle, introduction of Unity Schools and National Youth Service Corps. This paper seeks to discover most important challenges that face state-building in Nigeria.

Hypothesis and Structure

The central thesis of this paper is that the state-building initiatives utilized by successive central governments in Nigeria suffer from inherent philosophical contradictions because their bases were not properly articulated

and the objectives lack focus and clarity. Moreover, there are a number of challenges that impede state building in Nigeria, perhaps the most prominent of which are: corruption, leadership, inequality, and social problems. These account for the poor application of the measures and the inability to achieve national integration and equity upon which development efforts rest.

The paper is made up of eight parts. The first is the Abstract; followed by Introduction; and sequentially as follows: Hypothesis and Structure of the Paper; Theoretical Discourse & Concepts, Overview of Governance Development in Nigeria, State-building and Nigeria's Experience, Challenges of State Building and the final part anchored the Conclusion and of the paper.

Previous studies

There are many studies that have addressed the issue of state-building and nation-building in Nigeria, but they were not as comprehensive as our study. We can mention some of those studies.

1. Charles, E. E. & Jide, C. & Frank, N. E. (2016). The irony of Nigeria's fight against corruption: An appraisal of president Muhammadu Buhari's first eight months in office, International Journal of history and philosophical research, 4(1), 61-73
2. Azuonwu, G. (2002). Understanding group dynamics: Effective tool for conflict resolution in Nigeria, Ibadan: Evi-Coleman Publication.
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4. Mylonas, H. (2012). The politics of nation building: Making co-nationals refugees and minorities. New York. Cambridge University Press.
5. Nwabughuogu, A. I. (2016). Problems of nation building in Africa. Okigwe: Fasmen Communications.

• Theoretical Discourse & Concepts

First: Theoretical Discourse

Classical and contemporary understandings of government emphasize the existence of the sociopolitical structures and processes that authoritatively determined the allocation of societal values (Easton, 1953, p.54). The ability to construct institutional reality is based, in its depth, on the biological ability that we humans possess (Abd, 2016, p.151). Stretched further, the institution called government is necessary to resolve or manage conflicts between groups

within a society by making decisions, which are enforceable without necessarily using force (Assafi & Aziz, 2022, p.2510). This makes for the organization of society for the ultimate good of all-public good.

Almost every society is made up of economic, political, cultural, religious, and professional groups. The activities of these groups are often managed in an institutionalized system, in which three main organs are prominent in most modern societies. The three organs, known in many places as legislature, executive, and judiciary, are in charge of formulating policies, implementing such policies and rendering advice as well as relevant suggestions, and adjudicating as well as interpreting for reconciliation in cases of conflicts respectively. Although societies vary as to how these important organs operate, it is common, especially in democracies, for them to have distinct spheres of operations, so as not to concentrate all powers in a single institution or individual. However, this does not imply acrimony as these arms of government and other relevant agencies, which operate in between, primarily exist for the good of all.

The government of a democracy is accountable to the people. It has the responsibility to fulfill its end of the social contract, while public officials (political office holders and civil servants) are social servants; they serve society and the population. The government has the responsibility to ensure equality and promote fundamental human rights. Therefore, governance is involved in the process of achieving all these lofty goals of liberty and societal good. The United Nations sees governance as the formal and informal arrangements that determine how public decisions are made and how public actions are carried out from the perspective of maintaining a country's constitutional values.

Drawing from this, governance presupposes a power structure with its own hierarchical categories, incorporating the economic, social, cultural, and political tensions within the society, and thus spreading out an inherent dynamism which absorbs the ebbs and flows of pressures toward ensuring peaceful and effective solutions to existential problems confronting the society and its people (Saleh & Jabr, 2022, p.514).

From the above functional analysis of governance, it should be noted that governance transcends politics and the traditional notion of government. Its various aspects and sub-systems are also highly interconnected for effective administration. In other words, government, business, and

citizens—through civic engagement—“play different but profoundly complementary and collaborative roles,” so as to engender economic productivity, competitiveness, and development, in general (Ezekwesili, 2011, p.19).

Second: Theoretical Concepts

1. Concept of the State

If states are the bedrock of the international system, they are surprisingly under-defined in international law. Despite the frequency with which the term “state” is used in international affairs – thirty-four times in the UN Charter alone – the formal definition of a state remains underspecified. The Montevideo Convention of 1933 provides the only definition under international law: statehood requires a permanent population, a specified territory, a government and the capacity to enter into relations with other states – a minimalist definition by any standard (Lauterpacht, 2012, p.419).

Meanwhile, the lack of definition is not a historical accident. Coming to a shared view of what constitutes a state has proved difficult in negotiations and hence for the most part has not been attempted, even as the institution of statehood spread rapidly around the globe. Worthy of note is that the United Nations which was created by and for states has neither formal criterion for statehood other than recognition by other states, nor is there any provision for “decertification” of statehood in the event of failure to meet some set of standards, either of capability or performance (Liebich, 2003, p.454).

Of course, academics and philosophers have not been so shy and have spawned numerous definitions and counter-definitions. Furthermore, an entire body of serious scholars argues (not without merit) that the very concept of the state is a figment of enlightenment imagination, one that obscures rather than illuminates the realities of political and economic systems (Hassan, 2017, p.56). The most widely accepted starting point for the explication of the state is still, therefore, the early definition provided by German theorist – Max Weber (1919). From Weber to Charles Tilly, the pre-eminent contemporary historian and theorist of state formation, to Ashraf Ghani, there lies a central intellectual thread built around Weber’s oft-recited definition of the state as “...a human community that ... claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory”. Four essential concepts reside in this seemingly sparse definition: that of a human

community (in modern form, usually a *national community*), the *monopoly of the use of force*, *legitimacy* and a bounded *territory*. Of these concepts, the most persistent has been the idea of a state as an entity that maintains a monopoly on the use of force (Mughamis & Kadhim, 2023, P.131). Many scholars argues that “an organization which controls the population occupying a defined territory is a state *in so far as* (1) it is differentiated from other organizations operating in the same territory; (2) it is autonomous; (3) it is centralized; and (4) its divisions are formally coordinated with one another” (Chesterman, 2006, p.146).

2. Nationhood

The idea of nationhood is one that has not been defined explicitly in international law. This is perhaps due to the inherent flexibility of the concept; it is multifaceted and loosely defined; nations are “self-defined”, meaning that its perception and existence depend on what people make of it. “National identity involves some sense of political community. However tenuous, this allows for loosely defined bonds to be created, marked by affiliation to any number of qualities. Thus, nations are essentially “a self-constituted ‘natural’ category, a group of people who naturally form a unit with a common past, present and, often explicitly, future; a group of people who share things...that mark them off from other groups...” (Walker, 2007, p.584).

At the most basic level, nation has been defined as a collective or large group of individuals that are bound together and therefore unified by commonalities like language, ethnicity, habits, behaviors and customs (Hikmat, 2019, p.197). However, national identities are highly complex and this raises significant questions of what may actually constitute a nation in practice rather than theory. For example, many argues that a nation is built upon myth and memory because these elements forge a collective purpose, hence inducing a sense of belonging that all too often inspires the ‘nation’ to defend its identity.

Stalin asks what a nation was in his text *Marxism and the National Question*, noting that nationhood goes beyond tribal and racial origins. He, instead, advocates that a nation must be a “...historically constituted community of people”, thus situating the idea firmly in historical, political and social discourses that extend into the past (Stalin, 1913). It has however been observed that the term itself is not a modern one. Rather, it can be traced back to the 14th century where it referred to a series of concepts that extend

from the idea of descendants, countries and births (Harper, 2001). In effect, the structure of the idea behind it has always been complex, but has evolved alongside understandings and attitudes towards what constitutes a nation. Despite this, the notion of unification has remained constant with Egypt essentially being identified as the first nation as a direct result of the shared ethnic background, cultural consensus and unification on which it was built (Gat, 2013, p.89). In effect, the concept of a nation existed for several millennia prior to the actual term.

3. State-building

In its simplest formulation, state-building, especially as understood by the international community since the 1990s, refers to the set of actions undertaken by national and/or international actors to establish, reform and strengthen state institutions where these have seriously been eroded or are missing. Key goals of state-building include provision of security (Wali, 2017, p.84), establishment of the rule of law, effective delivery of basic goods and services through functional formal state institutions, and generation of political legitimacy for the (new) set of state institutions being built (Brinkerhoff, 2007, p.11).

It could be inferred from the above definition that state-building and governance are closely related terms. They both share a concern about similar issues, especially on how to make institutions work better. However, in many ways, state-building is an antecedent task. It is a more all-encompassing/holistic endeavor, and the term can imply a more explicit awareness of the political nature of institution-building (Fritz & Menocal, 2007, p.536). Put differently, state-building is about constructing the foundations of the very (government) edifice within which governance ought to operate; without prior construction of this edifice, governance interventions are likely to have only limited impact (Alwan & Majeed, 2022, p.665). At the same time, ensuring the quality and integrity of government is an important dimension of the state-building process, including generation of the legitimacy of a new or re-emerging state.

• The Governance Development in Nigeria

The specific issues examined in this section are, namely, security of life and property; rule of law; accountability, transparency, and corruption; and electoral system. However, in view of the pivotal role of leadership, it is also analyzed as part of the key factors in Africa's governance problem.

Before this is done, it is useful to draw some broad instances of governance crises from across Africa. Take for example, since the end of the Cold War in the early 1990s, and despite the growing embrace of democratic governance processes, the African continent has had to grapple with multiple of challenges of insecurity, poverty, injustice, and underdevelopment, in general. These range from civil wars (Liberia and Sierra Leone), postelection violence (Cote d'Ivoire, 2010, and Nigeria, 2011), coups d'état (Mali and Guinea Bissau, 2012), large scale uprisings, and the associated migratory flows (Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya since 2011), xenophobic attacks (South Africa and Zambia), to the growing threats of transnational crimes, violent extremism, and terrorism across the continent.

According to many experts, most of these security challenges have emerged partly as a result of "multiple socio-economic injustices," including but not limited to "marginalization, social inequality, political exclusion, corruption, economic deprivation, unequal allocation and distribution of state resources, among others" (Aning, 2016, p.4). In examining these issues, it is important to adopt one or more of the strategies often adopted by scholars on governance and development. In Nigeria, there is the epoch by epoch examination of regimes as it is found in Adamolekun, or a taxonomy which utilizes constitutional order. These two are related in a way but slightly different. Based on constitutional order, three main epochs can easily be identified as far as governance in postcolonial Nigeria is concerned. They are parliamentary system, also called the Westminster model, military autocracy, and the presidential system (Oladeji, 2010, p.115).

For the regime or tenure-based classification, five main categorizations are identified. They are namely, First Republic (1960-1966), First Coming of the Military (1966-1979), Second Republic (1979-1983), Second coming of the Military (1984-1999), and Fourth Republic (1999-till date). The Third Republic, which is omitted in the categorization, was quite unique as it combined the features of a military autocracy and a democratic dispensation. It was between 1992 and 1993, with a military Head of State and a full-fledged ministerial cabinet as well as a national parliament of representatives of the people and elected state governors and assemblies also at the state levels.

In examining these issues, it is important to consider one or more of the strategies often adopted by scholars on governance and development for

the analysis of this study. In Nigeria's First Republic, the country practiced a parliamentary system that was patterned after the British model. The government, at this period, was largely democratic and federal in character. Powers and resources were essentially decentralized, with the effect that subnational units were strong, relatively independent and largely self-financing (Nigeria, 2002, p.297). This system which, in terms of its impact on the living conditions of the generality of the people and evidence of physical infra-structure was relatively functional, was curiously replaced with the presidential system in the country's Second Republic.

It should be recalled that Nigeria's multiethnic nature fragmented its multiparty system and legislature, during the First Republic, so much that the prime minister had to seek help in a political alliance to garner the necessary authority to rule. Since the enactment of the 1946 Richards Constitution of Nigeria, that provided the basis for Nigeria's federalism, the politicization of the multiethnic groupings has become a bane to Nigeria's national unity, effective governance, and development. The militarization of power and its accumulation for personal and prerental interests further deepened ethnic divisions and hostilities in the country. Despite strong optimism that a return to democracy in 1999 would abolish ethnicity and ethnoreligious conflicts, the country continues to be driven by tides of ethnic hostilities with devastating consequences. Babangida enumerates such consequences as a "waste of enormous human and material resources leading to fragility of the economy and its political process" (Kwaja, 2009, p.108).

- **Nigerian experience in State-building**

Scholars of political science are wont to commencing their discussion on the concept of state by asserting that it is an abstract entity that can be felt through the operation of its institutions. It is to this extent that the state is qualified by its organizational presence and as an organizational abstraction that homogenizes and hegemonies "a society conceived as inherently fragmented, atomized and centerless" (Olaitan, 1998, p.137). It is pertinent to note that elite complicity in resource management and governance in Nigeria could present it as a fragmented and atomized society, the country is definitely not centerless due to military incursion into governance and their centralizing tendencies via decrees, which substitutes federal practice for unitarism (Onah & Ibietan, 2010, p.265).

A distinction must be made between state building initiatives targeted at creating a new state where one did not exist before and a situation “where the state in existence has a fitful life...and one designed to consolidate the existence of the state through changes to meet...the contrasting interests of its peoples in its institutions and principles in order to be meaningful” (Onah & Ibietan, 2010, p.265). The latter part of this averment seems to typify the Nigerian situation. Accordingly, several policy initiatives namely: regionalism; state creation; federal character principle; National Youth Service Corps; and Unity Schools, among others have been conceived and implemented by successive central administrations in Nigeria (James, 2014, p.121). It is however plausible to argue based on the initial dichotomy that a new state anchored on genuine nationalistic orientation and consciousness of citizens is desired for Nigeria. This is predicated on the views that the 1914 amalgamation that produced the country as a single entity is artificial and a “creation of British colonial authority whose primary motive was economic imperialism (Obasi, 2005, p.55), and constitutes a foremost danger signpost of the Nigerian state.

In a related discourse, Ake posited that state building is one of the challenges “which the political system has to cope with.” He corroborated that state building represent measures aimed at solving “the problem of establishing or maintain authority of penetration and control”. Other challenges that the political system has to cope with are participation (nation building; distribution and welfare) (Ake, 2003, p.9).

Building on the works of other scholars, Bereketeab posited that state building “occurs through the penetration and integration of the territorial economy, polity and society and speaks to questions of political authority and effective governance.” This underscores the idea of horizontal and vertical integration with special emphasis on societal integration and state penetration of society, which is sine qua non for contemporary state formation. The issue of legitimacy in governance strikes directly at the heart of discussion on state-building which translates to the willingness and consent of citizens to state rule. The consequences of legitimacy deficit are dire, and they include state failure and implosion (Bereketeab, 2013, p.73).

Efforts and attempts at state-building in Nigeria can be better highlighted as the response to the Nationality Question, but there are problems with this solution, not only arising from the faulty conception of the

Nigerian state, but due to the inadequacies and deficiencies of the policy measures. The ineffectiveness of these measures resonates from the following features of the Nigerian State: it has been an exploitative state, largely irrelevant or coercive. Gana aptly qualified this point thus: “the Nigerian federal state has been transformed into political monster-thanks to the oil economy” (Gana, 2003, p.17).

Onyeoziri enumerated the other attributes of the Nigerian state to include its indifference to social welfare; the state has an image of a hostile coercive force (and this converges with the assertion made above by the Nigerian state lacks autonomy, this reverberates on the overhang that the governing elites are predatory and carriers of particularistic nationalism. The net effect and painful repercussion of these are that securing acceptance and winning legitimacy belong to the realms of fiction or a tall order (Onyeoziri, 2002, p.27).

Weber operationalized state building in a federal system as a “process whereby the associative type of relationship implied in the conscious creation of a federal state is transformed into the communal type in which orientation to social action is based on a feeling that everyone belongs together.” This seems to be a mirage in Nigeria, although there was a glimmering attempt that found expression in the June 12, 1993 presidential elections, wherein Nigerians jettisoned mundane sentiments and banal inhibitions to vote massively for their preferred candidate. History was made on 23rd June, 1993 as this election adjudged to be the freest, fairest and most credible was annulled by a selfish, clueless and rapacious military junta (Ibenwa, 2014, p.7). “Thus began the reverse process of de-nationalizing the state”. It is obvious from the foregoing that the task of state building in Nigeria has become herculean or arduous requiring adept leadership, nationalistic re-orientation and patriotic commitment (Gana, 2003, p.16).

• **Challenges of State Building in Nigeria**

Scholars interested in the State-Building discuss in Africa nay Nigeria, are in agreement that, the attainment of ersatz independence did not come with liberation from problems facing African countries. Their independence status rather opened new chapters in their respective histories and one of the most turbulent chapters in Africa’s chequered post-colonial history is the one on the challenges of State-Building (Iroanusi, 2009).

The following are some of the challenges of State-Building in Nigeria since independence.

1. Historical Challenge

The legacies of colonial rule created some challenges to nation-building in Nigeria. Colonial rule split Nigeria into irreconcilable halves-North and South with different land tenure systems, local government administration, educational systems, and judicial systems. While large British colonies like India and Sudan had a single administrative system, Nigeria had two, one each for the North and South. It was almost as if these were two separate countries, held together only by shared currency and transportation system. Many members of the elite in the 1950s and 1960s had their education and world outlook molded by the regional institutions. Some had little or no understanding of their neighboring regions. Under these conditions, it was easy for prejudice and fear to thrive. During the period of decolonization struggle, Nigerian nationalists from different regions fought each other as much as they fought the British colonialists. Nigeria never had a central figure like Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana or Nelson Mandela of South Africa, rather each region threw up its own ethnic champions (Gambari, 2008, p.3).

From the historical legacy, regionalism has been a major challenge to nation-building in Nigeria. To their credit, however, the founding fathers of Nigeria tried to deal with this challenge by adopting federalism and advocating a policy of unity-in-diversity. Unfortunately, the lack of consolidation of Nigerian federalism around commonly shared values and positions means that this challenge of divisive historical legacy continues to undermine the nation's efforts at nation-building. A close manifestation of this is the division between „indigenes“ and „settlers“. This division has been a source of domestic tension and undermined the efforts at creating a common nationhood as evident in the ethno-religious crises in the case of insurgency in the North-East, inter and intra-ethnic conflicts, the intractable Jukun-Tiv conflicts, among others (Ashiru, 2009, p.34).

2. Leadership Challenge

Leadership is a responsibility and not a privilege. Nigerian leadership has declined with the destruction of the First Republic with military intervention in 1966 except for some occasional attempts there have been no genuine efforts to salvage the leadership situation (Elaigwu, 2012, p.68). Chinua Achebe has stoutly demonstrated the intractability of the leadership

challenge in Nigeria. Using the colonial setting in Arrow of God, Akachi Ezeigbo analyzed the theme of leadership thus, Achebe seems to imply that the struggle for power at different levels of individual and communal interaction by people of different beliefs, orientations and backgrounds would more often than not generate crises and conflicts which could cause a lot physical, mental and spiritual harm to those concerned and even others who are under authority (Umaru, 2012, p.5).

In another of Achebe's books, *The Trouble with Nigeria*, he stated that the trouble with Nigeria is the failure of leadership. This is because, "In spite of conventional opinion Nigeria has been less than fortunate in its leadership. A basic element of this misfortune is the seminal absence of intellectual rigour in the political thought of our founding fathers- a tendency to pious materialistic wooliness and self-centered pedestrianism". An absence of vision coupled with lack of intellectualism has plagued Nigeria into the abyss of poor leadership from the twilight of colonialism through independence to post-independence. Leadership is a critical factor in nation-building and it should be understood in two important but related ways. First, there are the personal qualities of integrity, honesty, commitment and competence of individual leaders. Second, there are the collective qualities of common vision, focus and desire for development of the elite as a whole (Umaru, 2012, p.5).

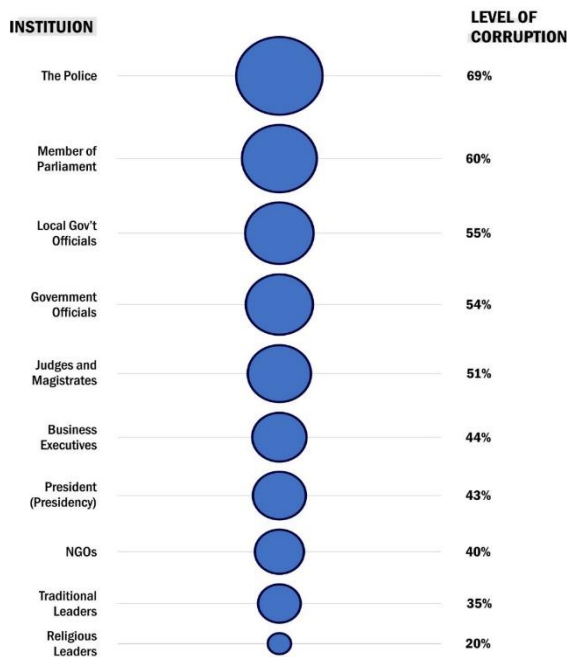
The standards for recruitment and performance of our individual leaders over the years have left much to be desired. Nigeria do not need leaders who do not understand the economic and political problems of the country, leaders who see themselves as champions of only some section of the entire population, leaders who cannot find a durable solution to the nation's problems. Nigerians do not need leaders who are interested in silencing their opponents, than in pursuing justice. To succeed in the nation-building effort, Nigeria must have a leadership that is committed to the rule of law and has a demonstrable sense of fair play and democratic tolerance, a leadership with the ability and integrity above the ostentatious pomp of office (Gambari, 2008, p.5).

3. Corruption Challenge

The issue of corruption in Nigeria is a terribly fragile web. The Nigerian situation of corruption was once described thus by the Weekly Star

of 15th May, 1983 with the caption, “The Nigerian and Corruption” “keeping an average Nigerian from being corrupt is like keeping a goat from eating yam” (Chinua, 1983, p.18). The newspaper description of Nigerians using the yam and the goat analogy is rather over-simplistic and over-generalization which attracted Achebe’s rebuttal, clarification and recommendation on endemic corruption prevalent in Nigeria (Ekeh, 1999, p.12).

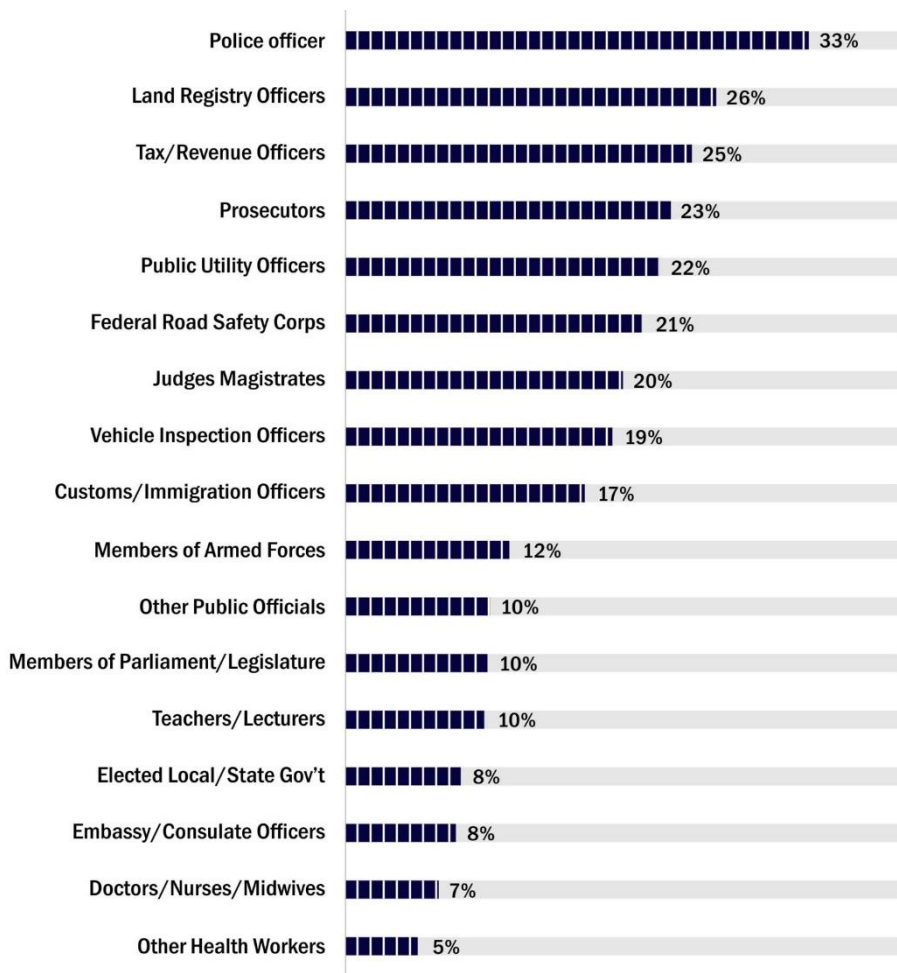
FIGURE (1)
Corruption Levels in Nigeria by Institutions 2020



A goat needs yam because yam is food for goats. A Nigerian does not need corruption, neither is corruption necessary nourishment for Nigerians (Aeowolo, 2011, p.19). Nigerians are corrupt because the system under which they live today makes corruption easy and profitable; they will cease to be corrupt when corruption is made difficult and inconvenient (Imbua, Sandy & Odey, 2017, p.72).

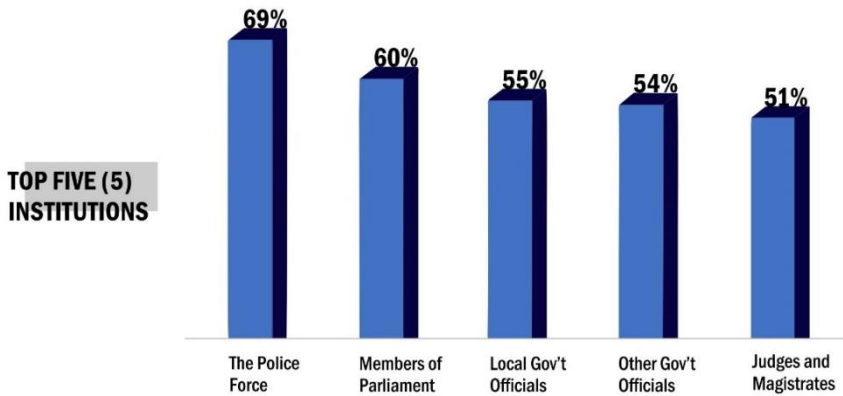
FIGURE (2)

Bribery rate among officials in Nigeria



The military officers who aborted the country’s post-colonial democratic experiment averred that the aim of the revolutionary council was to “establish a strong united and prosperous nation, free from corruption and internal strife” (Audu, 2008, p.21). Continuing the young military officers stated, Our enemies are the political profiteers, the swindlers, the men in high and low places that seek bribes and 10 percent, those that seek to help the country divided permanently so that they can remain in office as ministers or VIPs, at least the tribalists, the nepotists, those that make the country look big for nothing before the international circles, those that have corrupted our society and put the Nigerian political calendar back to their words and deeds (Chibo, 2011, p.153).

FIGURE (3)
Top 5 Most Corrupt Institutions in Nigeria

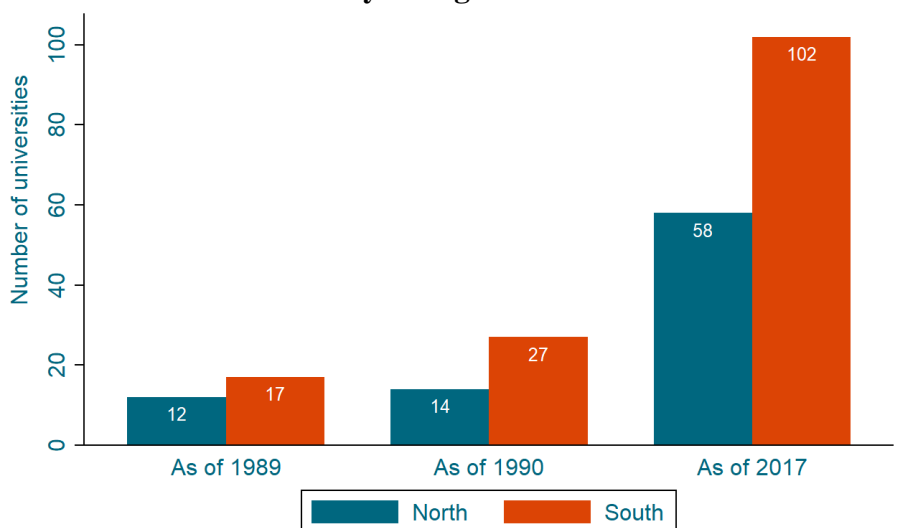


The Fourth Republic appears to be riddled with despite creation of anti-corruption agencies like the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and the Independent Corrupt Practices and Related Offences Commission (ICPC) by the Olusegun Obasanjo's Administration in 1999 (Azuonwu, 2002, p.91: Amunden, 1999, p.21).

4. Challenges of Socio-Economic Inequalities

The denial of equal opportunities for Nigerian is a major challenge to nation-building in Nigeria. The building of a common citizenship is an important aspect of nation-building. In Nigeria, not only are many citizens denied basic rights life freedom of speech, life, movement, and association just as access to basic infrastructure like education, roads, water, health, employment, and electricity. This has caused the rate of impunity to soar, increase in the illiteracy, unemployment and insecurity rate, and above all, economic depression. The failure of the Nigerian government to address the contentious resource control conundrum has caused violence protest in the Creeks of the Niger Delta leading to the militarization of the oil-rich region and loss of oil revenue to the country. It is also worthy of note that the environmental degradation in the Niger Delta as a result of oil exploration with no commensurate compensation from the Federal Government and the various multinational Corporation and the socio-economic prosperity in the North at the expense of the oil-producing region briefly explains the grievances of the region (Chibo, 2011, p.153).

FIGURE (4)
Poverty in Nigeria for 2017



Source: Author's compilation using data from the National Universities Commission (NUC) of Nigeria

Total is of federal, state and private universities

5. The Constitutional Challenge

Since independence, Nigeria has been faced with the challenge of crafting a constitution that would reflect the needs and aspirations of the citizens. The opening statement in the 1999 Constitution (As amended) “We the People of Nigeria...” has been contested to be fraudulent because, the Constitution was midwife by the Military and was never a product of the people (Odojin, 2005, p.15). Thus, its anti-people provisions laden with ambiguous and divisive provisions. The challenges of previous efforts and the heterogeneous nature of Nigeria predisposed the choice for a federal constitution for the country. This choice of a federal constitution has not been free from the attacks by exponents of a unitary constitution (Odojin, 2005, p.15).

Ibrahim Gambari argues, “to my mind, the worst enemies of Nigerian federalism are those who speak of federalism, but act in a unitary fashion brushing aside all the divisions of powers between all levels of our federalism”. There is the issue of fiscal federalism which has become contentious in the Nigerian federalism that hampers nation-building. The economy of the country is majorly dependent on oil sourced from the Niger Delta. The 13% accruable revenue from oil to oil-producing States in Nigeria

has been contested by the Niger Delta region given the environmental degradation and sustained neglect by the leaders whose developmental interest are other regions especially the North at the expense of the polluted Niger Delta. Thus, there have been agitations for up to 50% if not 100% revenue from oil going to the oil-producing States (Ibrahim, 2008, p.5).

• Conclusion

Nigeria is a country in transition desirous of nation-building. Unfortunately, an interplay of her historical antecedence, corruption, leadership, and her contentious constitutional provisions have hampered this effort at nation-building. For this well-intentioned desire of nation-building to be realized, the building of dependable institutions rather than strong-men is necessary just as the mobilization of a well-conscientized citizenry that would boldly demand accountability from the leadership class. The neo-colonial strings need to be severed with the development of indigenous economies and socio-cultural and political environment.

The paper presents a set of recommendations related to the subject of article:

1. There is a need to revisit the philosophical basis of some of these policies and to tinker with them for practical implementation, devoid of inequity, acrimony and injustice.
2. The paper calls for speedy institutional reforms that can guarantee the architecture of strong and enduring institutions of governance in cultivating and sustaining virtues of accountability, transparency cum allied codes of good public governance.
3. The Nigerian state is long overdue for re-capacitation and a break from its colonial trappings and overhang. There is a need for massive overhaul on the approach to public resource management to make governance citizen-friendly and focused, thus redressing the apathy or nonchalance to citizen welfare.

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