

PHILOSOPHY: A PATHWAY TO SYSTEM-BUILDING IN A FRACTURED NATION

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Abstract:

System's building is at the heart of every meaningful growth in all facets of human endeavour. Without system-building, societal cohesion and progress would be left at the whims of irredentist ideologues whose adulations are for personal and personalized interests and goals. This paper identified the myriad challenges facing Nigeria as exemplified in political, educational, and social structures, and observed that the lack of a functional system is at the base of the numerous problems beclouding the nation's growth. It recognized the invaluable role philosophy plays in grounding societal activities under institutional structures in general, and maintained that as the pathway to system-building, the application of philosophical principles into national institutional frameworks is perhaps, the only way for the fractured nation to crawl out of the present quagmire.

Keywords: *system-building, philosophy, irredentist ideologues, institutional framework, structures.*

The Tragedy of a Fractured Nation

The terms "nation", "nationhood", "country", "state", etc., have been used to delineate people into stratified social groups for proper control and administration. From its root meaning, the concept pertains to the generation of life within specific situation, community, language and culture, with defined boundaries (ethnic nation). But over time, and due, specifically, to the liberation and subsequent integration of African slaves into the mainstream life of the New World, the term *nation*, assumed a new dimension: language and cultural backgrounds ceased to be the exclusive defining characteristics. The use of the concept was no longer limited to cataloging people of common heritage or ethnic proclivities, but was expanded to include people of different ethnic groups under specified geographic boundaries, with defined leadership structures.¹ Nation came to be understood as a cultural-political community that has become conscious of its coherence, unity, and

¹ Ogbujah, C. 2014. "Fostering National Integration: A guide from Nyerere's Philosophy of *Ujamaa*", in *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences*, Vol. 4, (26), 2014: 53-60.

particular interests.² This later depiction connotes the *civic* sense of the term, and encapsulates the *raison d'être* for which diverse people come together.

In recent times, the foregoing conceptualization of “nation” is often contrasted to the “state of nature”—the hypothetical condition of life of people before societies came into being. Scholars like Hobbes, Locke, Montesquieu, Rousseau, Hume, Rawls, among others, have, at different times, proposed different theories regarding the state of nature. As espoused by Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), the “state of nature” depicts a condition of perfectly private independent judgment, and chaotic living where humans, behaving like animals, were purely guided by their instincts and natural drives. It was a condition of constant and violent competition for power, characterized by *bellum omnium contra omnes*—the “war of every man against every man.” Due to the absence of a binding social structure, life, in Hobbesian state of nature, was nasty, solitary, poor, brutish and short.³ To escape this nasty life, people resolved to create a social contract in which they gave up their right to self-defense to a *Leviathan*—a powerful force above all and to which all were subject, in order to create a peaceful and orderly life. In line with this hypothesization, the state of nature, for Hobbes, is “natural” in the specific sense of being derived from nature, as contrasted with political authority which is artificial, in the sense of being created by men. It is obvious this state of nature exists at all times among free nations, over whom there is failure of governance.

Events following Nigeria’s independence from Britain, which have culminated in the current leadership of president Buhari, point to how effusive this hypothesized state of nature is in our governance structure. Over the years, successive governments have taken turns in pillaging the nation, leaving it on the verge of collapse. Without excusing previous leaders for their failings, it does seem the current regime revels in breaking all moral and statutory bounds in the fragmentation of the nation through its political appointments, developmental strides, and crass failure in the protection of lives and properties of the citizens. Now and again, new records are set on nepotism, corruption, insecurity, and outright bellicose to civil liberties. The judiciary seems to be gagged, and for the most part, individuals are left to fend for themselves on basic societal infrastructures like electricity, water, and security. Indeed, every aspect of nationhood is at the brink of collapse, and there seems to be no government to steady the course of events. The nation is

² Smith, A.D. 1983. “Ethnie and Nation in the Modern World”, in *Millennium*, Vol. 14, (2): 128-132.

³ Hobbes, Thomas, 1651. *Leviathan*. Edwin Curley (Ed.). 1994. Hackett Publishing.

tragically sliding fast into the Hobbesian state of nature where life is nasty, poor, brutish, and short.

The tragedy of Nigeria is rooted not just on the charlatans masquerading as leaders, but on the fraud that was a constitution imposed on her citizens. Prepared by northern oligarchs, and foisted on the entire populace by the military, the extant 1999 Constitution is skewed in many ways, and cannot stand the taste of a unifying charter. In the end, it produces narcissistic irredentist ideologues as leaders who, with little regard to justice, peace and security, often denigrate the dignity and sanctity of human life. Otherwise, how can one explain the unabated orgy of killings across the country by Fulani herdsmen? how do we reconcile the humongous security votes and the apparent inertia of security agents when insurgents attack and sack whole communities? Leadership failure has created a monster of a society in Nigeria, and every day is a nightmare. People are scared off their farms and highways by marauding herdsmen; others, for fear of being hounded by security agents, are forced to swallow the bitter pills of their resistance.⁴ In the end, tens of thousands of innocent lives have been lost, billions of naira worth of properties perished, and food insecurity is looming within the horizon.

Social discrimination—differentiation of people on the basis of certain extraneous reasons such as height, caste, colour, sex, religion or culture and treating them unjustly in the distribution of benefits and burdens of social life, is a great burden to societal cohesion and growth. Its apparent institutionalization in Nigeria, as demonstrated in the skewed implementation of quota system in matters relating to education, employment, promotion, distribution of positions, power, and wealth in favour of the north, is unjustifiable and provocative. Not only is such preferential treatment arbitrary and morally bankrupt,⁵ it drives a knife across the heart of the federal character principle as enshrined in the 1999 constitution as amended.⁶ Sadly, the argument to justify this lopsided practice is hinged on the faulty premise that the northern region is unjustly deprived in many respects, and needs to catch up with the rest of the country; on affirmative action. This sort of thinking is ironic and lacking in substance, as the following paragraphs will demonstrate.

⁴ Ogbujah, C. 2019. "Combating Injustice and Insecurity in Nigeria with African Traditional Values," in *Philosophy and Praxis*, Vol. 9, 2019: 1-12.

⁵ Satyanarayana, Y. V. 2012. "Preferential Treatment: A Justifiable means for promoting social justice", in L.C. Bargeliotes and K. Wang (eds.). *Skepsis*, XXII/i – 2012: 187-194.

⁶ 1999 *Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, with Amendment*, 2011. Ch. II, 14-(3).

First, the purveyors of this premise conveniently ignore the fundamental principles that birthed affirmative action, and want to equate the consequences of “rejected opportunities” to those of “imposed discrimination. From independence till date, northerners had same opportunities as those in the South to embrace Western education in order to better their lot. But some of their leaders rejected it, and are still rejecting it in the Boko haram (western education is evil) struggle. Now, the overriding motif of affirmative action is to provide “preferential treatment programmes” in response to only competitive disadvantages that were unjustly imposed on victimized groups. The aim is to counteract the effects of discriminations, and the reach is to rectify current social disparities within social groups. In the words of Negal, “Compensatory measures in admissions or appointment can be defended on grounds of justice only to the extent that they compensate for specific disadvantages which have themselves been unjustly caused.”⁷ Otherwise, they are indefensible. It means that preferential treatment programmes cannot be premised on a self-inflicted social backwardness. To use state apparatus for the promotion of culture and religion at the expense of the functional aspects of life such as ability, efficiency, merit, or skills, is to say the least, tragic to socio-economic growth of any nation.

Second, it becomes more ironic when the groups clamouring for affirmative action are those who have unjustly held power and arbitrarily distributed the national resources for the greater part of the nation’s independent history. To think that forty-two (42) out of the sixty years of Nigeria’s independence has been ruled by northerners, and yet there is this level of rot in the north, defiles imagination. More ironic is that the south did not develop with any assistance from the federal government. Her progress largely stems from free enterprise and community efforts. In my community, for example, we made and are still making financial contributions to provide water, electricity and roads to our people. It is absurd to think anyone is fooled into believing that this advancement of nepotism has anything to do with affirmative action. Lowering educational standards for a group of people, and at the same time acting as though such an “educationally disadvantaged” group possesses the best expertise for sensitive administrative and managerial positions in a nation, is more like a comic relief. This structural harm is destroying the fabrics of the country by heightening mutual suspicion, anger and hatred. Nigeria’s corporate existence is hanging on a precipice, and will

⁷ Negal, Thomas. 1975. “Equal Treatment and Compensatory Discrimination”, in Tom. L. Beauchamp (ed.). *Ethics and Public Policy*. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc., pp. 52-53.

soon be tipped over if system-building does not create a pathway for cohesive living.

Understanding the Concept of System-Building

One basic way of grasping the true meaning of a concept or phrase is to engage in its meta-analysis, which breaks down the concept into its component parts for step by step scrutiny. Even though the parts do not make the whole in the sense of the absurdity inherent in the fallacy of composition, their accurate understanding and contextualization do provide glimpses to the right interpretation of the whole. So, to stimulate a profound grasp of the meaning—content of system-building, we shall first dissect the concept into its component parts, and then reconnect them under the contextual frame of our general discuss.

The term “system” has effusive character that permeates divergent spheres of study from physiology to computing, to geology, to astronomy; and from music to politics or social order. Aside from specific nuances that dichotomize individual subject matters, the descriptions from these shades of activities all point to the same meaning: “a set of things working together as parts of a mechanism or an interconnecting network”; “a set of principles or procedures according to which something is done; an organized scheme or method.”⁸ According to Hitchens, “a system is an open set of complementary, interacting parts, with properties, capabilities and behaviours of the set emerging both from the parts and from their interactions to synthesize a unified whole.”⁹ System connotes the idea of multiple entities or parts interacting with each other to form a unified whole within specific time and space. It is influenced by its environment, defined by its structure and purpose, and expressed through its functioning.¹⁰ On the other hand, “building” as a *noun*, is understood as a relatively permanent enclosed construction over a space, with a roof and walls. But in its *verb* form, to build is to construct by assembling and joining parts or materials; “to establish, increase, or strengthen”; or to form a plan or system of thought.¹¹ System-building then, is a method of building in which prefabricated components are used to speed

⁸ System, Definition of System by Oxford Dictionary on Lexico.com, <https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/system>, (accessed 4 June 2020).

⁹ Hitchens, D.K. 2003. *Advances Systems, Thinking and Management*. Norwood, MA: Artech House.

¹⁰ Systems theory – Wikipedia, https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Systems_theory

¹¹ Definition of building – Dictionary.com, <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/building>

the erection of structures.¹² It entails the assemblage of structures from contrived modules set to offer specific building patterns. Some of such structures include panelized buildings, pre-engineered buildings, etc. In this sense, system-building involves much of the works of structural engineers. However, limiting it to the method of erecting edifices by means of assembling products is, no doubt enlightening, but does it by any means shed light on the philosophical enquiry regarding the subject matter?

In social engineering, system-building is taken to mean the process of establishing an interconnection between independent parts in order to form a desired unified whole. It is the process of building a system that is influenced by its environment, solid in structure, and serves the collective interest of the constitutive parts. Building systems take time and energy, but once done, people develop attitudes and habits that depend on them. They become so familiar that often, people find it difficult to identify their pitfalls or let go of them. This perhaps explains why apartheid lingered in South Africa, and why racism and tribalism continue to linger in America/Europe and Africa respectively. Like a man who has worn eyeglasses so long that he forgets he has them on, we have gotten so used to discrimination that we don't seem to realize the damage we are doing to humanity. With the recent inhuman treatment and death of the African-American – George Floyd in the hands of White US police officers, the spate of unabated insecurity in Nigeria orchestrated by Fulani herdsmen, etc., there is no doubt we need a set of “new lenses”, new systems to navigate the path of nationhood; we need to throw away the old system that is divisive and destructive, and build new ones that can accommodate everyone within the national and universal scheme of things.

System-building in Philosophy

In the realm of philosophy, system-building is the development of a model as a foundational framework for finding multiple credible solutions to corresponding societal challenges of specific people that relate to man's ultimate place in the universe. In other words, it entails a systematic development of a world-view that encompasses everything from the nature of reality to axiology and to the justification of beliefs. In his blogs, Paul So sees it as “a kind of grand and ambitious thinking-tool analogous to an architecture's blueprint.”¹³ Earlier in the general treatment of the concept, we

¹² Collins English Dictionary. System building definition and meaning.

<https://www.collinsdictionary.com/amp/english/system-building>

¹³ Paul So. 2013. “System-Building in Philosophy?” [website], June 9, 2013,

<https://www.facebook.com/notes/paul-so/system-building-in-philosophy/539408032762595/>

identified that prefabrication of tools for speedy construction of building, is a necessary component. Even though we did not expressly use the term ‘architecture’s design’, it was tacit that the whole process – from fabrication to assemblage – is guided by the vision of an architect. The vision of the architect that results in magnificent buildings is akin to the philosophical thinking-tool that paves the way to creativity and harmonious living.

There is no doubt philosophy has played vital roles in the evolution of knowledge and human growth; neither is there a challenge to philosophical penetration of the disciplines, as the phrase: “philosophy of” can be bandied in all disciplines. A grave concern for many however, is whether it is really possible to construct a comprehensive philosophical system capable of finding multiple credible solutions to societal challenges. Over the years, especially with the development of Einstein’s theory of relativity, system-building has come under scathing criticisms. If it is not accused of making implausible claims concerning reality that are either falsified by science or fail to satisfy the criterion of verification, it is reproached for being extremely ambitious, with very high standard too difficult to achieve. For these reasons, one might be tempted to abandon system-building as an archaic complicated thinking-tool.

On the contrary, it is not difficult to find the possibility and relevance of system-building in modern philosophy. By noting that “there is nothing in the historically evolved idea of philosophy which excludes the possibility of building again the great systems in the style of Spinoza or Hegel,”¹⁴ Marković was echoing the idea that system-building does not need to be an isolated field that makes implausible claims about the empirical world. Rather, it can evolve as an interdisciplinary philosophical thinking-tool that integrates people from different scientific and cultural backgrounds, to collaborate on identified task. The charge is to develop a comprehensive “worldview” to guide human actions – a task which the Belgian thinker Leo Apostel devoted his life pursuing. System-building creates a framework which ties all things together by allowing us understand society, the world, our place in it, and our capacity to make important decision that will impact our future. Rather than centering on specific aspects of reality, it would be a coalescence of knowledge from various disciplines to help us properly understand, and thus cope with the complexity of reality.¹⁵

¹⁴ Marković, Mihailo. 1977. “Is Systematic Philosophy Possible Today?” in *Contemporary Aspects of Philosophy*, edited by Gilbert Ryle, Boston: Oriel Press, pp. 269-283.

¹⁵ Heylighen, F. 2000. “What is a world view?”, in F. Heylighen, C. Joslyn and V. Turchin (eds.): *Principia Cybernetica Web* (Principia Cybernetica, Brussels), URL: <http://cleamc11.vub.ac.be/worlview.html>.

From ancient times, Plato and Aristotle both tried to provide a comprehensive account of reality. This attempt resurfaced in the early modern period in the works of Leibniz, Descartes, Spinoza, Hegel, and Whitehead. The efforts were to build a “theory of everything” that could aid in solving multifaceted problems of humanity. Later in the 20th century, Ervin Laszlo in the text – *Introduction to Systems Philosophy: Toward a New Paradigm of Contemporary Thought* (1972) laid the modern foundation for “systems philosophy” by attempting to fit reality onto the model of systems, and subsequently using same to wrestle important human tasks. Laszlo's idea was based on the general system theory which presupposes that the world is organized as a whole, and thus has an underlying unity.¹⁶ For him, a good understanding of this underlying intelligibility in a well ordered nature is key to solving tenacious socio-political problems and answering profound rational questions.

In critiquing Cartesian reductionist ideas, Hitchens explains the basic principles that underlie the workings of systems philosophy. He likens the flaws arising from breaking down of complexes into discrete parts for better understanding to those of a surgeon excising the organs from a patient to understand how they work individually. By the time the organs are put back, the patient would have been dead, because each organ is healthy only to the extent it interacts with others within the system. The organs are complementary, that is, they each provide what the others need. Without such interactions, the organs die off. This mutual interdependence within the organs of the body system, for Hitchens, is analogous to all complex systems.¹⁷ Organizations act in similar ways as organisms do, and civilizations have come and gone in much the same way as organisms. Organizations thrive when the many complementary parts mutually cooperate to produce a unified whole or system. The assumption of system-building is that reality is a unified, coherent whole, and that the attendant philosophical problems must equally be resolved under a unified framework.¹⁸ No national or regional administrative system can be effectual except they act in much the same manner.

¹⁶ Laszlo, E. 1972. *Introduction to Systems Philosophy: Toward a New Paradigm of Contemporary Thought*. Gordon & Breach Science Publishers, pp. 8-10.

¹⁷ Hitchens, D.K. 2003. *Advances Systems, Thinking and Management*. Norwood, MA: Artech House.

¹⁸ Paul So. 2013. “System-Building in Philosophy?” [website], June 9, 2013, <https://www.facebook.com/notes/paul-so/system-building-in-philosophy/539408032762595/>

In their seminal work, *World views, from fragmentation to integration*, the “Worldviews” group tried to delineate the necessary components of a world view. Founded by Leo Apostel, the group listed seven fundamental components as including a model of the world, explanation, futurology, values, action, knowledge, and building blocks. Among these, the theory of values is very significant because it gives humanity a sense of purpose, direction or set of goals to guide actions. Values define what is good or bad, right or wrong, important or unimportant, acceptable or unacceptable. In the absence of unifying values, individuals are left to their whims, and society turns into a frenzied instinctive arena where “might becomes right.”

Blips with Non-existent/Non-functional Systems in a Political Economy

By political economy, we understand a sovereign state insofar as it is engaged in production, trade and distribution of public income and wealth, in relation to subsisting laws, and customs. In other words, political economy pertains to how a state is managed, relative to administrative and financial factors. The very existence of a state or political economy (the terms are used interchangeably here) presupposes a social contract guided by rules. In modern era, this “social contract” is often couched in the positive laws of states which specify rights and duties of her members. To help enforce the rights and duties, society creates a system of institutions with specific rules and ethics that devolve from the positive laws. Rules and ethics are tools to guide and monitor the interactions of society members to engender productivity, efficiency and cohesion. A society that is not organized on rules and the systems which are designed for the right enforcement of the rules cannot be on strong footings. It can neither guarantee stability within its internal frontiers, nor structure a robust and beneficial relationship with its neighbours. The rule of law is the groundwork upon which a nation exists, persists and thrives. Without it, the cartilage binding society disintegrates, giving rein to anarchy, and making it impossible for people to function in any meaningful way.

In the course of history, instances abound of the blips encountered by societies administered without functional institutions and the rule of law. From the crumbling of the Greek City States due to exclusionary practices, to the frequent dynastic wars / palace revolutions in aristocratic regimes (Hellenistic to Roman Empires); from the collapse of monarchical establishments in Europe to the overthrow of fascist and tyrannical regimes of Mussolini, Hitler and the attendant wars, it has never been peaceful with any society that jettisons “the rule of law.” This holds true also for modern societies under individual hegemonies like Syria, Iran, Egypt, etc., as well as in those like Nigeria, Cameroon, etc., which, under the guise of constitutional democracy,

are governed by tyrannical elements. The results are always the same: the creation of a dysfunctional society with a bleak future.

It seems quite apparent that the overall motif for subverting or jettisoning systems is to pave way for political corruption—the use of powers by government officials for illegitimate private gain. These powers can be used to advance personalized interests and goals in the unbridle acquisition of material wealth, or in the preferential appointment and promotion of kit and kin into sensitive positions; they can manifest in the criminal usurpation of the powers of other arms of government by the executive, or in the use of state apparatus to crush political dissents. Whichever form it takes, political corruption is a somber reminder of the atrocious costs of operating with non-existent/weak institutions; it is a manifestation of the glitches linked with running a political economy bereft of functional systems and institutions.

There is no doubt Nigeria is today more fractured than ever because it is inundated with these myriad problems. Granted that previous administrations engaged in nepotism that led to the emergence of economic oligarchs in the likes of Dangotes, Otedolas, Adenugas, Ubas etc.; or to the leasing of the 80% of the oil wells in the Niger Delta region to their cronies from the North; or to the arrogance of alleged kleptomaniacs in the likes of Dasuki, Diezani, etc., we have never had it bad like now. Aside the barefaced ‘ethnic robbery’ displayed in the leasing of oil wells, these others are ‘textbook’ cases of political elites deploying state apparatus in advancing the economic wellbeing of their cronies irrespective of their tribe or religion. Prior to this time, the nation’s problem was largely that of elites’ gang-up against the masses in forms of bad policies, improper implementation of programmes, lack of oversights, and corrupt enrichment. But the brazen acts of “ethnic cleansing” of the current regime has given a new dimension to the understanding of political corruption.

Cognizance of the seriousness of the charge for “ethnic cleansing”, and of the risks associated with bandying such an indictment without evidential proofs, it is pertinent to ex-ray the twist of fate in Nigeria for the past five years. Leaving aside ample instances where Fulani militant group—ranked as the fourth deadliest terror group on earth¹⁹, masquerading as herdsmen, have unabatedly attacked, killed and displaced Christian communities; leaving

¹⁹ “Global Terrorism Index 2015.” (PDF). Institute for Economics and Peace, pp. 43-44. Buchanan, R. T. 2015. “The fourth most deadly terror group that you’ve never heard of”. *The Independent*. 2015: 11-18. [website], 18 Nov. 2015, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/africa/global-terrorism-index-nigeria-fulani-militants-named-as-fourth-deadliest-terror-group-in-world-a6739851.html>, (accessed 20 March 2020).

aside that as much as 92 percent of their attacks target defenseless private citizens in remote places—reflecting the group’s primary concern over the ownership of farmland²⁰; and perhaps, leaving aside that they have always attempted to occupy, and in fact actually occupied some Christian communities they displaced in the Middle belt, it is not difficult to identify the systemic elimination of Southerners in the current political spectrum. Whether the attacks occurred at Agatu (Benue), or Kajuru (Kaduna), or Numan and Lamurde (Adamawa), or at Bokkos, Riyom and Mangu counties of Plateau state;²¹ whether they resulted in the killing of 2 Catholic Priests and 17 worshippers at St. Ignatius Catholic Church, Ukpok-Mbalom of Benue State,²² or the sacking of Christian villages in the South-Eastern state of Enugu,²³ the imprints are the same: killing and displacement of Christians, destruction of their properties, and government’s acquiescence demonstrated in the inability or refusal of security agents to prosecute the perpetrators. If these were not enough to raise eyebrow regarding the sinister moves of these AK47-wielding Fulani tribal militia, the inaction of security agents, often headed by their kinsmen, speaks volumes. It did not take a wink for government to declare IPOB—unarmed youths protesting marginalization, as a terrorist group. Yet, the same government finds nothing wrong with gun-wielding herdsmen that have killed thousands and displaced millions from their ancestral homes. There is no doubt the “Ruga Settlement” programme was a veiled attempt at legitimizing this land grabbing, and of course, this administration’s direct way of expropriating native lands for its cronies.

Beyond the foliage of using armed banditry as a façade, there seems to be no pretence to systemic “ethnic cleansing” within government institutions, agencies and departments. With the renewal of the appointments of current Fulani-dominated Service Chiefs under whose watch Nigeria has become a macabre theatre of murder; the dominance of Fulani Muslims in the select management teams to key state-owned institutions, sensitive ministries,

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ “Violence in Plateau State, Nigeria Escalates with more Muslim Fulani Herdsmen Attacks.” *Morningstar News*. [website], January 30, 2020, <https://morningstarnews.org/2020/01/violence-in-plateau-state-nigeria-escalates-with-more-muslim-fulani-herdsmen-attacks/>, (accessed 20 March 2020).

²² Eyoboka, S., Abdullah, W., Agbakwuru, J. and Duru, P. “Fresh bloodbath in Benue, 2 Catholic priests, 17 others killed by herdsmen.” *Vanguard News*. [website], April 25, 2018, <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2018/04/fresh-bloodbath-benue-2-catholic-priests-17-others-killed-herdsmen/>, (accessed 20 March 2020).

²³ “Muslim Fulani Herdsmen Massacres Reach Southern Nigeria.” *Morningstar News*. [website], April 27, 2016, <https://morningstarnews.org/2016/04/muslim-fulani-herdsmen-massacres-reach-southern-nigeria/>, (accessed 20 March 2020).

agencies and departments, no one is left in doubt as to where this administration is heading: to, as much as possible, *fulanize* all agencies at the expense of other cultural groups, and perhaps set up the machinery for their systemic takeover of government institutions through unmerited employments, at the expense of often more qualified other competitors. In a recent suit filed against President Buhari's corrupt appointments made since 2015, some Southern leaders, among other things, pointed out:

- a) That the present composition of the government of the federation, and most of its agencies, especially as regards the composition of the security and quasi-security agencies, do not reflect the federal character principle, and consequently threatening to national unity and integration;
- b) That it is "reckless and averse to the interest of Nigeria" for the president to obtain a loan facility from the Islamic Development Bank, African Development Bank, the World Bank, China, Japan and Germany amounting to \$22.7 billion, for infrastructural development, only to allocate the bulk of the fund to the North, wherein less than one per cent of the amount is to be allocated to the South-east;
- c) That the current appointments into federal agencies and parastatals, as seen in the appointment of the armed services chiefs, other commanders or top officials of the respective armed forces higher and high commands' general staff; namely the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), Chief of Army Staff (COAS), Chief of Naval Staff (CNS) and Chief of Airforce Staff (CAS); the other statutorily established Nigerian national security agencies or services, namely: the Inspector General of the Nigerian Police (1G), the Directors General (DGs) of the Department of State Services (DSS), National Intelligence Agency (NIA) and the Defence Intelligence Agency (DIA); the heads of national security associated with federal government (FG) establishments, namely the Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), the Nigeria Customs Service, the Nigerian Immigration Services (NIS), the Nigerian Correctional Services (NCS), the National Emergency Management Authority (NEMA), the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC), the National Security Adviser (NSA), the Ministers of Defence, Interior, Police and the respective national security ministries' permanent secretaries, is lopsided in nature;
- d) That the president's frequent arbitrary extension of appointment tenure beyond statutory prescription, and appointment of retired

persons instead of the most senior staff, tantamount to an abuse of office and threat to national unity;

- e) That the appointments into positions in government, especially into strategic government agencies such as NNPC, NIA and other strategic infrastructural and regulatory institutions, are ethnically discriminatory and lopsided; etc.²⁴

These concerns are patently in violation of Sections 14, 171 (1), 171 (5), 217 (3), 218(2), 219 of the 1999 Constitution (as amended), the Public Service Rules 2008, and the Armed Forces Act 2004. We are thus, threatened with a scenario where all key management positions of our governing structure are hijacked by one ethnic group, in breach of constitutional guarantees, and spite of national unity and integration.

Perhaps, it is impossible to imagine a more brazen display of political corruption than the attacks on a component of the triumvirate of constitutional democracy—the Judiciary. The uncautioned harassment of judicial workers by security agents which, culminated in the unabashed dismissal of the Chief Justice of the Federation, Justice Walter Onnoghen—a Christian from the south, and his replacement with Ibrahim Tanko—a northern Islamic scholar with degrees in Islamic law, is possibly the last straw in the grand design of subjugating other ethnic nationalities under the leadership of the Caliphate. Hatched and executed just before the 2019 general elections, his removal was apparently to clip the wings of the judiciary, and to forestall the possibility of unbiased judgements for potential litigants of results of the coming elections. Evidently, the gamble paid off, as the new sheriff of the Supreme Court could, among other bizarre judgements, mastermind the addition of votes to the APC candidate—Hope Uzodinma in order to unseat the Governor of Imo State—Emeka Ihedioha. Till now, scholars are aghast as to how the apex court could add to a candidate’s tally all the nullified votes cast in the 388 polling units which the electoral umpire dumped for irregularities; or the mathematical formula used in amplifying INEC’s accredited voters in the State from 823,000 to 913,854 in the court’s ruling. Even when the world cried out against this judicial rascality and sought for the reversal of the judgement, the jurists couldn’t be perturbed because they were shielded by political patronage.

The claims to the “infallibility” of the decisions of this very “fallible” institution have opened a new vista to the practice of jurisprudence in Nigeria. Events such as these make it harder for the citizens to trust in the

²⁴ Enumah, A. “Southern Leaders Sue Buhari over Alleged Breach of Federal Character.” *THISDAY*, June 23, 2020.

administration, or see the judiciary as their last bastion. Perhaps, this is why many perceive the recently suspended Executive Order 10 of President Buhari, which purports to promote separation of powers in the States, as a ruse. After subjugating the other branches of Federal Government under its tutelage, the Executive then contrives of an Order to divest State Governors of their last vestiges of resistance to central manipulations. Granted that ‘the rule of law’ can only be realized in a polity with independent Judiciary and Legislature, this contrivance of an Executive Order is of sour taste, and portends the revival of military-style “rule of man” instead of “the rule of law” which Aristotle denounced long ago. The “rule of man” usually adds the element of the beast in us. To sideline the legislative and judiciary processes in the pursuit of the “rule of law” is, to say the least, to elevate personal desires, which like wild beasts, pervert the minds of rulers, even when they are the best of men.²⁵

By no means, this is not to applaud State Governors that have for long, smothered the independence of the Judiciary and Legislature within their precincts. The argument rather, seeks to highlight the level of duplicity and decay in all strata of governance. The refusal of financial autonomy to state legislatures and judiciary not only creates multiple avenues for fraud, but grants the executive branch undue political leverage. While the central leadership destroys the principle of “separation of power” by its flagrant defiance to valid court orders, and persistent harassment of agents of other branches of government, the local leadership does same with economic strangulation. In the end, good governance is sacrificed at the altar of political patronage: tribalism is promoted; merit is torn to shreds; and citizens are incessantly harassed for religious or political dissent. Political corruption has turned Nigeria into a “zoo republic” where might is right, with an eerie aversion for the rule of law. No wonder the call to unbundle the country into its ethnic divides is echoing more loudly than now.

System Building, Institutionalization and the Rise of a Broken Nation

System building, as we echoed earlier, is an interdisciplinary philosophical thinking-tool that integrates people from different scientific and cultural backgrounds, for collaborative purposes. The aim is to construct a comprehensive philosophical system capable of finding multiple credible solutions to societal challenges; and the presupposition is that the world is organized as a whole, and as such has an underlying unity—a unity that can be relevant to solving grave socio-political problems. As an interdisciplinary philosophical thinking-tool with no warranted epistemic privilege, system building promotes institutionalization of political structures.

²⁵ Aristotle. *Politics*, Bk. 3, Ch. 16, 1287a.

Institutionalization, in the sense used by Samuel P. Huntington, means that political structures acquire value and stability; it means the ascendancy of the rule of law.

The “rule of law”—mechanism, institution, practice, or norm that supports equal opportunity of all citizens under the law, is what prevents the arbitrary use of power by regimes with authoritarian inclinations.²⁶ Over the centuries, scholars are livid with totalitarian regimes, and regularly warn of the disasters that patent disregard for the rule of law portends to a polity. In the Republic, for instance, Plato views the law as an “external authority” that functions as the “ally of the whole city.” In the administration of society, it is envisaged that there may arise a leader who, led by caprice, subverts the will of the people and engages in activities that are hurtful to communal lives. If there were no ‘external authority’ to restrain such a leader, his actions could put the entire society into serious harm. Society cannot be preserved without the rule of law. As Plato notes, “where the law is subject to some other authority and has none of its own, the collapse of the state is not far off; but if law is the master of the government and the government is its slave, then the situation is full of promise and men enjoy all the blessings that the gods shower on a state.”²⁷ A nation can thrive only to the extent that legal constraints impose same obligations on everybody; that both government and citizens are subject to extant laws.

Aristotle is subtler in identifying true forms of government and their perverses, insisting that only those constituted in accord with strict principles of justice can work for the common good. He regards the ‘rule of man’ demonstrated in the ‘benevolent’ rule of powerful individuals as defective since individuals possess flaws and could tailor government to their own individual interests. In the *Politics*, he is unyielding in his advocacy for the rule of law stating: “We thus arrive at law; for an order of succession implies law. And the rule of the law, it is argued, is preferable to that of any individual. On the same principle, even if it be better for certain individuals to govern, they should be made only guardians and ministers of the law.”²⁸ The idea of rulers being guardians and ministers of the law resonates with the cliché used at the beginning of most papal bulls: *servus servorum Dei* – servant of the servants of God. A ruler is a servant of the people guided by the law; a collaborator with others within the system of institutions. Tyranny—the

²⁶ Choi, N. “The Rule of Law,” in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*,
<https://www.britannica.com/topic/rule-of-law>

²⁷ Plato. 1970. *The Laws*. Translated by T. Saunders, Bk. IV, 715, London: Penguin Books, p. 174.

²⁸ Aristotle, *Politics*, Bk.3, Ch. 16, 1287a.

arbitrary use of power by a government to promote particularized interests, and for the advantage of a select few, is averse to the rule of law, and oppressive to human flourishing. It arrogates the power of the constitution to itself, and jettisons reason unaffected by desire. Aristotle is certain that no free persons, if they can escape from it, will endure tyrannical rule.²⁹

The preeminence of the rule of law in system building is echoed in the works of philosophers along the centuries. From John Locke to Montesquieu, Dicey to Hayek and Fuller, there is manifest indication that commitment to the rule of law is the pathway to stability and growth. The thinking is that in systems where rules operate impersonally, people are protected from one another, and from the whims of errant governments. Montesquieu, for instance, largely envisages the emergence of a prosperous society from the heels of distinct arms of government autonomous from each other. His insistence on the separation of judicial power from executive and legislative authority was to institutionalize the bodies within the polity, which in turn, will promote citizen's incentives for productive enterprise.³⁰ A nation is under tyranny, and prone to implosion when, failing to guarantee the rule of law, it subsumes other governing powers to the caprice of the executive.

The difficulty in building a united front from the ashes of tyranny seems now to be sufficiently obvious. But society can experience a reprieve, and thus be on the path to flourishing through system-building. By denying epistemic privilege to any of the diverse fields integrated together, system-building opens the vista to dispassionate collaboration, which by all intent, promotes the rule of law. Much as nature, to arrive at its goals, is guided by rules, every system is built into symmetry by the guidance of rules. But might all rules be adjudged good and useful for building of systems? Relying on the wisdom of the ancients, Aristotle, even when he acquiesced with the idea that the goodness or badness of laws varies of necessity with the constitution of the state, pointed out that true forms of government, will of necessity, have just laws; while perverted forms will have unjust laws.³¹ In other words, the rule of law is solely hinged on the faithful application of the constitution, but if by any chance in the design of a constitution, the basic requirements regarding the enactment of the law is abandoned, and/or certain fundamental qualities about the characteristics and content of the laws themselves are jettisoned, the tendency is to contrive a defective constitution, which undoubtedly will corrupt the rule of law.

²⁹ Aristotle, *Politics*, Bk.4, Ch. 10, 1295a.

³⁰ Montesquieu 1748: Bk. 11, Ch. 6; 1748: Bk. V, ch. 14, p. 61.

³¹ Aristotle, *Politics*, Bk.3, Ch. 11, 1282b.

Although flawed in many respects, the current Nigerian constitution, to some extent, provides for the promotion of the rule of law. It separates the powers of government into three equal branches of government: the executive, the legislative and the judiciary, and the aim is for each branch to check the others to prevent political corruption or tyranny. In other words, the constitution provides the basic ingredients for building a system with strong institutions. What is lacking is the legal apparatus for compelling officials to submit to the law. But the success or otherwise of such an enforcing legal apparatus is dependent on the agents' appreciation of the society as a macro system akin to human organism where a defect in one part of the system adversely affects the whole organism; it is dependent on the ability to sift and integrate the best society can offer, irrespective of tribe or religion, for integral development. This is practical application of wisdom—a philosophy of sort. No doubt Plato was adamant in noting that “there will be no end to the troubles of states, or indeed of humanity, till philosophers become kings, or till those we now call kings and rulers really and truly become philosophers.”³² True wisdom is the lonely pathway to building strong institutions within the systems; the singular recipe for galvanizing the nation from the ashes of brokenness, to a prosperous united entity.

Conclusion

From its ancient roots, *philosophia* means ‘love or pursuit of wisdom,’ and philosophizing is an enterprise that displays one’s love for wisdom. Wisdom in the sense of philosophy is not acquired by revelation or by age, rather, it is the active use of intelligence; the right application of knowledge. Wisdom is the capacity, the attitude and constant push to putting knowledge to good use.³³ In other words, one who possesses wisdom is adroit, and has the reliable knack to judge and decide with soundness, prudence, and intelligence. This being the case, it is obvious a nation can have no better ruler than a wise person—a philosopher.

To live in a country where mass burial of people slaughtered by bandits and insurgents is a recurrent decimal; where relatively protected Cities are fast becoming mega IDP camps sheltering defenseless citizens displaced from their homestead by bandits; where AK47-wielding herdsmen terrorists who kill, burn, rape and abduct women as sex slaves are pampered, while stick-wielding IPOB members are declared terrorists; where nepotism has become

³² Plato. *The Republic*, 5, 473d.

³³ Ogbujah, C.N. 2020. “Philosophy of Science and Technology”, in C.N. Ogbujah (Ed.). *History and Philosophy of Science and Technology: A Reader*. Port Harcourt: Pearl Publishers, p. 62.

official administrative practice; and where it is increasingly difficult for the masses to safely vent their displeasure with their leadership, is harrowing. No wonder, as the great philosopher – Aristotle surmised, people are risking their lives every other day at the Mediterranean Sea, to escape this tyranny. Indeed, ours is the tragedy of a broken nation.

The fracturing of Nigerian nation is due largely to the dearth of philosopher-kings. The situation is not any better with the absence of philosophy units in the academic curricula of some regions of the country, and in the High School syllabus of the nation as a whole. To overcome this systemic rot, it is not only imperative to device means of compelling leaders to submit to extant laws, it is also exigent to inculcate in all the values and virtues of philosophy, and to start this swiftly from the early stages of human development. This, for me, has acquired the urgency of the now. Philosophy, as catalyst for building systems with fortified institutions, without doubt, has the potential to patch the broken frames of Nigeria into a strong cohesive entity.