

An Analysis of Nations and Nationalism within the Context of Nigerian Political Landscape

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Abstract

The term nation by its very nature should be considered in primordial, cultural and emotional terms. But the need for increased human interaction engendered by modernism introduced the need for hybrid type of grouping among humans. Statehood became the new order and employed patriotism to promote its cause. But the use of the terms 'nations' and 'nationalism' did not stop. Rather, scholars started conflating them with the terms 'state' and 'patriotism' making it generally acceptable to name a conglomeration of states 'United Nations'. As a result of this conflation, conceptual ambiguities set in which even led to the denial of the existence of nations in Africa before colonialism. Nigeria as well as England are both referred to as nations. Yet, both differ in their national pose. This paper is an attempt at a conceptual clarification. We used Nigeria as a case study and concluded that Nigeria has many types of national groups inside it. Defined in the real sense of the word, Nigeria is not a nation. It is a state-nation because her union is defined in physical and forced togetherness. She can only become a nation when she meets certain conditions that define a nation.

Keywords: Nations, Nationalism, State, Nigeria, Patriotism

Introduction

Before 1918, the study of the terms 'nation' and 'nationalism' was mostly philosophical and received little theory in the form of analytical or sociological studies. Some scholars erroneously argued then that nations must have to be coterminous with the state or unit of governance while nationalism is an ideological movement towards that realisation. However, England as a nation is not coterminous with the British state. England is considered a nation. Great Britain is considered a nation and Nigeria, a conglomeration of ethnic groups that is not even up to 200 years old

is also considered a nation.

The seeming confusion in these considerations must have been as a result of scholarly, theoretical and analytical ambiguities. It was perhaps based on the foregoing that Trevor and Hegel claimed that Africa had no nation and no history before colonisation. But the existence of African national heritage does not depend on Hegel's or Europeans' knowledge of it. Yet some scholars impliedly justify the claim of no history and no nation in Africa.

Breuilly John, *Nationalism and the State*, Second Edition, (Chicago, 1984), p.1-2

Michael Hatcher, *Containing Nationalism* (New York, 2000), p. 7

Ronald Kuykendall, "Hegel and Africa: An Evaluation of the Treatment of Africa in the Philosophy of History Journal of Black Studies, Vol. 23, No. 4, (1993), p. 572.

Modernism or the modern theory of nations and nationalisms which denied the existence of cultural or ethnic nations.

Zernatto, Guido, and Alfonso G. Mistretta. "Nation: The History of a Word." *The Review of Politics*, vol. 6, no. 3, 1944, pp. 351–366. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/1404386. Accessed 27 Oct. 2020.

Merriam-Webster. (n.d.). Nation. In *Merriam-Webster.com dictionary*. Retrieved October 26, 2020, from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/nation>

In this paper, we seek to establish that Nigeria is made up of many distinct peoples which when considered in her African reality constitutes national groupings substantially distinct from each other. This paper also questions the basis for the no nation and no history argument of some Europeans when referring to Africa. To do this, we shall go through the major theories of nations and nationalisms to deconstruct and reconstruct what the term really constitutes.

One needs to be clear when one says; 'I am a Nigerian, a Scottish, a German or a British national.' We seek to establish that considered in her own reality, the area now known as Nigeria was composed of many distinct national groups before the British colonial conquest. Those national groups can be defined in their particular national pose as well as Britain, England and Nigeria respectively. We seek to define the type of nation Nigeria is vis a vis other nations. To do this, we have to seek for a paradigm shift in the definition of 'nation' and 'nationalism' in this paper.

Conceptual Clarification of Terms

What is a nation

Etymologically the word 'nation' originated from the Latin word 'natus' meaning 'birth'. The meaning connotes the idea of being born into a family, a kindred or group. It raises a socio biological concept of group development from a small family to a large family like a tribal or an ethnic group. *Peter Rasmussen pointed out that this sanguine origin of the term 'nation' "is rarely*

actual. More often, it derives from a postulated common ancestor. This common ancestor may be an actual historical figure, but most of the time, he or she is a mythical being." So blood ties whether real or imagined is an important part of a nation. The essence of the nation lies in the feelings, intuition, beliefs and sense of its members.

One may begin to wonder how this notion of nation transformed over time leading modernists especially to define nation in purely political, economic and ideological terms. This metamorphosis which led to the introduction of the concept of ethnic and civic nations has gone far in resolving the problems raised. The findings of this paper will also contribute to the resolution of the conceptual confusions.

The Meaning of Nationalism

We may not be able to treat the term 'nationalism' in isolation of the term 'nation'. Smith defined nationalism as "an ideological movement that seeks to attain and maintain the autonomy, unity and identity of human population, some of whose members deem it to constitute an actual or potential nation. Simply defined therefore, people see nationalism as 'love of nation'. If 'nation' is defined in such socio biological terms as groups with real or imagined blood relationship, the drive to protect and promote the nation which is nationalism should also be accepted as positive. But historically it is not so.

Earlier studies of nationalism viewed it as a negative philosophical ideology. Some scholars saw it as, 'a

Peter Rasmussen., (July 2001) "Nations" or "States" an Attempt at Definition [online] Available at <https://www.globalpolicy.org/component/content/article/172/30341.html> [Accessed 10 October, 2020]

Connor Walker, *Ethno-Nationalism: The Quest for Understanding*, (Princeton, 1994), pp 92, 190-213.

Lecours, André (2000) 'Ethnic and Civic Nationalism Op Cit., p.155

Ibid.

See Connor walker (1994), p. 98 see also Smith A. D (2001) op cit.,

Earnest Gellner., *Nations and Nationalism*, (Oxford, 1983), p. xvii

Ibid.

Ellie Kedourie., *Nationalism*, Fourth edn. (London, 1993), p. 1 Wiley, 1993

Lecours, André (2000) 'Ethnic and Civic Nationalism: Towards a New Dimension', *Space and Polity*, 4:2, p.155

Article III (3) 'Principles', in the Establishment Charter of the Organisation of African Unity signed in Addis Ababa Ethiopia on 25th May 1963.

threatening militancy movement' and 'a modern form of primitive tribalism'. For them, nationalism is irrational and aggressive.

This view seems to be exacerbated by the Nazi German nationalism which caused the World War II. According to Kedourie, appeal to ethnicity as a means to capture state power started in Germany once modern politics is concerned. It was the aggressive nationalism of the Nazis in Germany that caused the Second World War. The defeat of Germany by the allied forces in 1945 also brought with it the defeat and rejection of ethnic nationalism that time. This is because scholars started presenting nationalism as aggressive ethnicity. When decolonisation started in Africa around 1946, the conquered people could not fight for independence with their ethno-national affiliations considering this rejection. The anti-colonial nationalists therefore had no option than to define nationalism in civic terms. During colonialism, the anti-colonial nationalists had to play down ethnicity or its role in state building in order to present a united front as they fought for independence.

This move was to have its own consequences. In playing down ethno-national affiliations, the Nigerian nationalists affirmed tacitly the European colonial borders with all its defects. Later, African countries were to accept African colonial borders in their 1963 conference. However, ethnic nationalism took the central stage within many African states shortly after the departure of the imperial overlords. The question is: should nations and nationalism be defined exclusively in either civic or ethnic terms or both? The quest to

answer the above question introduced a critical phase in the study of nations and nationalism. Such critical study started with Gellner's modernism.

Modern Theory of Nations and Nationalism

As the name implies, the proponents of this theory hold that nations and nationalisms are modern developments. Michael Hatcher, Tom Nairn and Ernest Gellner from socio-economic standpoint argued that modern nations are formed in modern times based on socio-economic factors such as capitalism and industrialism. John Breuilly, Anthony Giddens and Michael Mann believes that nations and nationalism are forms of modern politics. For them, Politics in the modern world is for the primary control of the state power, while nationalism serves as a means of organising support base for seizing and retaining such control. Paul Brass sees nationalism as an instrument used by the elites of small communities to capture state power. Ethnic cultural symbols are employed by nationalist elites as instruments to gain political power.

There are also modern theorists who are ideological about their stand. Ellie Kedourie argued from an ideological point, saying that nationalism emerged from self-determination principle introduced by Kant. For him, Nationalism is not intrinsic part of nations. Nationalism is only employed by the elites as instruments of nation-building or defence from external conquest. Hans Kohn traced his own idea of nation to the 17th century England. He believes that nationalism experienced in this English period was

Lecours, André (2000) 'Ethnic and Civic Nationalism: Towards a New Dimension' Op cit.,
Earnest Gellner, op cit.

Hechter, M. (14th January 2013) Modernity of Nationalism . *Wiley Online Library*. (Online at)
<doi:https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/9780470674871.> [accessed 10th October 2020]
Ibid

Blaut J.M., (December, 1980) Nairn on Nationalism. (online) available at
<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1111/j.1467-8330.1980.tb00650.x> [accessed on 10th October 2020]

Earnest Gellner, op cit.

Ibid

Breuilly John., *Nationalism and the State* (Chicago, 1993), p.3

Anthony D. Smith., *Nationalism* (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 48-49

influenced by French ideas of personal liberty and adoration of collective power. Kohn believes that this idea of personal liberty pooled into a collective power, influenced the British American colonies into nationalism that led them to revolt and become nations. There are modern theorists who believe that nations are socially imagined and created as political communities. Eric Hobsbawm from that standpoint holds that nations and nationalisms are historical inventions which flourished in Europe from 1830. Nationalism for him is a result of deliberate social engineering which came with such marks as national anthems and national flags. He argued that even if there were 'proto-national' kingdoms in pre-modern periods, they cannot be the forerunners of modern nations because they were not congruent with the unit of governance which defines what we understand as 'nation' in modern times. In the same view, Benedict Anderson saw nation as 'imagined political community'.

The modern theory of nationalism in its entire variations can be summarised thus; all nations are driven by modern political and economic ideas and education. They don't believe that there were nations in the pre-modern societies. Most importantly they all believe that nations must be congruent with the unit of governance.

Primordial Theory of Nations and Nationalisms

This can be summarised as a natural or organic nations and nationalism. Its focus is on the naturalist conception of the term nation. According to

dictionary.com, 'primordial' means "constituting a beginning; giving origin to something, original; elementary." This theory can therefore be likened to Rousseau's consent theory of political legitimacy which puts into consideration "a state of nature" that marks the human beginning in a society. According to this theory; nations are primordial, meaning that "nations, ethnic groups, and races can be traced to the underlying genetic reproductive drives of individuals" and evolved or naturally originated from state of nature. In this instance, people voluntarily surrender their sovereignty to their cultural group leaders in exchange for certain rights as members of that nation. They therefore believe that, "nations have existed since time immemorial."

This theory was influenced by the philosophical writings of Johann Gottlieb Fichte and Johann Gottfried Herder. Herder, for example, saw nations as language groups. In this regard, every language group is a nation since it is hard to socially construct a language. These unique languages also embody in them and transmit to their (future) users, unique values that promote national spirit.

Primordialism as a theory of nationalism can have either socio-biological or cultural character depending on the view of its proponents but they fundamentally agree that certain primordial bonds, symbols and other genetic factors are irreducible. That is, they persevere and coexist in the modern state despite its reforms and progress. For Socio-biologists among them, people have united throughout history under common bonds

Ibid.

Breuilly John. Op Cit.,

Paul Brass., 'Elite Groups, Symbol Manipulation and ethnic Identity among the Muslims of the North India', in David Taylor and Malcom Yapp (eds), *Political Identity in South Asia*. (London, 1979), p. 69

Ellie Kedourie., *Nationalism in Asia and Africa*. (London, 1971), pp. 100-113

Paschalis M. Kitromilides (2005) Elie Kedourie's contribution to the study of nationalism, *Middle Eastern Studies*, 41:5, 661-663, DOI: [10.1080/00263200500233166](https://doi.org/10.1080/00263200500233166)

Cited in Jaffrelot, Christophe, For a Theory of Nationalism (June 1, 2003). *Questions de Recherche / Research Questions*, Centre d'études et de Recherches Internationales (CERI-Sciences Po/CNRS), Available at

SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2290897> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2290897>. [Accessed 29 August 2020].

Hobsbawm, E. J., *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*. (Cambridge 1990), p.47

Ibid.

which may be religious, cultural, historical, linguistic, racial, or ethnic ties to form nations. They believe that such bonds evolve into group identities over time. It is the nationalistic identities formed from this type of group identity that creates nations.

Perennial theory of nations and nationalism

The perennial theorists hold that nations are group identities that exist in every age from generation to generation. They differ from the primordialists on the ground of the natural origin of nations. For them, the fact that nations existed from time immemorial does not mean that it is natural. They maintain that nations continue to occur and recur throughout human history.

The proponents of Perennialism are Seton Watson, Gillingham, and Hastings among others. They believe that nations are historically either continuous or recurrent. For them, nations may come and go but the idea of nationhood remains and can apply to many cultural and political communities in every age.

Perennialists accepted the recent nature of some nations but departed from the modernists on the ground that there are other nations that have roots in the immemorial past. Thus the ground of disagreement between modernists and perennialists is the question of the age of nations. While the modernists hold that nations are recent, the perennialists hold that nations are from antiquity.

According to Renan one of the major proponents of this theory, the nation like the individual is “the culmination of a long past of efforts, sacrifice and devotion”. He argues that the ancestral cult is the most legitimate of all cults because the ancestors made us what we are today. It is a cult that represents a heroic past of great men of glory. This is for him “the social capital upon which one bases a national idea. To have common glories in the past and to have a common will in the present; to have performed great deeds together, to wish to perform still more. These are the essential conditions for being a people.”

Ethno Symbolism as a Theory of Nations and Nationalism

This theory borrows largely from the three earlier discussed theories of nations and nationalism. It concentrates on making use of ethnic historical symbols to explain the formation of modern nations and nationalism. According to its chief proponent Anthony Smith, it arose because there are certain cultural and historical facts that modernism fails to explain. Again it seeks to shed more light on the emergence of new nations which perennialists and primordialists find hard to fathom. Thus in considering the modernity of nations, one may want to understand what the nature and role of nations are in history. The main concern of ethno-symbolists is the question of how the earlier forms of collective identity influence the formation of modern nations. Two conspicuous authors in this regard are John Armstrong and John Hutchinson among others.

Anderson Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. (London 1991), p.5

Anthony D. Smith., *Nationalism* (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 48-49.

Smith, Anthony D. “Culture, Community and Territory: The Politics of Ethnicity and Nationalism.” *International Affairs* (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-), vol. 72, no. 3, 1996, pp. 445–458. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/2625550. [Accessed 10 Oct. 2020].

Smith, Anthony D. “Theories and Types Of Nationalism.” *European Journal of Sociology / Archives Européennes De Sociologie / Europäisches Archiv Für Soziologie*, vol. 10, no. 1, 1969, pp. 119–132. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/23998626. [Accessed 05 Oct. 2020.]

[online] Available at <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Primordialism>> [Accessed 03 October, 2020]

Smith A. D. op cit., p.52

Umut Özkırımlı, *Theories of Nationalism: a Critical Introduction*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), p. 64.

[online] Available at <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Primordialism>> [Accessed 03 October, 2020]

Nation - New Ways of Thinking About the Nation [online] Available at <<http://science.jrank.org/pages/10379/Nation->

Hutchison examined the role played by peoples' cultural past or history in modern nations. He looked at how peoples' cultural symbols, myths and memories persist through institutions into the modern epoch. For him, these cultural repertoires have national significance and need to be studied.

John Armstrong looked into pre 1789 nationalisms in Europe. For him, it is not all nationalisms that pursue political or state power as their primary objective. The aim of some nations is to regenerate and keep alive their cultures on their own soils. Such nationalisms attach more importance to cultural identity than political independence.

Armstrong also pointed out the role played by the past in formation of modern nations. Modernists should not take territorial identity in modern nations for granted because it originated from the Greek Polis and Roman Patria which are not modern nations.

On his part, Smith is seeking to understand how pre modern ethnic ties have provided a basis for modern nations and nationalism. He wants to know the “extent nations are created *de novo* by nationalist intelligentsia or are reconstructed out of existing cultural materials and ethnic sentiments”. There is the need to trace the origins and mutations of nations over long periods of time in order to grasp the power and understand the shape of modern nations and nationalisms. There are subjective cultural elements other than territory with which a people define themselves. These

cultural materials of pre-modern ethnies are in the form of symbols and myths that are always re-interpreted and refined to provide the mobilising power of nations and nationalism

For Smith, ethno-symbolism focuses particularly on these cultural elements especially in the persistence of *ethnies* and nation formation. “By relating national identities to prior ethnic ties, and showing the influence of subjective dimensions, of shared symbols, myths and memories, ethno symbolism throws lights on the continuing hold exercised by modern nations over so many people today.”

The theory shies away from concentrating on political, economic and socio-biological factors which are purely external factors and focuses rather on internal cultural dimensions of symbol, memory, myth, value and tradition. While taking cognisance of the objective factors which abound in and define modern nations, ethno symbolism pays more attention to such subjective factors as sentiment, value, memory, myth and symbols in such a way as to understand the 'inner worlds' of ethnicity and nationalism.

The theory is concerned with the analysis of social and cultural patterns over a long period stretching from the past to the present. Historical or sociological explanations are therefore advanced by ethno-symbolists to explain the attachments of people to their ethnic communities and nations which may include their capacity for self-sacrifice on its behalf. The proponents maintain therefore that there must be a complex relationship between the past, present and the

New-Ways-Thinking-about-Nation.html#ixzzOnRzzFYWf> [Accessed 03 October, 2020]

Smith A.D., op cit., p.54

Ibid.

Anthony D. Smith., Nationalism (Cambridge, 2001), pp 55-56

Anthony D. Smith., Nationalism., Op Cit., p.49

Spencer Philip & Howard Wollman., *Nationalism: A Critical Introduction*. (Guildford, 2002), p.27

Anthony D. Smith., Nationalism. Op Cit.

Anthony Smith, *The Nation in History: Historiographical debate about Ethnicity and Nationalism*. (Hannover: University Press of New England, 2000), p. 35.

Smith A. D., op cit., p.49

future; a reserved place for ethnicity and nationalism in history which can only be made evident by investigating past generations through its centuries.

Theoretical Analysis

Modernism concentrates largely on modern aspects of the nation which is the state. In such exclusive pose it denies the primordial aspect of the nation and therefore its original meaning. It therefore ended up not being able to explain the origin of pre-modern nations. Its explanations of cultural repertoires of the nation gotten from ancestry have not also been satisfactory. We cannot therefore adopt modernism in this paper considering its exclusive pose in national definition.

While primordialism can provide explanations of the origin of nations and provide ground from where hybrid nations can be understood, it fails to accommodate the points of modernism in the definition of nations. The theory can explain what nation means in its cultural version, but it remains silent on such concepts as political nations and artificial nations which can be explained by modernism.

Perennialism holds that nations are immemorial and can be constructed, yet they cannot explain how those immemorial nations which are actually not modern can be constructed. We cannot accept the theory entirely because it has no explanation on the origin of cultural nations.

Ethno-symbolism is a theory that seems to cut across all other theories. It fails to commit to any extreme position. For example, it neither denied the modern

aspect of nations nor its cultural aspects some of which can be traced to antiquity. It is an open theory that is ready to accept in the national definition, some of the merits of other theories and the rejection of their demerits. This paper seeks to adopt this theory in its openness to the national discourse. Considering the reality on ground, neither antiquity nor modernism can explain nations and nationalism exclusively since both contribute immensely to what we now understand as the term 'nation'. This shall guide our definition of nation below. We shall as much as possible avoid sectional and exclusive approach to a term which is a universal one.

The Concept of the State in Contradistinction to the Nation

Based on the fact that the major confusion in understanding nations and nationalism is in the scholarly conflation of the 'nation' and the 'state', the meaning of the state as we shall describe here would have to be in reference to the nation. The state has been defined as “the major political subdivision of the globe.” It can be seen as a political unit geographically located somewhere on earth in terms of longitude and latitude and can easily be defined in such physical terms. This is quite different from the 'nation' of which the geographical location is not an essential defining character.

Let us here borrow Handler's dichotomy. For him, the 'state' is viewed as a rational, instrumental, power-concentrating organization. The 'nation' as

BlgojiConvev., “Theorieis of Nations and Nationalism: A Comparative Outline' [online] Available at https://www.academia.edu/40762412/THEORIES_OF_NATIONS_AND_NATIONALISM_A_COMPARATIVE_OUTLINE [Accessed 05 October, 2020]

Renan Ernest., 'What is a Nation' A lecture Delivered at the Sorbonne, 11 March 1882. 'Qu'est-ce qu'unenation'[online] Available at

<http://classiques.uqac.ca/classiques/renan_ernest/qu_est_ce_une_nation/qu_est_ce_une_nation_texte.html> [Accessed 05 October, 2020]

Anthony D. Smith., Nationalism. Op cit., pp 49-50.

Ibid.

Ibid.

John Hutchinson(2000) Ethnicity and modern nations, Ethnic and Racial Studies, 23:4, 651-669, DOI: [10.1080/01419870050033667](https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870050033667) [Accessed 10 October, 2020]

a human group may or may not control its own state, the same way the 'state' as a political organization may or may not correspond to onenation.

Moreover, like we earlier submitted, the essence of the nation lies in the feelings, intuition, beliefs and sense of its members. Daniele Conversi toes this part too when he defined a nation as a human population sharing historic memories centered on a myth of common descent. In agreement, Geertz observed that even if the cultural symbols of blood, language and common decent negate the reality, the most important essence of the nation is their assumed origin. This assumption is psychological and expresses itself in the feelings and beliefs of the social group members. This is the notion of nation that this paper adopts and promotes.

Having gone thus far, we have realised that the major mistake scholars make in national discourse is the conflation of the term 'state' with the term 'nation'. This mistake is more prevalent among the modernists such as Anderson, Gellner and John Breuilly.' The point is that the scholars are stripping the 'nation' its psychological characteristics with which it can elicit sacrifices from her members and trying to recreate them in the 'state'. This is very important because, a state may be termed national to the extent it is able to imbibe these national essences. Connor noted that when a nation controls its own state, that is, when the psychological bond becomes coextensive with political bond, it is known as a **nation state**. That is where there is one nation for a given state and one

state for a given nation. This according to him is very rare.

In actual fact, majority of states are made up of many nations while members of a nation might find themselves in two states. One example is the Irish people who can be found both in the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland. Smith pointed out that if a poly ethnic state aspires to nationhood and seeks to be unified but not to become homogenous through measures of integration, we speak of **state nations**. Examples of statenations are the African colonial constructs such as Nigeria which brought together many ethno national groups under one state. Once this integration is realised and national psychology of shared past achieved, the poly ethnic state becomes a **national state**. Many African states, Nigeria inclusive, are still potential national states. Looking at the above conceptual description, it becomes easy to understand the reason behind the conceptual confusion in our subject. Due to the fact that sometimes a nation and a state coincide and some other times a modern state may house many nations as pointed out by Smith and Handler, academic laxity has reduced the terms to interchangeable usage. Yet many scholars seem complacent with the confusion which in most cases secretly underlines the opposing views among scholars.

Ethnic and Civic Dichotomy: The Imperative of Using 'Nation' as a Common Noun Qualified by an Adjective

Having looked at the theoretical discourse, its

Armstrong John, *Nations Before Nationalism*. (Chapel Hill, 1982), pp. vii and 410

Smith A. D. op cit., p.59

Ibid, p.4, see also Book Review by Eric Kaufmann, University of Southampton, England [online] available at <http://www.sneps.net/OO/images/Ethnic_Nat_Biblio_Nationalism.pdf> [Accessed 10 October, 2020]

Ibid. p. 78

Smith A.D., op cit., p. 57

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid, p.59

Ibid.

analysis and conceptual clarifications, one comes to the conclusion that there is no one type of nation. Originally and from our etymological definition given above, nation is cultural or ethnic and employed mostly as a proper noun in reference to a group of people. But considering its sweeping modern usage, it becomes imperative to use it as a common noun. According to Grammar-Monster.com, “a common noun is the generic name for a person, place, or thing.” Based on the foregoing, this paper defines nation as “any group of people; that has a homeland; has attained a great degree of integrated cohesion; and seeking or have attained some degree of self-determination either within a state or as a separate state.” So when nation stands as a common noun that can be adopted by any group, some adjectives would then be employed to identify or define the type of nation we mean. This approach will then allow us room to define such words as nation-state, state nation, ethnic nation, political nation, tribal nation, federal nation etc. It will also remove such theoretical squabbles where the term 'state' is conflated with the term 'nation'.

Contextualizing the Term 'Nation' in Nigeria

The age of enlightenment and modernism helped to engender political nationalism where USA can be its successful example. The negative connotation of Nazi nationalism and its defeat also sounded a death toll to

ethnic nationalism and only helped to project preference to political nationalism in our contemporary world. The word 'nation' therefore needs to drop its original concept of primordial 'origins' and 'cultural givens' as the basis of political relationship, and take up 'agreements to coexists', constitutions, mutual respects and 'arranged togetherness' as the new basis for political relationships. Thus the cohesive and emotive spirit of 'nations' and 'nationalism'; properties it gathered from its sense of shared past or common ancestor, needed to be transplanted from their original uses and forced to the service of the 'state' and its patriotism. The result is that 'nation' has come to be used interchangeably with 'state' in the modern world politics. But when we use nation in reference to states, we must make sure that proper adjectives are used to avoid conceptual mistakes.

Nigeria is therefore not a nation per se. Since her citizens lack the psychological feelings of common origin, shared past, real or imagined progenitor, the emotional spirit of real or imagined blood ties, Nigeria it yet to become a **national state**. Nigeria can be referred to as a **state nation**; meaning that her togetherness is only defined in forced, physical and political terms and nothing else. The Nigerian state is politically one, but nationally many. Nation, based on our earlier submissions means unity and oneness that is not forced; oneness that exists from the subconscious of the members. When the Nigerian ethnic nationalities

Connor Walker, (1994) op cit., p.93

Handler Richard., *Nationalism and the Politics of Culture in Quebec* in 'New Directions in Anthropological Writing: History, Politics, Cultural Criticism', ed. George E.; Clifford Marcus & James Madison: (Wisconsin, 1988), pp. 6-8.

Connor Walker, *Ethno-Nationalism: The Quest for Understanding*, (Princeton, 1994), pp 92, 190-213.

Conversi, Daniele. (2002). Conceptualizing Nationalism: An Introduction to Walker Connor's Work. [online] Available at https://www.researchgate.net/publication/234079215_Conceptualizing_nationalism_an_introduction_to_Walker_Connors_work [10 October, 2020]

Geertz Clifford., *The Interpretation of Cultures*. (London, 1973), p.259-260.

Connor Walker (1994) op cit., pp. 100-103

Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Revised Edition ed (London, 1991)

Gellner, Ernest. *Nations and Nationalism*. (Ithaca, 1983)

Breuil John., *Nationalism and the State* (Chicago, 1993).

Connor Walker., (1994) op cit., pp. 90-197

Connor Walker (1994) op cit., p.97

develop a political oneness that creates emotional spirit of real or imagined shared past or blood ties, and common future it can become **a national state**.

For Nigeria to achieve this, emotional and psychological attachment has to be created around her as a union and homeland. It has to become a union that ensures group and individual rights; where lives and properties are secure. Political actors must go out of their way to make positive histories which groups and individuals would look back to with nostalgia. As Smith puts it, "If the nation is to become a 'political community' on the Western territorial and civic model, it must, seek to create those myths of common descent, those historical memories..., that common culture..., along with a mutual solidarity... and emphasize the historic kinship of its constituent ethnies and their common ties of ideological affinity." If Nigeria succeeds in creating this myth in the psyche of its members - then a national state will be born.

But there are many reasons why it may be difficult for Nigeria as presently constituted to attain the status of a national state. First, is that the consequences of the British "Divide and Rule" system are still causing more divides after more than 50 years. Moreover, the question of the real bearers of title to the lands and territories in the 'Niger-area' and sovereignty over it has not been addressed properly. Who bears the title to the lands in Nigeria and sovereignty over them? A select aristocratic few? The British Government? Or the multi-national foreign oil companies?

Secondly, the centralisation of the government power and the abrogation of federalism and regional autonomy since 1966 alienate people all the more from the Nigerian project. Third, the impunity of the government officers and political office holders promote corruption and make people to lose faith in the Nigeria they represent. Fourth, the anti-people 1999 constitution favours only a section of the entity called Nigeria and other sections will always work, either to balance it or pull it down. Fifth, the inter-ethnic wars, killings and near genocide which has continued from 1945 until now makes people afraid even inside their supposed Nigerian homes. All these points are exactly what stand against the development of psychological togetherness and a national spirit. So, for Nigeria to attain the status of a national state, certain serious decisions must be made by all the national groups living in the "Niger area."

Conclusion

In this article, we looked at the meaning of the terms nations and nationalism and tried to deconstruct and reconstruct its concept in academic discourse. This we have done by going through its academic theories of modernism, primordialism, Perennialism and finally ethno symbolism. Relying mostly on the ethno-symbolic approach, we suggested that there are types of nations which can either be modern or pre-modern. This led us to use some words as adjective such as ethnic, tribal, political to qualify the term nation for conceptual clarification. The outcome of the theoretical discourse is an understanding of the terms which has established a base for us to conclude with both

Smith A.D. (2001) op cit., p.17

Handler Richard., (1988), op cit., pp. 6-8

Definition of Common Noun. [online] Available at <http://www.grammar-monster.com/lessons/nouns_different_types.htm> [Accessed 12 October, 2020]

Connor Walker (1994)., op cit., p.98

Smith A.D., op cit., p.47

Smith A.D., *The Ethnic Origin of Nations* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), p. 147

Obafemi Awolowo, *Path to Nigerian Freedom* (London, 1947)

Wole Soyinka Called Nigeria a "Nation-Space" and not a nation in his' Between Nation Space And Nationhood'. (online) Available at <https://obafemiawolowofoundation.org/pdf/BETWEEN%20NATION%20SPACE-Soyinka%20lecture.pdf> [Accessed, 12 October 2020]

Renan Ernest, 'What is a Nation' (Sorbonne, 1882), op cit.

Awolowo and Wole Soyinka that Nigeria is yet to be a nation. Nigeria is only a state-nation that can one day become a national state if the political actors sit down to work towards that goal based on our submissions above.

We argued that before the European invasion, there was separate and distinct national order for different peoples that now make up Nigeria. Colonialism introduced another national order that sought to unite those separate units. But essentially the new modern European order requires that those separate and distinct (national) groups that formed the old (national) order need to both as groups and individuals have a say on the fundamentals of the new (national) order. After 50 years, these national groups that became the spring board of Nigeria as a supposed political nation have never adequately negotiated the basis for Nigeria against Renan's submission that nationalism is a daily plebiscite. Such plebiscite will see to it that the mechanical norms enshrined into the 1999 constitution is put aside and the nations that make it up unite in a sovereign constitutional conference to decide for themselves the basis for the united existence of Nigeria as a national state.

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