

RE-MAKING THE NIGERIAN NATION: A PHILOSOPHICAL REFLECTION

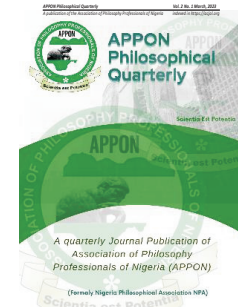
MSC Okolo

Communication and General Studies Department,
Federal University of Agriculture,

Abeokuta, Ogun State, Nigeria

E-mail: mscokolo@gmail.com

Phone number: +234 7038401594



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Abstract

Nigeria, in more than a century of existence, is still grappling with the process of nation building. The process from the onset was thorny, resulting in an attempted secession and civil war. The old challenges of ethnicity and religious intolerance, which played key roles in the war persist even as the boundaries of poverty, unemployment, corruption, insecurity continue to expand. As such, Nigeria is nowhere near achieving the one nation, which the 1914 amalgamation was set to accomplish. How best, then, can this task be approached? This study adopts philosophical reflection as the best method that can offer the level of social analysis required for both understanding the issues frustrating Nigeria's nationhood and measures to correct them. This study locates the threats to nation building in the structural flaws inherent in Nigeria's democracy, which makes its application contextually removed from the needs of the people. A democracy that is unreflective of the plural composition of the country and incapable of making leaders accountable. These result in instilling in Nigerians a sense of not belonging to the nation, thereby undermining the unity of the country. This study concludes that a rehabilitation of Nigeria's democracy, especially by instituting a constitution that reflects the peoples' will and a peaceful restructuring of the country where each region can develop at its pace are prerequisites for re-making the Nigerian nation.

Key words: Nigeria, Nation, Democracy, Philosophy, Restructuring, Constitution

Introduction

Since the birth of Nigeria in 1914 the nation has been struggling with nation building and how to authenticate its existence as a 'one' nation. Underlying and undermining this painful struggle is the complete disregard, or perhaps disdain, for differences with which

Britain forced the southern and northern protectorates into a union. The make-up of the protectorates was nations such as the Yoruba, Kanuri, Fulani, Igbo among others. The Nigerian nation is, in the words of Sofela, "a container...for the assemblage of nations in their own rights."¹ Sofela, in fact, denounced

¹. B. Sofela, *The Burden of History: An Inaugural Lecture*, (Ibadan, Ibadan University Press, 2021), p.17.

the British for demoting the pre-1914 nations which has led to their wrong labelling as tribes, ethnic groups or mere groups in order to fashion out the Nigerian nation. What this implies is that the Nigerian nation is a make-up of many nations. Indeed, "Nigeria's painful problems of state and nation-building can be said to derive partly from the acrimonious co-existence of multiple cultural logics and the conflicting claims they bring to bear in the state."²

Perhaps this inherent seed of discord and self-destruction in Nigerian politics is what the British *visionary* policy on amalgamation aimed to achieve in Fawole's thinking. According to Nnoli, Governor Sir Hugh Clifford's policy is to:

secure to each separate people the right to maintain its identity, its individuality and its nationality, its chosen form of government, and the peculiar political and social institutions which have been evolved for it by the wisdom and accumulated experiences of generations of its forebears.³

Fawole rightly described the intention as deeper than the surface presentation. The real intention for him is "to encourage disunity among the various ethnic formations that made up each of the colonies in such a way that they would not be able to act in concert to challenge the colonial authority."⁴ To say that

Sir Clifford's policy succeeded in its goal will be a crass understatement; its extraordinary success is evident in the fragmented, hostile and often irreconcilable differences that characterised, and continue to define, the relationship existing between the different ethnic groups that make up Nigeria in its century plus existence. Ethnicity, then, both for good and ill "is integral to Nigeria's nation building project and its overall development process and as such, a recurring decimal in the annals of its nationhood."⁵

In as much as it is difficult to extricate ethnicity from the many ills plaguing the country, there are many issues that ethnicity cannot explain. Such issues include: Nigeria's inability to achieve oneness even after the Nigeria-Biafra war of 1967-70. The reason no leader has succeeded since sixty-two years of independence in providing quality leadership. Finally, and most pertinent, is the cause of the inability of state governors, local government chairpersons who are not encumbered by ethnicity to provide the dividends of democracy for their people. The priority issue posed by this context is the need for social analysis that is radically different from the ethnic origin that has dominated Nigeria's political blame game discussed so far. From this perspective, the problem dogging Nigeria's nationhood aspiration seems to be a structural malaise that makes it easy for other components to be diseased. Besides, ethnicity in and of itself is not necessarily negative but the way it is manipulated and used as a trump

². A.R. Mustapha, 'Rethinking Africanist Political Science', *CODESRIA Bulletin*, Nos.3&4, 2006, p.6.

³. O. Nnoli, *Ethnic Politics in Nigeria*, (Enugu, Fourth Dimension Publishers, 1978), p.112.

⁴. W.A. Fawole, 'Colonial History and the Search for democratic Nationhood: The Case of Anglophone West Africa', in *The Crisis of the State and Regionalism in West Africa: Identity, Citizenship and Conflict*, Edited by W. AladeFawale and Charles Ukeje, (Dakar, Senegal, CODESRIA, 2005), p.62.

⁵. O. Alubo, 'Citizenship and Nation making in Nigeria: New challenges and Contestations', *Identity, Culture and Politics: An Afro-Asian Dialogue*, Vol. 5, Nos.1&2, 2004, p.136.

card for favouring some people at the expense of others can turn it “into a weapon for the furtherance of particularistic aims, and thereby threatening nation building.”⁶ This can easily happen based on the environment provided by the type of government in place. In the case of Nigeria, democracy is in focus. The question, then, is what type of democracy is Nigeria operating that is making it possible for it to be trapped in an endless, futile struggle for nation building?

This study locates the threats to nation building in the structural flaws inherent in Nigeria's democracy which makes its application contextually removed from the needs of the people, unreflective of the plural composition of the country, incapable of making leaders accountable and fuels an established attitude rather than an exploration of possibilities of cooperation and meaning. The result of these is that Nigerians do not feel a sense of belonging to the nation, thereby undermining the unity of the country. This study concludes that a rehabilitation of Nigeria's democracy especially by instituting a constitution that reflects the peoples' will and a peaceful restructuring of the country where each region can develop at its pace are prerequisites for re-ordering the Nigerian nation.

Interrogating Nigeria's Democracy

Democracy in its origin, orientation, outlook and essence is government that is supposed to represent the interest of the people. Derived from two Greek words 'demos', people and

'kratos', government or power, it literally translates to 'the government of the people.' Abraham Lincoln in his Gettysburg Address of November 19, 1863 rendered a memorable description of it as a government of the people, by the people, and for the people. Essentially, democracy guarantees the freedom of people to participate in conducting the affairs of government to which they have surrendered a measure of their freedom in exchange for the collective good of all and the provision of security and safety. That is the “sovereignty of the government represents the aggregate sovereignty of the citizens who constitute the government.”⁷ Under this arrangement, differences are accommodated and there are set of rights and responsibilities for members to follow.

The value of democracy has long been recognised as the best form of government that affords citizens the power to participate in directing the course of government and by implication the best for safeguarding individual freedom and collective existence. Mill underscored the importance of individual to hold free speech when he argued that “If all mankind minus one, were of one opinion, and only one person were of the contrary opinion, mankind would be no more justified in silencing that one person, than he, if he had the power, would be justified in silencing mankind.”⁸ Mandela during his Rivonia Trial submits that he has “cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities. It is an ideal which [he]

⁶. Alubo, 'Citizenship and Nation making in Nigeria', p.137.

⁷. F. Lowenstein, S. Lechner and E. Bruun, eds., *Voices of Protest: Documents of Courage and Dissent*, (New York, Black Dog and Leventhal Publishers, 2007), p.16.

⁸. J.S. Mill, 'On Liberty', in *Voices of Protest: Documents of Courage and Dissent*, Edited by Frank Lowenstein, Sheryl Lechner, and Erik Bruun, (New York, Black Dog and Leventhal Publishers, 2007), p.31.

hope to live for and to achieve. But if needs be, it is an ideal for which [he is] prepared to die.”⁹ Indeed the first words of Nigeria's 1999 Constitution preamble which read: “We the People of the Federal Republic of Nigeria”¹⁰ is a testimony that the power and authority of the government lies with the citizens. All this help to position democracy as the best form of government where government derives its authority from its citizens.

Given all these, why should Nigeria that is currently under a democratic government be in need of re-making? Re-making involves the process of making something in a better way. Implied in this mission is the notion that the current state of the Nigerian nation is not what it *should* be. Matters of should needs to be grounded using rigorous interrogation of the issues at stake. How, then, can Nigeria fashion its democracy to reflect her realities and become developmental in its mode of execution, goals and welfare of the people? That is, a democracy that takes its mandate from the aspirations, will, potential and capacities of the people in a socially inclusive way that both gives everyone a sense of belonging and a scope of operation that recognises other peoples' space without any injury to one's own. To achieve this, there is need for approaches that are context specific to be put in place.

The first in this consideration is to rescue Nigerian democracy from the clutches of its

colonial origin. According to O'Connell, Nigerian's democracy contains the inevitability of instability which were actually built into the structural foundation of the state.¹¹ In Fawole's submission the defective foundations carried over from the Anglophone colonial states and used as the foundation for post-colonial democracy in the affected states in Africa of which Nigeria is one is what is preventing enduring democratic rule in Nigeria.¹² This is chiefly due to the authoritarian character of colonial rule and the lack of training on the part of the nationalists who succeeded them. In Ake's view, “everyone in this political arena, security lay only in the accumulation of power. The result was an unprecedented drive for power; power was made the top priority in all circumstances and sought by all means. This politics hardly encouraged moderation and compromise.”¹³ In fact, the situation is so hopeless that even “when the new rulers wished to operate democratic politics, they were incapable of doing so because the foundations of their new states were profoundly authoritarian and violent”¹⁴ with a narrow social base that relied for compliance on coercion rather than authority.¹⁵ Added to this is the deliberate handing of power at independence to a pliant and accommodating leadership most ill-equipped for running a modern state which has helped to entrench a fractional politics calculated to prevent nation-building.¹⁶ Ake endorses this view. He submits that the

⁹ N. Mandela, *No Easy Walk to Freedom*, (Edinburgh Gate, Heinemann, 1965), p.189.

¹⁰ 1999 *Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria*, 1st, 2nd & 3rd Alteration, 2011.

¹¹ J. O'Connell, 'The Inevitability of Instability', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol.5, No.2, 1967, p.181.

¹² Fawole, 'Colonial History and the Search for democratic Nationhood', p.58.

¹³ C. Ake, *Democracy and Development in Africa*, (Ibadan, Spectrum Books Limited, 2001), p.3.

¹⁴ Fawole, 'Colonial History and the Search for democratic Nationhood', p.64.

¹⁵ Ake, *Democracy*, p.3.

¹⁶ P. Okigbo, 'Africa and Europe', *Africa Today*, second edition, (London, Africa Books Limited, 1991), p. 424.

colonisers handed power to those who could be trusted to share their values and be attentive to their interests and these lay the foundation in which systematic breakdown was inevitable.¹⁷ Clearly, democracy on its own is not enough. Its full import must be located in its contextual application to the needs of the people.

The second follows from the first. There is need to tame the constitutional powers of the president. To begin with, other essential democratic institutions such as the legislature, judiciary, civil society and the press are fragile compared to the President or Head of State of the Federal Republic of Nigeria who has “without question, the power of life and death over any Nigerian or group.”¹⁸ In this vein, there is urgent need for a substantial review of chapter VI of the 1999 Constitution pertaining to the President of the Federation, especially, section 143 that deals with the Removal of the President from Office. For instance, President Buhari has come under heavy criticism regarding his handling of all aspects of Nigerian affairs: ranging from appointments to insecurity; from taking and mismanaging loans to destroying university education; from gross insensitivity to the plight of the suffering masses among others. In fact, scholars described him as Nigeria's most clueless

leader.¹⁹ Yet, his media aid, Femi Adesina as reported by Oluwafemi, dismissed the impeachment threat issued to him on July 27, 2022 by senators of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) to improve the country's security as coming from “the minority of minorities”²⁰ and a waste of both the country's time and that of the upper chamber of the national assembly. His confidence, no doubt, came from the knowledge that the hurdles placed by the constitution regarding the removal of the president is such that it is practically very difficult to achieve such objective especially given the unequal representation of the Northern and Southern members in the National Assembly and the role ethnicity and party affiliation play in Nigeria's political life. Eboh, in fact, reports that the senate minority leader, Philip Aduba, was blocked from raising the motion by the senate president, a member of the ruling All Progressive Congress (APC).²¹ To impeach Buhari would require support from two thirds of senators. Adesina's reaction underscores a fundamental flaw in democracy that always awards the prize to the majority whether they are right or wrong. In Nigeria's case given its composition of both 'majorities' and 'minorities' in a forced union there is need for a kind of democracy that can accord equal weight to both if Nigeria is to realise its' destiny. Banseka is categorical

¹⁷. Ake, *Democracy*.

¹⁸. V.S. Alumona, 'The Rhetoric of Corruption and the Quest for Political Power in Nigeria', in *Culture and Society in Nigeria: Popular Culture, Language and Intergroup Relations*, Edited by Tunde Babawale and Olukoya Ogen, (Lagos, Concept Publications, 2008), p.119.

¹⁹. D. Sobowale, 'President Buhari meet Buba Galadima your former ally', *Sunday Vanguard*, January 6, 2019, p.17; O. Nwakanma, 'Presidential Election: The Morning After', *Sunday Vanguard*, February 17, 2019, p. 32; W. Soyinka, 'Between Dividers-in-Chief and Dividers-in-law', Available at guardian.ng/politics/between/dividers-in-chief-and-dividers-in-law/, September 16, 2020; S. Ayodele, 'ASUU, Keyamo and Buhari's Profligacy', *Nigerian Tribune*, Available at <https://tribuneonline.ng/asuu-keyamo-and-buhari-s-profligacy/> August 9, 2022.

²⁰. A. Oluwafemi, 'Femi Adesina: Senators who threatened to impeach Buhari are the minority of minorities', Available at July 27, 2022.

²¹. C. Eboh, 'Nigerian Opposition Senators urge Buhari's impeachment over Security Problems', Available at July 28, 2022.

that “a political community's existence can only be founded on an adequate convergence of the interests of the various groups making up the community, and on a sense of national consciousness and mutual obligations.”²²

Equally, Ake proposed a “democracy that puts as much emphasis on collective rights as it does on individual rights” by recognising “nationalities, subnationalities, ethnic groups, and communities as social formations that express freedom and self-realization” and “grant them rights to cultural expression and political and economic participation”²³ as suitable for Nigeria. This is the way to scale-up cooperative initiatives whilst ensuring that no dominant ethnic group lords it over the minor ones. The task is to bring equity not merely equality as the guiding principle in conducting national affairs.

Third, in addition to tuning down the excesses of presidential power, those vying for political offices must submit to personality audit to ensure they have the needed mental capacity for the job. They must be integrity-certified, competent, credible people with proven record of achievement and people who read. Reading is important because it “is inextricably tied to intelligence and cognition, and the capacity for analytic and critical reflection and problem solving.”²⁴ Okolo is also of the view that reading is critical both for good leadership and for transforming the society. To commit leaders to read she raised two critical suggestions in the form of questions: “Is it possible to have a monthly or even quarterly programme on radio and

television where our leaders talk about the book(s) they are reading? Is it possible to incorporate as a key condition during election campaigns an account of the book(s) those aspiring for public offices are reading?”²⁵

In addition, to mandating election seekers to give an account of the books they are reading before election, elected leaders should be constitutionally required to appear on the programme, at least, once in a quarter. Indeed the essence of books is for them to be read. Democracy is what it is today because of the works of political philosophers. John Locke's *Second Treatise of Government*, written in 1689, in which he developed his thoughts on the relationship between the ruler and the ruled helped to give democracy a new dimension. Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *The Social Contract* and John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty* helped to map out how the rights of individuals and the needs of government and freedom of speech are handled. This is possible because those in government who are in the position to design and implement policies that affect the entire citizens read them. It is, ultimately, in the country's own interest to constitutionally review the terms and conditions of elected politicians. This will, both in the short and long run, put the country on the path of political recovery, restore peoples' confidence in the elected class, drastically reduce the cost of governance and free funds for the development of critical sectors such as education, agriculture, medicine among others. Nigeria must pay attention to human

²². C. Banseka, 'Painful Good-bye to Home: Governance Failures as a Precipitant to Emigration from Africa', *CODESRIA Bulletin*, Nos. 3&4, 2006, p. 35.

²³. Ake, *Democracy*, p.132.

²⁴. T. Olaopa, 'Do Nigerian leaders read and what's their developmental mindset?', *Sunday Sun*, June 2, 2019, p.34.

²⁵. MSC Okolo, 'Repositioning Africa for Social Transformation through Creative Writing: A Philosophical Contribution', *Philosophy and Praxis*, Vol.II, No.2, 2021 p.104.

development to raise citizens with critical minds who will continue to keep its elected officials in check as well as involve themselves in activities that will add value to the country. However, this requires a firm commitment by all if the implementation is to work and be sustained.

Fourth, the Nigerian democracy is tailored to both favour the northern region and alienate integrity-conscious, competent people who are not super-rich. On the issue of favouring the northern region, at independence Britain rigged the election in favour of the North²⁶ to maintain their hold on the country both politically and economically. This interference has not only been the bane of nation-building but has gone a long way in helping the Northern part to maintain its strangulating hold on Nigerian politics and render inoperative any measure to restructure the country along the path of common justice for all the federating nations. The full consequence of this ill-conceived action became evident with the civil war and has continued to dwarf all efforts to make Nigeria a real nation. It is unlikely that the North will ever willingly surrender their hold on power as the 2023 presidential race shows. For a presidential candidate to be viable he will have to come from the north or his vice candidate will be from the North. The joining of the Eastern, Western and Southern part of Nigeria as Southern Nigeria gives weight to the uneven arithmetic that champions the arrangement that a presidential candidate if he comes from the north then his vice should come from the south as the political correct thing to do. On a closer inspection, however,

this places the regions that are put together under south at a serious disadvantage if not in a subservient position given that they are culturally and linguistically different from each other. For a workable Nigeria to emerge there is need to decouple the regions and accord them the full weight given to the north and this includes equal representation in the National Assembly. Equally, a presidential candidate from the west or south or east or north should be able to pick a vice from any region and win. Except Nigeria is able to exist on such terms it will be difficult at this stage, if not impossible, to see how she can achieve the status of a nation.

Coming to the matter of integrity-consciousness, competent people who are not super-rich, the two dominating political parties, the ruling APC and the opposition party PDP sold their 2023 presidential ticket for ₦100,000,000 (one hundred million naira only) and ₦40,000,000 (forty million naira only) respectively. These amounts are not part of the bribe the aspirants were alleged to have given the delegates who voted during the convention to elect the parties presidential flag bearers. According to Musowo Senator Ahmed Tinubu of APC paid \$25,000 to \$10,000 to delegates depending on the strategic value of the delegate.²⁷ The same report notes that delegates rejected Professor Yemi Osinbajo's (Nigeria's current vice president) \$5,000. Tinubu, of course, was elected the party's flag bearer. How many integrity-conscious and competent Nigerians can boast of such amounts? Alikor reports that over 42 per cent of Nigeria's population (91 million) is living below the poverty

²⁶ C. Achebe, *There was a Country: A Personal History of Biafra*, (London, Allen Lane, 2012); W. Soyinka, *You Must Set Forth at Dawn: Memoirs*, (Ibadan, BookCraft, 2009).

²⁷ T. Musowo, 'APC Convention: Tinubu pays Ogun delegates \$25,000, Adamawa \$10,000; delegates reject Osinbajo's \$5,000', Available at [gazettengr.com>apc-convention-tinubu-pays-ogun-delegates-\\$25,000-adamawa-\\$10,000-delegates-reject-osinbajo-s-\\$5000/](https://gazettengr.com/apc-convention-tinubu-pays-ogun-delegates-$25,000-adamawa-$10,000-delegates-reject-osinbajo-s-$5000/) June 7, 2022.

benchmark of \$1.9 a day; the minimum wage for a vast majority of Nigerians is only ₦30,000; and the economic life of an average Nigerian is in jeopardy with no clear direction for the future and the nation too expensive for economic sustenance.²⁸ More fundamentally, how can an integrity-conscious Nigerian aspiring to the office of the first citizen of the country give bribe and do so in a foreign currency? In the face of such insensitive squander, kidnappers have joined the fray demanding ₦100 million as ransom to release their victims. According to *Nigerian Tribune* of June 1, 2022 the abductors of the Prelate of the Methodist Church of Nigeria, Sam Uche, collected ₦100million as ransom before they released him and two others kidnapped along with him.²⁹ Equally, Sanni writes that a report 'The Economics of Nigeria's Kidnap Industry' conducted by SBM Intelligence, a Lagos-based Security and Political Risk Research firm, published in August 2022, recorded that about ₦653.7million was paid as ransom in Nigeria between July 2021 and June 2022.³⁰ This figure does not include the ransom paid by kidnapped victims of Abuja-Kaduna passenger train attacked by terrorist on 28 March, 2022. According to the report, on 25 July 2022 eight of the hostages parted with ₦100million each, while a Pakistani hostage paid ₦200million. The point is that most of these kidnappers are youths who are supposed to define the destiny of Nigeria as a nation in this 21st century; instead, they have become its tormentors and arch-problem.

Fifth, given the many 'nations' that make up Nigeria there is need for a constitutional provision on Power Rotation Principle. This apart from giving every region a sense of belonging will go a long way to cut the high cost attached to seeking presidential office. This will also make it easier as Sofela pointed out to have genuine representation (not representatives) and transparent accountability, which is the democracy, suited to the Nigerian condition.³¹ The region that is supposed to present the presidential candidates should through series of Town Hall meetings select a credible and competent person and present him/her to the nation. Apart from eliminating huge resources expended during campaign, each region's reputation is tied to the choice of their candidate. Such measure and collective sense of responsibility will go a long way in ensuring that each region produce their best, especially, given that the presidency will go to the vice president who will be from another region in case of impeachment.

Sixth, there is need to initiate and implement ways to manage religious differences in the country, especially the relation between Christians and Moslems. This is critical if the country is to be saved from digging the grave of its extinction. Two instances will help to underscore the urgency of this point. The first is the furore over the Moslem-Moslem ticket of the ruling party of Nigeria, the APC, in the 2023 presidential election. In the assessment of most Nigerians, this is a weightier

²⁸ V. Alikor, 'Nigeria is Becoming too Expensive for a poor Country', *Business Day*, Available at [businessday.ng>news-nigeria-is-becoming-too-expensive-for-a-poor-country/](https://businessday.ng/news-nigeria-is-becoming-too-expensive-for-a-poor-country/) May 23, 2022.

²⁹ *Nigerian Tribune*, 'Methodist Prelate Reveals: Abductors Collected ₦100million before Our Release', Available at tribuneonline.ng/methodist-prelate-reveals-abductors-collected-n100-million-before-our-release/ June 1, 2022.

³⁰ K. Sanni, 'Kidnappers Collected ₦650million as ransom in one year – Report', *Premium Times*, August 13, 2022.

³¹ Sofela, *The Burden of History*, p.13.

consideration than the qualification of the aspirants. Alabelewe reports that members of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) in the 19 Northern states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) are against the idea for its lack of sensitivity to the multi-religious and multi-cultural composition of the Nigerian society.³² The second, and more telling in its total implication, is the murder of Deborah Solomon on May 12, 2022 over alleged blasphemy against Prophet Muhammad. This event is particularly crucial in two critical aspects: one in its portrayal of abysmal religious intolerance and two, and more profound, in its chilling presentation of the mind-set of some future teachers in Nigeria. The murdered Deborah and her assailants were students of Shehu Shagari College of Education. A College of Education by definition, orientation, purpose and mission is a training institution entrusted with the training of future teachers. These people will be authorised and empowered to impart knowledge on the next generation. A logical implication of what happened is as profound as it is disturbing in its total dimension for Nigeria's future unity, cooperation and co-existence. This does not project an atmosphere of oneness or a climate where one can be forged or re-made. For this reason, instituting how religious differences are to be handled is fundamental to re-making the Nigerian project. One way is to review the supremacy given to Moslem and Sharia in the 1999 constitution. While Chapter I, subsection 10 of the 1999 Constitution prohibits the adoption of any religion as State Religion, Chapter VII of the same Constitution is very generous in its

recognition of Sharia Court and Islamic Law. The Constitution mandates the president to ensure that there are among the holders of the offices of Justices of the Supreme Court and Justices of the Court of Appeal persons learned in Islamic Personal Law. All these without according even a single mention to Christianity, Traditional Worshippers and Atheists in a country where they should all have equal stake. Based on this arrangement, it is not out of place for Moslems to believe that they are somewhat superior to people of other religions. It is a human tendency for a free born to think that he is better than a slave is. Indeed, Gordimer writing on the different experiences of the black and white people in South Africa during the apartheid regime notes, "it is simple for white men and women to deduct that the black men and women are an inferior race."³³

The seventh is the inculcation of the right attitude of citizenship and the demotion of religion and the elevation of integrity and competence as a decisive factor in national activities. This will be a citizenship that is responsive, first, to the challenges of re-making the Nigerian nation; and, second, to enabling Nigerians to imbibe a spirit of togetherness that will enable Nigeria to claim its place as the giant of Africa in words and deeds. To achieve this, Nigerian leaders will have to pay greater attention than they did in the twentieth century to the wellbeing of citizens, secure the trust of the people and overhaul the leadership structure that awards everything to the winner irrespective of how the winning is achieved. All this is consistent with the determination to make Nigeria a

³² A. Alabelewe, 'North's CAN to Fed Govt: Nigeria under siege, collapsing', *The Nation*, Available at <https://thenationonline.net/norths-can-to-fed-govt-nigeria-under-siege-collapsing/> August 1, 2022.

³³ N. Gordimer, *Living in Hope and History: Notes from our Century*, (New York, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1999), p.107.

workable nation. Ake in his analysis of characteristics a suitable democracy for Africa would possess identified a social democracy that “invests heavily in the improvement of people's health, education, and capacity so that they can participate effectively.”³⁴ Mkandawire elaborates on this point. In his thinking social inclusiveness to be:

important, first because it is the only way of ensuring that all citizens enjoy their intrinsic rights to health, education and participation in their lives from their society. But there are also instrumental reasons for this. The first is that the management of the ethnic diversity of our individual nation states demands social policies that are inclusive and create a sense of belonging for the diverse groups. The second one is that social policy is a major instrument in the process of economic development.³⁵

But this must be sustained by commitment on the part of the citizens to build a united nation where every member is free to pursue his/her legitimate activities with equal possibility of holding any public office based on one's integrity, knowledge, skills, experience, competence and qualification. This way Mafeje's submission that it is “known that the people do not only want to be free to organise themselves and to express their views but also to have adequate access to means of livelihood or a fair share of the national product”³⁶ will be realised. It requires the collective effort of all

citizens irrespective of differences in ethnicity, language, cultural and religious affiliation if Nigeria is to make it to true nationhood. Such cooperative endeavour is most likely to result in the kind of nation Nigeria should be if she is to survive the demands of the 21st century. Fortunately a 21st century citizen has the advantage of citizen-power conferred on him/her by the internet and social media to x-ray and dissect all government activities. Nigerian citizens must leverage this advantage, although ensuring that such activities pass the test of responsible criticism. Responsible criticism here is understood as the absence of calumny and clear focus on issues affecting the country's progress. It is essential that every citizen of Nigeria feels a sense of belonging and empowered to not only key into the Nigerian project but also be its best representative. Without this, national effort will be lacking as there will be no aggregate pull, no consolidation of effort to build a one nation; instead there will be discordant tunes, fragmented effort and disjointed development in all areas of national life. In the end, there will be huge waste of human and material resources devoted to a house of cards waiting to tumble down.

The eighth and the most immediate is for a discussion on the part of the various 'nations' that make up Nigeria on the way forward. They must come together in a 'nation's' forum to decide if they truly want to continue with the Nigerian nation. Already serious pressures are on the Nigerian nation by discontented groups like the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), the Movement for the Actualisation

³⁴ Ake, *Democracy*, p.132.

³⁵ T. Mkandawire, 'Towards a Development, Democratic and Socially Inclusive Africa Once Again', *CODESRIA Bulletin*, Nos.3&4, 2005, p.48.

³⁶ A. Mafeje, 'On 'Icons' and African Perspectives on Democracy: A Commentary on Jibrin Ibrahim's Views', *CODESRIA Bulletin*, Nos. 3&4, 2008, p.68.

of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), the Yoruba Self-Determined Movement (YSDM) among others for the breakup of the country. To stem this tide, there is need for a collective endeavour involving a series of national dialogues (this time to be implemented unlike the National Political Conference convoked by President Olusegun in 2005 and the National Conference of 2014 by President Goodluck Jonathan's administration) in which the thorny issues undermining the nation's unity are aired, discussed and resolved. Of cardinal importance, the right to secede must be recognised and conditions for it clearly stipulated. This will go a long way in calming the restiveness associated with regions that feel marginalised under the current Nigerian project. Indeed, in a letter by YSDM to President Buhari seeking a self-determination and peaceful breakaway of Yorubas from Nigeria, the group reminded him that Yoruba leaders requested in the 1950s for the input of a secession clause in the Nigerian Constitution but was overruled by the then colonial master.³⁷ The national debates will go a long way to enable the different regions to re-negotiate their partnership and reach agreement on critical areas of their union. It is expected that with the long experience of forced co-habitation each by now should know the terms and conditions that should work for mutual cooperation. The progress, development and even the continued existence of Nigeria is tied to this. In addition, such frank talk will invariably enable the diverse regions that make up the country to create the desperately needed mental space to accommodate each other. It is within this secured environment that each will be able to bring forth its assets for the common good of

all and dispense with the current drive to seek the interest of one's region instead of the collective interest of all Nigerians. Anything short of this will continue to promote suspicion, distrust, acrimony, bitter rivalry which have been fuelling violence, conflict and had even resulted in war, the Nigeria-Biafra war 1967-70. Given the devastating outcome of the war and its continuing influence in the political life of the country, efforts should be made to avoid a repeat.

Conclusion

The complexity of the analysis of the Nigerian nation has been the dominating concern throughout this study. This is due to a number of factors: first and most pertinent is the value of the concept of 'oneness' embodied in the notion of Nigeria when in reality the country is a convoluted nation assaulted on all sides by ethnic, religious, cultural rivalry and intolerance which make every effort at nation-building futile. Equally important, is how to evolve a democracy that speaks to Nigeria's socio-political dynamics. Nigeria's democracy must be rescued from fuelling established attitude and be made to engage in exploration of possibilities of co-operation and meaning. Beyond this, also underscored is the issue of the 1999 Constitution and its key role in promoting bad governance. All these converge in two clear paths any meaningful attempt to re-make Nigeria must confront. One is for the different 'nations' that make up the country to go their separate ways; two is for them to join hands and make Nigeria a nation in words and deed. Both are not easy; they demand a high price for them to succeed. Tailored along the latter, the study views establishing a base for understanding that transcends the differences and which aim at

³⁷ *Penpushing*, 'Yoruba Movement writes Buhari demands peaceful breakaway from Nigeria', Available at penpushing.com.ng/yoruba-movement-writes-buhari-demands-peaceful-breakaway-from-nigeria/ August 15, 2022.

cooperation as both expedient and a political necessity. In a situation where citizens know that irrespective of their ethnic affiliation or religious inclination they can achieve whatever they set out to do within legitimate bounds, insecurity, violent contestations and such like vices will be drastically reduced. That is, recognition of the country's diversity and mutual accommodation of each other instead of threatening rights and privileges will secure them for the different regions. Alubo submits that rather “than deny diversity, the very concept of nation building process demands that every unit should count.”³⁸

For this reason and, even, as bad as things may seem, democracy remains the best option for a diverse nation like Nigeria. The major challenge is to unshackle the nation from colonial inherited democracy and evolve one that meets the demands of a pluralistic society like Nigeria. Gonidec notes that it “seems necessary, according to the logic of a pluralistic society, that democracy itself be pluralistic, whether it is seen as a means, or tool; or as an end in itself, or philosophical value.”³⁹ Nigeria needs the cooperation of all the regions to achieve a common unity so that all can live in an equitably, just and mutual nation. This should form the focal point for all well-meaning Nigerians who have the abiding interest in preserving the country. Until, there is a firm commitment by all stakeholders to remake the Nigerian nation and make it viable for all citizens and enviable for other people; the nation is in danger of total collapse. This is why Nigerians themselves are accountable for the destiny of the nation; whether it survives and thrives, whether it stays on and continues to slumber, or whether it is laid to rest. The

outcome of any of these will be a mark and conviction of the seriousness of purpose to save the country and place her on a platform of cooperation on a mutually beneficial basis or otherwise.

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³⁸. Alubo, 'Citizenship and Nation making in Nigeria', p.139.

³⁹. P. Gonidec, 'A Contribution to the Debate on the Recolonisation of Africa', *CODESRIA Bulletin*, Nos. 3&4, 2008, p. 95.

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