



SUSTAINING THE MOMENTUM OF NATION-BUILDING IN NIGERIA THROUGH EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP

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Abstract

This paper explores the link between effective leadership and sustainable nation building in Nigerian democratic landscape. Nigeria is a country blessed with abundant human and natural resources yet battles with the challenges of building and sustaining a viable nation. It is against this backdrop that this paper examines the impact of valued based leadership for nation building in Nigeria. The paper adopts qualitative research design as data were collected through secondary sources. Content analysis is applied to analyze the data collected, predicated on the transformational leadership theory. The paper reveals that Nigeria lacks visionary leadership which is the panacea for sustainable nation building. It demonstrates the fact that the absence of selfless leaders that would put the nation above personal and sectional/ethno religious interest is reason the country is still facing development and governance crises. Further analysis shows that endemic corruption, lack of ideology, policy reversal and faulty leadership selection process among others are responsible for the country inability to maintain its building process. The paper concludes that Nigeria needs a committed political leadership with courage and political will to tackle the nation's development challenges. It recommends that leadership recruitment process should be reformed and straightened towards producing nationalist and patriotic leaders devoid of ethnic or religious attachments.

Keywords: Nation, Nation building, Effective Leadership, Transformational Leadership, Nigeria

Introduction

The process of nation building and effective leadership are believed to form a strong connection in the sense that one cannot thrive without the other. This is because effective leadership is essential to the achievement of any basic institutional or organizational goal be it family, religious, political and otherwise. The lessons from the USA, Germany, Russia, Japan and other advanced nations of the world, shows they have become what they are today not essentially due to their resources and technologies, but by quality leadership (Akinola, 2018). Former President of Nigeria, Olusegun Obasanjo while addressing a gathering at the African Ministerial Forum on Integrated Transport in Africa on March 11, 2003, reacted to the abysmal economic development of Africa as a reflection of the 'poor and sometimes out rightly irresponsible leadership' in many African countries of which Nigeria is not an exception (Thisday, 2003 as cited in Bature, 2015).



Nigeria, with a multicultural diversity and ethnic plurality has faced leadership challenge that retard nation building. Since independence in 1960, governments at different levels have attempted various nation building initiatives ranging from national integration policies, educational reforms. Sustaining these reforms has remained the most difficult task due to inconsistent leadership, policy discontinuity, institutional weakness and insecurity. A nation that was at independence referred to as the 'showpiece of decolonization of Africa and as the continent's example of democratic institutions by the international cycles, has turn out to be an arena of political instability, economic mismanagement, underdevelopment and above all a vicious circle of failed leadership (Bature, 2015). This clearly shows that no doubt the effort towards achieving meaningful development in the country has been characterized by a history of colossal failure of leadership. The country had experienced governance by a crop of leaders that lack the basic understanding or comprehension of the fundamental requirement of leadership, hence the abysmal failure to evolve social, economic and political strategies that will facilitate an enduring meaningful nation building (Owosho 2012).

Kalagbor and Deinibiteim, (2020) as cited in Onifade and Imhopi (2013) asserted that leadership failure in Nigeria today have significantly created ethnic distributions leading to mistrust and misunderstanding among ethnic and religious groups who see one another as rivals who should be subjected or conquered at all cost, thus jeopardizing the quest to build a viable nation. This means that successful leadership is significant for nation building because it deals with the good and prosperity of the nation as a whole. It is rather unfortunate that the leadership in Nigeria has failed the people. The attitude of selfishness, desire for power and a drive for wealth accumulation has been so persistent. The leadership is rather unduly reliant on state resources for private accumulation and so there is unbridled struggle to control the state and its machineries. To achieve this is a resort to the use of thuggery, arson, election rigging and ethnic sentiments, storage force of political ascendancy and the control of the state. This account for the reason behind despite the huge uncommon natural and human resources Nigeria has, the country still battles poverty and underdevelopment in all spheres. Oni and Excellence-Oluye (2017) as cited in Ogbaki (2019, p. 105) added that:

Paradoxically, Nigeria the giant of Africa (as it is called) wallows in socio economic, political and infrastructural decadence in all her crevices. The inability of Nigeria's leadership to harness the nation's vast resources and reserves towards socio economic development continuously calls to question the composition of the fabric of the nation's leadership and governance. There seems to be a total collapse of ethical governance with the abuse of every moral norm of administration and a loss of conscience towards 'rightness' and objectivism in polity. To this end, it becomes a wonder if Nigeria can ever rise out of decadence and her impoverished state if those that are meant to drive the steering towards the nation's emancipation lack the morality and sanity to do so.

Therefore, leadership remained remains the most decisive factor shaping the trajectory of nation-building in Nigeria. Nation building cannot be achieved where there is lack of responsive and responsible leadership, high-level corruption, insecurity, political instability, abuse of law, public service failure, abject poverty, acute youth unemployment, inequality and weaken of institutions.

Conceptual Clarification

Nation Building

Like any other concept in social sciences there is no universally accepted definition among scholars regarding the concept of nation-building. Scholars have different views on what constitutes nation building though there is still some identifiable points of converge in some of their viewpoints. Ntalaja (1987) as cited in Erinoshio (2012, p. 195) asserts that:



Nation building entails establishing a national identity to transcend ethnic, regional and other particularistic ties, promoting national integration through political participation, economic exchange and cultural interaction by all segments of the population and developing a national culture through education and cultural activities.

What this means is that nation building is the responsibility of everyone in the society irrespective of political and cultural differences.

Nation building as the conscious and focused application of people's collective resources, energies, and knowledge to the task of liberating and developing the psychic and physical space that they identify as theirs. It involves the development of behaviors, values, language, institutions, and physical structures that elucidate the history and culture, concretize and protect the present, and insure the future identity and independence of the nation. Nation building thus is the deliberate, keenly directed and focused, and energetic projection of national culture, and the collective identity Smith (2012).

Nation building according to Sebiomo (2009) is a concept that involves the different processes of integrating the various people in the country into solidarity with common goals and objectives, as well as a determination to work cooperatively as a people to achieve the declared objectives through an appreciably high level of national consciousness. Elaigwu (2011) viewed nation building in two main dimensions of identity. The first is closely linked to state-building which he refers to the acceptance by members of the polity of a legitimacy of a central government with the central government as a symbol. Then, secondly, nation-building involves the acceptance of other members of the civic body as equal fellow members of a corporate nation a recognition of the rights of other members to a share of common history, resources, values, and other aspects of the state.

Related to the definition above, is Otinche (2016) who assert that nation building is an art and a process. As an art, he means, it is concerned with what should be done or can be done (the what) to build a virile nation. He explained that this aspect of nation building is seen as a dynamic activity that is participatory, constitutional or legal in nature. This aspect of nation building starts with state building. State building involves the creation of artificial boundaries for political significance and the designing of the structure of the state and institution in line with mutual political interest. As a process, nation building is concerned with the steps to be taken (the how) to build a virile nation. It is procedural, complex, conflictual, tolerant, concentual and reformative Otinche (2016). Though the social cohesion and tolerance needed to build a virile nation is difficult to construct over a short period of time. As such nation building requires the elimination of personal and institutional values that inhibits political tolerance, consensus, building national integration and sustainable development.

To Walker (2011) nation building is the most common form of a process of collective identity formation with a view to legitimizing public power within a given territory. It is basically an indigenous process which often not only projects a meaningful future but also draws on existing traditions, institutions, and customs, redefining them as national characteristics in order to support the nation's claim to sovereignty and uniqueness (Ikyase & Egberi, 2015). Adei (2003) as cited in (Akinola, 2018, p. 66) identifies four dimensions of nation building to include:

- i. Achieving political maturity and progress; nation building requires a state and acceptable political order. The political system must be capable of renewing itself to accommodate new ideas.
- ii. Achieving economic progress; nation building has to do with creating a favourable environment for sustainable improvement of the quality and quantity of life of citizenry.



- iii. Achieving social dimension; nation building involves building social cohesion that has to do with sense of oneness, working together and living together to pursue common destiny. A society rid of conflicts and rancour is crucial to nation building.
- iv. Cultural dimension; this has to do with modifying the dysfunctional elements of culture and use its positive elements to motivate nation building through education, economic incentives and a new vision.

Effective Leadership

The concept of leadership has been variously defined by different scholars. Onuigbo and Anaekwe (2025) defined effective leadership as the ability to guide, inspire, and influence others to achieve common goals and drive organizational success. This involves a combination of skills, including clear communication, strategic thinking, emotional intelligence, and the ability to motivate and empower team members. Adegeye (2015) defined leadership as the ability of an individual to influence, motivate and empower others to contribute toward the effectiveness and success of the organizations of which they are members. Fola, (2015) conceived leadership as the ability to provide selfless service to others, equipping with training, motivating and inspiring people with a view to working together to achieve a desire goal. It is an action that draws the future nearer to the present by envisioning the possible and influencing others to make the vision a reality while leaving the path for others to mature into leaders. Idike (1996) defines leadership as the ability to take initiative, motivate, influence, direct and control the thoughts, the opinions and actions of others in any given society towards the attainment of any desired end. This definition implies that a nation can rise to greater heights when one member of the society takes on the mantle of leadership effectively. Leadership means the ability, the art or process of influencing people so that they will strive willingly and enthusiastically towards the achievement of the group's mission.

Michael, Amadi and Ezuwobomude (2021 p. 77) citing Fayemi (2009), Odo (2015) affirmed that:

- i. Leadership is essential to the control, motivation and direction of every human society towards development, and achievement of meaningful progress in all spheres of human existence.
- ii. Leadership encompasses economic, political and socio-cultural spheres of every society and has the capability to either “make or mar” the society.
- iii. Leadership is the ability to take an initiative, motivate, influence, direct and control the thoughts, opinions and actions of the followers in any given society towards the achievement of purposeful end.

The above views imply that there a strong link between leaders and the lead in any given society. The emergence of a leader is expected to reflect the wishes of the people to be led.

Aguda (1995) asserts that leadership position may be attained in many ways. The first he refers as self-imposition, which is completely without constitutionality. Secondly, a group of people may impose a leader forcefully on the generality of the people. This type of leadership is mostly found under military dictatorship as was experienced from 1960 to 1979 and 1983 to 1998 in Nigeria. Also, someone may come to leadership position through a demonstration of leadership qualities over a long period of time. People like Nelson Mandela of South Africa, Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya, and Julius Nyerere of Tanzania among others. From this view point above, it's evident that the quality of leaderships determines the ability of a government to build strong institutions that ensures a sustainable nation building (Nduvi, 2016).



Qualities of Leadership

People occupied leadership positions at different levels and time. However, it is the collective efforts of the chain of leadership that makes the task of nation building easy. People who occupy leadership positions in a state are expected to possess qualities that showcase social indicators of performance and sustainable development. Some of the specific qualities and attributes that contribute to effective leadership are; clear sense of vision, mission and objectives, charisma and the ability to motivate others in a way that favours compliance, dedication and devotion to the fulfillment of the vision and the mission. Nelson Mandela of South Africa is a typical example of effective leadership (Hayat, 2024). Overall leadership before and after the apartheid era by Mandela was well guided by visions of unity and democracy in South Africa-a land where everyone would coexist peacefully with one another irrespective of race. Even after 27 years of imprisonment, Mandela came out as a voice of reconciliation, not retribution. His "rainbow nation" vision has helped South Africa navigate the very tough process and has put it in a position to be an even more inclusive and peaceful society (Hayat, 2024).

Engstrom (1976 as cited in Achile, 2022, p.9), Otinche (2016, p. 410) believes a leader is endowed with ideas to rule effectively if such a leader has the following attributes:

- i. He is able to inspire and influence his followers by modeled representation;
- ii. He is able to motivate his followers by making life condition favourable to them;
- iii. He must be a goal getter and optimistic about success in spite of challenges;
- iv. He must have a clear vision as to what to pursue, achieve and work towards achieving it. An effective leader never loses focus but strive to keep his dreams and vision alive;
- v. He must be emotionally stable. An effective leader does not allow his or her emotion to betray his love for other, his perception about others and his rational analysis of events;
- vi. He must have the ability to predict the actions his followers or subordinates and the consequences of his intended actions;
- vii. Desire for achievement or their country with allegiance to the constitution;
- viii. Accept their authority and yield it with a degree of competence and moral character;
- ix. Must demonstrate high levels of personal self-control over themselves and public goods;
- x. The ability to do original thinking by taking imagination and organizing it through self-initiated plans; and
- xi. Have clear priorities and place value of family, community, and social relationships. They have the ability to prioritize and promote balance in what they do.

This clearly shows that leadership is tied to nation building. These attributes of leadership makes the people interested in the politics and governance in their country. Therefore, political leadership and nation building cannot be in isolation. Chikendu (1987) stress that nations just don't happen by historical accident, rather they are built by men and women with vision and resolve. It is the product of conscious state management not happenstance. Nation-building is always a work-in-progress; a dynamic process in constant need of nurturing and re-invention. Nation-building never stops and true nation-builder never rest because all nations are constantly facing up to new challenges (Agboola, Lamidi & Shiyanbade, 2017).

Theoretical Framework

Transformation Leadership Theory

The theory adopted for this study is the Transformation Leadership Theory as a framework for analysis. Transformational leadership theory is a leadership approach that advocates for change in



individuals and social systems. This theory was first introduced in research by Burns (1978). He referred transformational leadership as a process by which “leaders and followers assist one another to advance to a higher level of morale and motivation”. He introduced two concepts “transforming leadership” and “transactional leadership”. He asserts that the transforming approach creates significant change in the life of people and organizations, redesigns perceptions and values, and changes expectations and ambitions of employees. The transactional approach on the other hand, it is not based on a “give and take” relationship, but on the leader’s individuality, traits and capacity to make a change by example, articulation of an energizing vision and challenging goals (Ogbaki, 2019).

Bass (1985), utilized the work of Burns (1978) to help explain how transformational leadership could be measured, as well as how it impacts follower motivation and performance. To him, the level to which a leader is transformational is considered first, in terms of his influence on the followers. The followers of the leader admire, trust, show loyalty and respect for the leader and due to the qualities of the transformational leader, are willing to work harder than originally expected. This is possible because transformational leader offers followers something more than just working for personal gain; they provide followers with an inspirational mission and vision and give them a sense of belonging. The leader transforms and motivates followers through his or her idealized influence (charisma), intellectual stimulation and individual consideration (Ogbaki, 2019).

The theory introduces four rudiments of transformational leadership:

- i. *Individualized Consideration*: the level to which the leader respond to each follower's needs, acts as a mentor to the follower and listens to their concerns and needs.
- ii. *Intellectual Stimulation*: The level, to which the leader challenges assumptions, takes risks and seeks followers’ ideas. Leaders with this style stimulate and encourage creativity in their followers. They nurture and develop people who can think independently.
- iii. *Inspirational Motivation* – the level to which the leader articulates a vision that is appealing and inspiring to followers. Leaders with inspirational motivation challenge followers with high standards, communicate optimism about future goals, and provide meaning for the task at hand.
- iv. *Idealized Influence* – Provides a role model for high ethical behaviour, instills pride, gains respect and trust (Ogbaki, 2019).

The transformational leadership theory is ideal for this study because it lay out strategies for leadership selection and how leaders relate with followers to achieve the desire for sustaining nation building in Nigeria. The theory advocates for selflessness and influential leadership over self-seeking leaders that will mobilize the followers towards greater good.

Methodology

The study adopts qualitative research design as it relies on secondary data collected from published books, journal articles and the internet, and were content analyzed in relation to the scope of the study. That is, a systematic review of extant literature on leadership as a panacea for sustaining the momentum of nation building.

Leadership and Nation Building in Nigeria

The issue of leadership and nation-building has been on the front burner of national discussions in Nigeria since independence. Unfortunately, it appears the solution is not near as these twin problems have remained a national predicament. Enyia, and Emelah (2020) expressed their worry that throughout the country’s history, sub-national or ethnic nationalism has dominated and sabotaged all meaningful discussions and debates about national integration and nation-building. They further



lamented that, 'no set of leaders in Nigeria whether military or civilian, has been able to create an atmosphere of credibility to ensure Nigeria's claim to a political future as a country'. No regime was, and is able thus far to evolve a unifying national ideology that is embraced either by fellow political elites or by the entire Nigerian populace.

Though there are few strategies in the past and present towards peace and unity in the country to achieve nation building, these strategies are not sustained. This is due to the inability of the leaders to chart a genuine course towards attaining these goals. Independence for Nigeria from the departing colonial masters raised the hope that things were going to change for the better. This expectation was informed by the dynamism of leadership that championed the struggle for independence. This category of leaders who were mainly products of nationalistic struggle was fired by sheer determination to build a nation, which seems to be politically and economically expedient especially at that point of Nigerian history. More than ever, the expediency becomes more interesting when viewed against the backdrop of the country's potentials in terms of human and material resources (Owosho 2012). Unfortunately, these high expectations were met with appalling failure by incompetent set of leadership to galvanise the huge human and natural resources for all citizens to benefit.

Obeten, et al. (2024) revealed that the Nigeria's enormous wealth currently lies in the hand of the privileged few, meaning that, 15% of the populace controlled the wealth while 85 % of the citizens who are the majority are under the budget line. They argued rather that reverse should be the case where 85% of the citizens should control the wealth or the wealth should be in their hands. Thus, Nigeria is faced with numerous challenges such as unemployment, abject poverty, political repression and domination, marginalization, corruption, inadequate housing, poor infrastructure, ASUU and labour unions strikes among others which inhibit the momentum of nation building.

Nduvi (2016, p. 1327) believes that:

The challenge of nation building in Nigeria and Africa in general is frequent leadership change, lack of ideology, policy reversal, and weak institutional patterns and dictatorship. According to him, leadership selection process in Africa is flawed and African leaders and Nigeria in particular have frequently come to their position without legitimate mandate from a flawed election process.

This account for the decline in quality of leadership leading to bad policies, eroded professional standards and ethics, and weakened institutions. The improvement in the areas of economic, social and political institutions is the principal factor for evaluating the level of success recorded in the task of nation building in any country. The apparent failures in these institutions are some of the fundamental problems threatening the task of nation building in Nigeria (Owosho, 2012).

Perspective on Nation Building in Nigeria

As contained in the Fundamental Objective and Direct Principle of State Policy. The Nigerian state performs its duties imperative of statehood. This is contained in the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria as amended section 15-21. These functions are grouped into executive, legislative and judicial and or economic, political and socio-cultural (Otinche, 2016). Performing these functions depend on the political leadership involved and the attitude of the followership and corporate organizations. This is because people participate in the process of governance base on the liberal framework laid down by the state or leadership. The 1999 Constitution as amended section (15-21) laid down the principles for building a sustainable nation. These include:



- i. To provide adequate facilities for and encourage the mobility of people, goods and services throughout the country.
- ii. Secure full residence rights for every citizen in all parts of Nigeria.
- iii. Encourage inter-marriage among persons from different religious, ethnic or linguistic background.
- iv. Promotes or encourage the formation of associations that cut across ethnic, linguistic, religious and sectional barriers.
- v. Foster a feeling of belongingness among the diverse ethnic and religious groups in the country.
- vi. Abolish or minimise all corrupt practices and abuse of power,
- vii. Harness the resources of the nation for national prosperity and self-reliance.
- viii. Control the national economy in such a manner as to secure maximum welfare, freedom and happiness of every citizen on the basis of social justice and equity of status and opportunity.
- ix. Manage the major sectors of the economy and protect the rights of every citizen to engage in all sectors of the economy and to promote a planned and balanced economic development.
- x. Harness and equitably distribute national resources for the common good and to reduce injustices and inequality in wealth distribution among individuals and groups.
- xi. Provide suitable and adequate shelter, food, income, social security benefits, unemployment and sick benefits and welfare for the disable.
- xii. Guarantee of equal rights obligations and opportunities to all citizens in accordance with the principle of freedom, equality and justice as enshrine in the enabling law.
- xiii. Maintain and enhance the sanctity and dignity of the human person.
- xiv. Guarantee the independence, impartial and integrity of courts of law and promote access to justice.
- xv. Provide adequate means of livelihood and opportunity to suitable employment under a just and humane environment with equal pay for equal work irrespective of sex. The states guarantee the health, safety and welfare of all people in employment and provide adequate medical and health facilities.
- xvi. Protect children, younger persons and the aged against exploitation and moral and material neglect and provide public assistance in deserving cases.
- xvii. Promote the growth of family life.
- xviii. Promote and provide educational facilities to eradicate illiteracy through a free, compulsory and universal primary education, free secondary, university and adult literacy programme.
- xix. To promote the national interest and promote the unity and integration of African countries.
- xx. Promote international cooperation, universal peace and mutual respect among nations and the elimination of discrimination in all its manifestation.
- xxi. Respect for international law and treaty obligations and the settlement of international dispute by negotiation, mediation, conciliation, arbitration and adjudication and the promotion of a just world economic order.
- xxii. To protect and improve the environment as well as safeguard the water, air and land, forest and wild life of Nigeria.
- xxiii. Protect, preserve and promote the Nigerian culture which enhanced human dignity and the development of technological and scientific studies which enhances cultural values.
- xxiv. Guarantee freedom of the press and project government responsibility to the citizens.

Unfortunately, some of the functions mentioned here are yet to be achieved in Nigeria particularly number eighteen. This vision for Nigeria can only be achieved through efficient leadership with the political will to harness the available resources for common good and of course the citizens' commitment toward a better country.



Challenges of Nation Building in Nigeria

Several factors account for the challenges of nation building in Nigeria since her political independence in 1960. Some of the challenges of nation building as identified by Ikyase & Egberi, (2015, Thom-Otuyah, 2012) include:

Corruption

Corruption is an anti-social behavior committed by individuals or social groups, which entails conferring unjust or fraudulent benefits on perpetrators the behavior is strictly inconsistent with the laid down rules and ethos of the land. The World Bank (1997) defined corruption as:

An abuse of public office for private gains: public office is abuse for private gain when an official accepts, solicits, or extorts a bribe. It is also abused when private agents actively offer bribe to circumvent public policies and processes for competitive advantage and profit. Public office can also be abused for personal benefit even if no bribery occurs, through patronage and nepotism, the theft of state asset or diversion of state resources.

The implication of corrupt practices is the possibility of subversion of communal wealth thereby leading to reduction of the capacity of constituted authority, be it federal, state or local government to build a nation and provide for the material wellbeing of the members of the nation in an equitable manner (Osoba, 2000, Agara & Olarinmoye, 2009 cited in Anikeze, 2015). It is a common knowledge that corruption has become an endemic problem threatening Nigeria's economic and political development. Na' Abba, (2003) asserts that while we cannot rule out the incidence of corruption and bribery in almost every facet of our society, it is particularly resident in the infrastructure areas in ministries or monopolistic parastatals saddled with the task of making infrastructure available to the public-water, telecommunication, electricity (NEPA), roads and railways (NRC). The above statement indicates that corruption which as an unethical behavior is not limited to only one sphere of life but it is found in every work of life.

Bad Governance

Governance is a system of values, policies and institution by which a society manages its social, economic and political affairs through interaction within the state, civil society and private sectors. Good governance has to do with the question of how a society can organize itself to ensure equality of opportunity and equity (social and economic justice) for all citizens (Anikez, 2015). Bad governance is one of the major factors affecting the nation as it is threatening to undermine nation building in Nigeria and it is caused by bad leadership. People seek leadership positions in order to collect rent and accumulate personal wealth through the conversion of public resources into private goods. There is lack of commitment to the public goods and no confidence in the future. This is the hopeless situation we find ourselves in due to bad leadership exercised through bad governance.

The sets of leadership that emerged in Nigeria at independence have no agenda for the country of their own. They come to power without any agenda of development for the people. That is why Ake, (2001) asserts that it is misleading to conclude that there is a failure of development in Africa rather it was never in the agenda of the emerging leadership at independence. The leaders receive political independence without economic independence which they perceived the political independence as a means to an end. They use power arbitrary for their selfish interest to the detriment of people they are supposed to be serving and protect. There is absence of political will to deliver good governance that will attract development to the country at large.



Leadership Crises

Leadership problem has been a bane to Nigeria's development since independence and it continue to be worsening till date. Only but few of the leaders in Nigeria desire to work for the common good of the majority of people. A lot of political reforms and programmes have been initiated over the years but there is no effective leadership to implement them to address the problem facing the country. Therefore, leadership is responsibility (Anikez, 2015). The actions of the leaders shape the reality the county faces. Their performance is the only standard by which leaders are judged. Sustaining nation building rests with effective leadership. The developmental challenges in Nigeria cannot be address by only constitutional actions.

President Bola Tinubu in 2013 cited in Otinche, (2016 pp. 388-9) had asserted that:

The situation our country is in today is both sad and unacceptable. We are as a people without a leader, a country with no trustworthy men at the helm of affairs, and a nation now lost at sea. Our leaders must commit to a better country not tomorrow but now beginning now... today, because time is not on our side and the continued patience of the people may no longer be guaranteed.

Today that he is at the helm of leadership of Nigeria, it needs to be seen how this assertion is playing out.

The history of Nigerian politics since independence has shown clearly through her various conflicts, coups and counter - coups, as well as a civil war, that the Nigerian ruling elite (both civilian and military) are divided along many lines, particularly along tribal, ethnic, religious and regional lines. This has led to inter -elite rivalries, mutual suspicion and status conflicts among the ruling elite. Thus, government and politics in Nigeria has been characterized by deadly competitions and conflicts of hostile subcultures arising various danger signals that occasionally threatened the continued existence of the country (Otinche, 2016). The implications for all these are the various issues like elections, census, state creation, religion, political appointments, revenue sharing and lately, resource control crises we are witnessing in the country today. A nation cannot be built on crises and selfish leadership rather leaders must show unity of purpose.

Ethnicity

Ethnicity according to Katuka (2013, p.123) is the consciousness of belonging to, identifying with and being loyal to a social group distinguished by shared cultural tradition, common language, in-group sentiments and self identity. Nigeria is home to over two hundred ethnic tribes. The amalgamation in 1914 brought different tribes within the river Niger geographical zones to become one country. This brought different perceptions, some saw it as a mistake, while others saw it as a necessity for the administrative convenience of the colonial masters. Similarly, while this has giving Nigeria a big name and image in the international scene, for Nigerians themselves, it has rather become problematic and has consequently created a weakened reality of the country that is far from its image (Ekot, 2023).

Therefore, Nigerians including their leaders pay more allegiance to their tribe than to the country. Even in time of elections people vote according to their tribal interest, when leaders emerge too, they reciprocate these tribal gestures. This has posed a big challenge to the desire for a united country (Katuka, 2013). Until Nigerian leaders and followers grow above tribal sentiments and look at the country as one indivisible nation that her cultural diversities could be used as strength rather than as a weakness.



Conclusion and Recommendations

Leadership plays an essential role as it is a determinant in nation building. Nations are built by leaders who have the will and vision to accomplish greatness, not for themselves and immediate families and friends, but for the generality of all their country. Though provided in the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria on the duties of the Nigerian state to its citizens, it is predated on the leadership to achieve it. With all the natural resources available to Nigeria, the country still battles poverty and underdevelopment due to lack of effective leadership to harness the resources for the benefit of all. The current crop of leadership rather, clearly demonstrates massive corruption, rent-seeking, nepotism, abuse of executive powers, lack of transparency and accountability in public offices. Hence the do or die nature of politics in the country as political leaders strive to perpetuate themselves in offices leading to recycling of leaders without vision for the country. With this attitude to leadership, nation building will continue to be an illusion. Nation building is a collective responsibility for leaders and followers to build nation that takes care of all irrespective of their diversity.

Therefore, it is necessary to proffer some recommendation to help the process of effective nation building through a well structured leadership.

- i. What is needed for the country to sustain its nation building process is committed political leadership to muster courage and political will to tackle the nation's development challenges. Moreover, an effective leader does not only play the role of achieving organizational goals but also help in developing followers to be leaders and this is a good sign of leadership development.
- ii. Address unemployment, corruption, end insecurity and promote societal development that will impact on the lives of the general populace.
- iii. Only leaders with foresight who can address Nigeria's structural and institutional challenges even at the expense of their short-term political ambition should be allowed to rule.
- iv. With high level of diversity in Nigeria, the best way for sustain nation building is to recognize and embrace existing divisions by building a decentralised system with effective power sharing between different segregated groups.
- v. Emphasis should also be highly placed on competence above where one comes from in leadership, in appointments, and recruitment into public offices in the country.
- vi. National interest should at all times prevail over tribal or ethnic interest.

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