

## NATION-BUILDING TO NATIONHOOD: PATH TO POSITIVE SOCIAL CHANGE IN NIGERIA (1999-2025)

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### Abstract

As a developing nation on the trajectory to national progress undoubtedly there will be inhibiting obstacles that will naturally dog the steps of her development. The very first step to removing such hindrance will be citizens' awareness of inherent obstacles to development, clarity as to the nature of the hindrance then, followed by the mindset of citizens, quality of leadership, ideology formation, assemblage of patriotic, visionary leadership helpers, strategies for holistic development, citizens' mobilisation through conscientisation and finally implementation. Our method in carrying out this research is integrative humanist and our goal is to create sufficient self-awareness, self-motivation self-identification and the forging of a national spirit. This study is adopting a qualitative, historical, diachronic and synchronic research modes. Our key recommendation is radical, emphasising the complete overhaul of our nation building tactics through socio-political and economic reengineering.

**Keywords:** Citizenship awareness, integrative humanism, nation building, national spirit, nationhood, diachronic and synchronic

### Introduction

The history of Nigeria taken diachronically and synchronically leaves much to be desired. Looking at Nigeria over any given historical period or considered within the spotlight of a given epoch, dispensation or regime throws up a lot of missed opportunities that would have leapfrogged us into the bracket of developed nations. In the 1970s and 80s our “headache” was how to spend money. We

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wasted our resources on economically wasteful ventures. We squandered that opportunity, in the mid-seventies to the nineties we had the structural adjustment programme which released a lot of funds for development, apart from the project of movement from Lagos to Abuja (the new national capital) other major sectors notably education and health suffered devastating setback. It was a period of robbing Peter to pay Paul. This is as far as the background goes. Coming to the period under review, that is, 1999 to the present, we have witnessed the same socio-political and economic essence which is characterised by new ways of robbing the poor to pay the rich. It is the same scenario of planlessness, goallessness, purposelessness and inarticulate development agenda. it has been a hit and miss, hit and get and “desperadoic” handouts and projects that betray a consciousness bereft of sound socio-economic trajectory. What we are seeing in the socio-political and economic landscape is a similitude of a teleguided vicious cycle of manipulations which serve metropolitan interest and the interest of politicians in power. It is a water tight crucible of bottomless pit. You know you are not working but since it allows you to remain in power as it keeps you in the good books of the pay masters (the metropolitan powers) and it provides you enough financial ambience to cruise in plenty with your political fellow travelers.

Democracy in Nigeria in the past 25 years have been redefined to mean “government of the politicians (in power) by the politicians and for the politicians”. This is a far cry from the original intendment of the original framers of this system of government. The original intendment was for democracy to be “the government of the people, by the people and for the people. Initially, we blamed our failings on quality of leadership but the unfolding reality is showing that there is more to it than meets the eye. The truth is that

African nations have been boxed into a tailor-made economic blueprint that serves the interests of World Bank and International Monetary Fund and those for whom they work. Only a radical break from the strangle hold of these financial institutions and their sponsors can initiate the very crucial step of self-awareness and recovery. The steps to attaining this state of true economic and political independence is what this paper seeks to track and justify.

### **Conceptual Framework**

The concepts we have used in this study are not new but we are putting them into a framework that will enable us achieve the purpose for deploying them. First and foremost, we look at the concept of “citizenship”. The bottom line of nationhood is citizenship. According to Ozumba and Eteng, citizenship can be simply defined as “state of being vested with the rights of a citizen”.<sup>2</sup> A citizen is a bonafide member of a nation state acquired through natural rights of birth and parentage or through naturalisation. Naturalisation is the process of acquiring or attaining citizenship through legal, political or by inheritance or length of stay, involvement or participation in the socio-political, religious and economic activities in a nation state which can lead to qualification for naturalisation.

We further averred that citizenship education will be like a committee with a mandate and terms of reference. Citizenship education is the totality of learning, instruction, equipping which a citizen needs to be able to play his or her role, discharge his responsibilities, know his rights, understand his country (the constitution, the politics, ethics, religions, economics) and the

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<sup>2</sup> Ozumba, G. O. and Felix Onen Eteng “Citizen Education” in *Nigeria: Citizenship Education*: (Aba: Vitalis Books, 1999), Pg. 3.

ideals that make the nation a unique geo-political entity”<sup>3</sup>. The purpose of citizenship education is to imbue knowledge, patriotism, selfless service and commitment, vision for a virile nationhood and political participation in all its facets.

A full-blooded citizen will be concerned about the goings-on in his nation. He is not supposed to be disinterested, nonchalant, apathetic and indifferent. He or she must/should show interest in the wellbeing of his/her nation since we have no other nation but Nigeria. The point is that in the case of Nigeria, many waters have passed under the bridge. So many negative events have led to the difficulty in actualising full-blooded citizenship in Nigeria. We shall consider all that in the body of the study.

Our next concept is “self-awareness” of the citizen. When a citizen is not “self-aware”, it could be as a result of the absence of the requisite education or the inability of the citizen to raise his consciousness to the point of self-knowledge, citizenship attainment and its accompanying or reciprocal duties and obligations. It is the duty of a nation to raise the citizenship consciousness of her citizens and consciously, intentionally and strategically imbue the awareness in the citizens. This is why “Citizen education”, “Nigeria's peoples and cultures”, etc, are taught in the tertiary institutions. Other bodies like National Orientation Agency (NOA) SERVICOM, YAGA Africa and many more are created or put in place to carry out both formal and informal teachings, trainings, sensitisations, instructions and enlightenment programmes for the education of people. The question is, do the prevailing socio-political and economic conditions of our country dispose Nigerian citizens to such

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<sup>3</sup>. Ozumba, G. O. and Felix Onen Eteng “Citizen Education”, Pg. 3.

enlightenment campaigns?

There is a heightening crescendo of self-awareness in Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, Senegal, Burkina Faso, Niger, Mali and other African nations which may sooner than later open the door to full self-awareness. Self-awareness means knowledge and understanding ones own character, abilities, rights, endowments, privileges and potential and actual responsibilities and obligation within the national scheme of things.<sup>4</sup> Full blooded self-awareness will lead to self-consciousness, self-defense, self-preservation, self-determination, self-development, self-discipline, self-discovery, self-drive, self-education, self-esteem, self-examination and comparison, self-expression, self-fulfillment, self-interest, self-knowledge, self-motivation and self-perpetuation. It is the aggregation of various self-awareness that leads to citizens awareness socially, politically, economically and religiously. When as a collective, the citizens become multidimensionally aware, then it becomes easy for collective bargaining and positioning for the attainment of the common good.

The concept of the common good is adequately treated in Udoidem's book titled *Authority and the Common Good in Social and Political Philosophy*. He sees common good as that which all human beings whether as individuals or a group desire by nature (for their holistic wellbeing).<sup>5</sup> For Plato common good is the attainment of virtuous life of the entire community. For Aristotle common good is the attainment of happiness which is the *Somum Bonum*. The good and virtuous life is achieved through the adoption

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<sup>4</sup>. See Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary, Pg. 1339.

<sup>5</sup>. See Professor Udoidem's book titled *Authority and the Common Good in Social and Political Philosophy*, Pg. 96.

and implementation of the right constitution. For St. Augustine, peace is the common good for all men. Common good comes through believing in God and living according to His commands. For Thomas Aquinas, the common good is the participation in the highest. He sees the common good as the end of law and government. For him, common good flows from God who is the highest common good. Thus, the common good of the state cannot flourish, unless the citizens are virtuous.<sup>6</sup> Others like John Locke saw common good as protection of citizens' life, rights and property. For Rousseau, it is obedience to the “general” will which must demarcate illegitimate authoritative force and legitimate authoritative force. For J.S Mill, the common good is utility, happiness to the greatest number.

For Udoidem the characteristics of common good include desirability, availability, accessibility, shareability, durability and communality. Common good is not common because it is cheap but because it is commonly desirable and of immense value to all.<sup>7</sup> We can only reverse the negative social change in our society if the operators of our government will in all intents and purposes pursue the goal of common good in all their programmes.

The next important concept is national spirit – by national spirit I mean the metaphysical or intangible being in which all bonafide members of a nation – state should share. It is akin to what Hegel calls the “*Geist*” the spirit that embodies the ideals and consciousness of the state. It permeates every citizen, driving him or her to consciously or unconsciously always walk in agreement

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<sup>6</sup>. See Professor Udoidem's book titled *Authority and the Common Good in Social and Political Philosophy*, Pg. 97-98.

<sup>7</sup>. See Udoidem's *Authority and the Common Good in Social and Political Philosophy*, Pg. 100.

with the ideals and objectives of the state. It embodies the abstract “general will” the spirit of patriotism, spirit of civilisation, spirit of intellectual ascendancy and virtue. For Hegel, *Geist* translated as spirit or mind is the universal, self-developing process of consciousness that forms the ultimate reality, moving through individuals, society and presenting itself in an objective manner.

An online account sees national spirit as the shared ideals, beliefs, and emotional connections that bind a group of people together as a nation fostering a common identity, purpose and collective consciousness. It is shaped by history, culture, traditions and shared experiences. It can be dynamic, evolving over time due to social, political and economic changes. National spirit is essential for national identity and unity. National spirit can be fostered through history and traditions, education, weathering difficult times or a period of general reawakening or renaissance. National spirit is important because it leads to social cohesion, patriotism, sense of belongingness and national rejuvenation.

Genuine self-awareness helps us to capture the principles of justice, fairness, equity and objectivity which imbues us with the operations of national spirit in which all true, patriotic, self-aware citizens participate to enunciate equitable and fair distribution of national resources, political positions and responsibilities and obligation as would be considered fair by all-inclusive citizens. Our country is still distant in achieving this state of affairs.

The next concept is nationhood. Nationhood according to Ernest Gellner is not inherited, not a mythical divine happenstance. Nation-building is a journey whose culmination is nationhood. This journey begins as prehistorical, cultural, linguistic, fairly

homogenous groups or disparate groups which share affinity, contiguity, other ties like trade, religion, social experience, may decide to come together to begin the process of attaining nationhood.

Gellner appears to use the concepts nationhood and nationalism interchangeably. He defines nationalism as the crystallisation of new units suitable for conditions now prevailing, though admittedly using as their raw material the cultural. Historical and other inheritances from the pre-nationalist world.<sup>8</sup> For me while nationalism is the drive towards nationhood, nationhood is the culmination of that drive.

Cambridge online dictionary defines nationhood as the fact or status of being a nation, that is, status of national identity or/and independence. A country with its own government, language, traditions etc. To attain nationhood, we must pass through nation-building. According to Ikyase *et al*, nation-building is seen as the process of common identity formation with a view to legitimating public power within a given territory.<sup>9</sup> Quoting Smith, they see nation building as the conscious and focused application of our people's collective resource energies and knowledge to the task of liberating and developing the psychic and physical space that we identify as our own.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>. Gellner, Ernest *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell publishers Ltd, 1999), Pg. 49.

<sup>9</sup>. Ikyase John Kennedy Tersoo, Egber, Anthony Ejue "One hundred years of Nationhood and the challenges of nation-building in Nigeria" in *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Action*, (Vol. 20 Issue 2 ver III Feb 2015), Pg. 44.

<sup>10</sup>. Ikyase John Kennedy Tersoo, Egber, Anthony Ejue "One hundred years of Nationhood and the challenges of nation-building in Nigeria", Pg. 44.

It is important to note the differences that exist between nation, nation-building, nationalism and nationhood. Nation could be a mere claim until we show the pangs and pains of nation-building which is seen or borne out by nationalism and then, if the process is successful, we attain nationhood. It is at this stage that our initial dream and claim of being a nation is actualised. To attain nationhood, the following conditions must be available.

1. Agreement through proper political process through referendum by components units to become a nation
2. A people's constitution approved by the component units
3. An inclusive, fair, just, equitable system that gives every unit a sense of belonging
4. National identity
5. National consciousness and pride
6. Equitable sharing of resources
7. Common language, religion, culture or well-built mechanism for cultural and religious toleration.
8. Absence of domination of the minority by the majority
9. Pervasive consciousness of the national spirit.

Going by the above conditions Nigeria is still embarking on nation building and it is far from attaining nationhood or being a nation in the true sense of the word.

Finally, we are looking at the concept of integrative humanism. This method and concept will help us to gather into our conceptual barn all the concepts then, we analyse and finally synthesise to assess how we stand in our journey in achieving social change after eliminating the virus of negative social change that hunt us in our efforts in national development. The concepts we have analysed so far aid us to ascertain the impediments and hindrances that stultify

our progress. For instance, lack of full-blooded self-awareness, sound citizenship, lack of national spirit are all obstacles to positive social change in Nigeria from 1999 to the present political dispensation.

Integrative humanism is a concept which has become crafted into a philosophy. I formulated this concept and theory in 2009 at the University of Cape Coast Ghana. Integrative humanism is simply defined as a ratio-empirico spirito-centric way of doing philosophy. It takes cognisance that the chief reason for all knowledge pursuits is to better understand the human subject of our discourse and to work out the most acceptable way of heightening his existential wellbeing as an earthly being and as an eternity bound being. This is why we say that man is “a being unto eternity”. As a tripartite being the three component parts of his being, the physical, psychological and spiritual must be taken care of to achieve man's holistic good which is both earthly and otherworldly. Events in this world can affect the way we end up in eternity.<sup>11</sup>

Our topic is “Nation-building to Nationhood: Path to Positive Social Change in Nigeria”. Our application of the integrative humanism concept will help us to microscopically analyze the problem of national development by identifying those negative phenomena or situations that have made speedy progress difficult within the period under review, that is from 1999 to the present day. We shall look at the issues under social, economic, political, educational, religious, etc, in a diachronic and synchronic manner.

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<sup>11</sup>. Ozumba, G. O. *Philosophy and Method of Integrative Humanism* (Calabar: Jochrisam publishers, 2010), Pg. 40-45.

## **Integrative Overview of the Negative Social Changes**

According to E. Kolawole Ogundowole, social change is an imperative because a time comes when the transformation in the way of life of a people and their institutions become necessary when the old way of doing things can no longer meet the requirements, or satisfy newly evolved socio-historical needs of the society.<sup>12</sup>

For Ogundowole, there is always a historical correlation between history and logic. This means that the historical and the logical correspond.<sup>13</sup> Continuing, he asserts that history is logical and logic is historical. It is the level of a people's consciousness that determines their material conditions. This in line with Hegelian and Marxian dialectics. This means that the course of history is not totally predetermined outside human activities. The direction of our socio-economic trajectory is determined by human actions and inactions. Ogundowole concludes that the Nigerians of today experience the social condition they deserve.<sup>14</sup>

It is at this point that I take a detour to put Nigeria's socio-economic and political, conditions in proper perspective. I do not think we deserve what we are getting from our leaders. The reality of the situation is complex. We are dealing with a hydra-headed problem. We have a number of issues.

1. Conspiracy against the good people of this country. A situation where the wish of the people has always been subverted through the barrel of the gun, corruption, election rigging, the negative complicity and connivance of the judiciary.

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<sup>12.</sup> Ogundowole, E. Kolawole. *Philosophy and Social Change*. (Lagos: Correct Counsels Ltd, 2010), Pg. 6.

<sup>13.</sup> Ogundowole, E. Kolawole. *Philosophy and Social Change*, Pg. 7.

<sup>14.</sup> Ogundowole, E. Kolawole. *Philosophy and Social Change*, Pg. 8-9.

2. The case of 2023 election is very vivid in our minds; the people rose up with one mind to overturn the status quo and at the dying minute INEC betrayed Nigerian by failing to transmit to the IREV as promised and a notorious concept GLITCH was introduced into our electoral lexicon.
3. The minority who have not attained self-awareness joined forces with the powerful politicians to subvert the will of the electorate.
4. The drumming up of tribal hatred, religious fanaticism and clannish parochialism all teamed up to prevent positive social change.

The issues of rigging (all kinds of electoral fraud), subversion of the will of the majority through the courts, (today, the popular euphemism in Nigeria is “Go to court”) have become the order of the day. We have the unthinking support of law enforcement agencies and the military as another negative phenomenon in the actualising of positive social change in Nigeria. The proclivity of some power blocks in the North to think that political power is their birth right robbed PDP of the needed unity that would have given them victory at the polls. Ogundowole may still defend his position by saying that as long as Nigerians are not united in their consciousness that the time for change is now, we will remain bogged down by the spirit of inertia. Hegel's consciousness that brings change must be universal.

On the economic side, we saw from 1999 the role of godfatherism, political thuggery, money politics. This scenario instead of abetting, it is worsening. As at 2023, it has become impossible to purchase party forms which now range from 5 million to 50 million. It may be more by 2027. This means that you need a “money bag”, a

“god-father” a financial sponsor to qualify to contest election in Nigeria. Delegates of some parties were bribed with as high as 10 million per delegate. Political positions have become the preserve of the highest bidder. What are economic consequences of these reckless, ungodly activities, they are as follows;

1. Cut throat political competition
2. Competence and merit are relegated to the background
3. Morality are exorcised from politics
4. Politics becomes a zero-sum-game of winner takes it all.
5. Politics becomes arena of suffocating corruption where politician do all in their power to recoup what they spent before and prepare financial war chest in preparation for future elections.
6. A cyclical ding dong battle between politicians and political parties. This means relegation of governance, delivery of dividends of democracy to the masses. This year electioneering has started when the next election to a distant of two years ways.
7. The last straw that broke the camel's back is the removal of subsidy and the horrendous devaluation of the naira. We have witnessed unfulfilled promises like improvement in infrastructure – like roads, healthcare, educating, etc. The promised gas revolution, CNG Buses, public transportation system are neither here nor there. The minimum wage has become starvation wage, people are dying in their hundreds daily.
8. Civil servants, teachers, lecturers have become a laughing stock in their families. Thus, making our children to vow never to serve the nation as most us are doing. They have been forced to leave the country for greener pastures or engage in illicit trade like drugs, 419, kidnapping, etc.

Democracy in Nigeria have become government of politicians, by politicians and for politicians. The economics in place is the economics of stealing from the poor to sustain the insatiable pleasure-seeking politicians.

Religion is another negative phenomenon that has polarised Nigeria. In spite of the outcry against Muslim-Muslim ticket, the card was played to the chagrin of most Nigerians. The view of the masses of Nigeria does not matter. What matters is the will of politicians in power. Education is almost crumbling. Lecturers cannot afford the luxury of going to work every day, attend conferences, buy or publish their manuscripts. Lecturers have become an endangered specie, a conquered beleaguered city. It is only a matter of time, public universities, will give way for private universities built by politicians for the children of politicians.

### **Integrative Humanist Solution to our Inhibiting Negative Socio-Economic Political Situations**

There is no position, situation, state of affairs that is immune to change. According to Heraclitus, the only law that is permanent is the law of change. And according to Karl Marx when the material conditions of men become deplorable, it will ignite a socio-economic and political consciousness that will make social change (revolution) inevitable. The stage is set for that social change. To facilitate and concretise our nation-building, we need to do the following;

1. Proper enlightenment of the masses which will ensure we stand against the tactic of divide and conquer.
2. Sincere, committed politicians must come together to lead the vanguard of change.
3. Refuse to fall for the card of religion, ethnicity, tribalism,

regionalism.

4. Give room for justice, equity, fair play without compromising merit, competence and quality.
5. Insisting on electoral reform that will make electronic transfer of election results compulsory.
6. Removing of corrupt judges known for compromising the demands of their sacred office.
7. The civil society organisations should rise up and demand accountability from our politicians.
8. Cushioning the effect of the harsh economy by reducing fuel price, privatising the refineries.
9. Public transportation system and good network of roads should be put in place. Cost of transportation should be reduced.
10. There is the need of the social media users to use the media to hold those in government accountable for their actions and inactions.
11. A conscious effort at building a righteous nation should be propagated by religious institutions because righteousness exalts a nation but sin is a reproach to any people.<sup>15</sup>

This leads me to the logic of the divine and the logic of matter. The material substructure determines the superstructure. Poverty will breed discontentment and by and large may lead to social dislocations and disillusionment. But in God's divine logic, value is placed on righteousness which places those concerned in the position of divine favour, their material conditions notwithstanding.

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<sup>15</sup>. See (Prov 14:34).

## Conclusion

In this paper, our effort simply has been to show that Nigeria is far from being a nation. We are still at the stage of nation building. To attain the level of statehood we need the following; a well thought through constitution that will address the question of marginalisation of federating units, the issue of expensive government structure, the issue of corruption, the issue of incoherent party politics, the issue of the wrong use of religion in our national life, the issue of electoral reforms, the growing rate of unemployment, the ever widening gap between the rich and the poor, poor economic policies that always lead the poor becoming further impoverished, the role of IMF and World Bank in dictating our economic trajectory. A robust welfarist system must be put in place, if our country will not end up in conflagration sooner than later. Secessionist tendencies will be nipped in the bud if we engage seriously with all the recommendations made in this paper. Only then, can our chances of attaining nationhood become a reality.

According to Ozumbas writing on integrative nationhood, our socio-political and economic reengineering should involve empathic consideration, and defense, for one another, over-arching patriotic outlook, spontaneous universal participation, acclaimed justiciable equalisation, entrenched diligence reward system, enabling environment for maximum potentials, accountability and servant/leadership system.<sup>16</sup> From nation-building to nationhood is like a long tortuous walk to freedom akin to Nelson Mandela's walk to personal and national freedom in 1990<sup>17</sup> indeed nation-building is

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<sup>16</sup> Ozumba, G. O. and Lily N. Ozumba “Integrative nationhood: A Projective Prognosis of the Trajectory to Nigeria's Nationhood” in *International Journal of Integrative Humanism*, vol. 14, No 1 March, 2022 Pg. 103.

<sup>17</sup> See Mandela, Nelson. *No Easy Walk to Freedom* Essex: Heinemann Educational Books, 1990.

not a hundred meters dash, it is a marathon.

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