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The state and nation-building in Nigeria: Challenges in the Democratic Era, 1999-2024

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Abstract

The process of state and nation-building in Nigeria is complex and ongoing. Though the Nigerian State evolved as the product of British imperialism, all efforts to create a nation out of the disparate people forcefully brought together by the colonialists have remained elusive. This study relied on documentary evidence to examine the challenges confronting and frustrating the process of nation-building in Nigeria. The theories of cultural primordialism and instrumentalism were adopted as the framework of analysis. It was established that the trajectory of nation-building has been on, Nigeria has remained fractionalized and polarized. The study further found that historical legacies, leadership failure, endemic corruption, citizenship crisis, poverty and inequality, secularism of the Nigerian state, ethnic and religious polarity, among others are some of the greatest challenges to nation-building in Nigeria. To turn the tide, the study recommends the need for good governance and personal examples from leaders, continuous re-orientation of the citizenry and institution-building in Nigeria.

Keywords: Democratic Era, Good Governance, Nation-Building, State

Introduction

The issue of nation-building, particularly national integration, has been one of the most persistent problems facing African states. As the case of Nigeria demonstrates, this problem became more prominent after independence. This is not to say that the issue of nation-building and national integration was absent under British colonial rule; in fact, the 1914 amalgamation brought Nigeria's previously diverse peoples together under a single administrative framework, so attempts to integrate all of these groups into a single nation have remained an arduous task (Ota et al., 2020) [22]. As further submitted by Oloruntoba (2021) [20], Nigeria has been struggling with the task of nation-building since gaining independence in 1960. It is sufficient to say that the colonialists' divide-and-rule strategies, the federation's flawed foundation, the form and character of the post-colonial state, and the political elites are all major contributors to Nigeria's ongoing nation-building difficulties. Because Nigeria was arbitrarily created by the colonial powers, the job of nation-building in Nigeria thus involves attempts to create a single, cohesive state out of groups of disparate nationalities. Over a century and nine years after the amalgamation, this has not only been an arduous undertaking but has also remained elusive.

Ethnic nationalism is on the rise, as are calls for secession and self-determination, marginalization claims, and tensions between different ethnic groups, regions, and religions in Nigeria's contemporary democratic regime. State politics are consistently dominated by these concerns. These issues are seen by some experts as signs of a lack of unity, nationhood, or national integration among the various ethnic and religious communities that comprise Nigeria. According to their argument, nation-building which includes enthroning a feeling of shared nationality is the answer to the unsolvable issues. This approach, on the other hand, contends that the absence of strong institutions capable of fostering meaningful interethnic relations may be the primary issue rather than a country's lack of identity. For unity in a plural society, state-(re) building in the form of institution-strengthening is fairly necessary. Therefore, in order to address the numerous issues facing the State, it is increasingly crucial to build new institutions and fortify those that already exist, such as the federal system, in order to create a functional Nigerian State that can provide public goods and effective governance.

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Conceptual overview of nation-building

Attempts to conceptualize "nation-building" are not restricted. Although the definition varies from person to person, it is usually accepted to be the process of creating or upholding a sense of national identity through the use of state power. This assumes that nation-building must include the procedures meant to bring the people of the State together in order to maintain its long-term political stability and viability. Once more, Babalola and Okafor (2022) ^[6] define nation-building as the process of fostering harmony and a sense of belonging among the diverse groups within the state, whereas Nwabughuogu (2004) ^[16] views the idea as entailing the establishment of a favorable environment that will uphold the affection that the people and groups have grown to have for the nation-state. Consequently, nation-building would typically entail the establishment of striking political, social, and economic components that define a contemporary state, such as good roads, a water supply, facilities for health and education, effective communication, job opportunities, and so forth, all of which would encourage citizens to love their nation.

From a political standpoint, nation building is defined as creating and implementing a democratic policy, which means that the country can maintain its sovereignty by granting its citizens freedom and liberty, establishing a system or mechanism for selecting leaders, and leaving a legacy or culture of peaceful power transfers to future generations. This is how Ahmed-Gamgum (2014) ^[5] defines nation-building.

The grandeur of individuals via a nation's success in industrial growth for improved production of commodities and services is considered nation-building from an economic perspective. The level of living is raised, and it strengthens the desire of all citizens to remain as a single nation. Oni and Adebisi (2021) ^[21] hold a different opinion, arguing that nation-building is primarily for "failed states" or economies that are dysfunctional or unstable and that are helped to develop civil society, governmental infrastructure, dispute resolution procedures, and economic aid in order to improve stability.

As a result, it is evident that nation-building has goals. Its goals include the establishment of institutions, physical structures, values, behavior, and languages that clarify history and culture, preserve the present, and guarantee the nation's identity and independence in the future. Nation-building aims to achieve sustainable development by creating jobs, employment, favorable service and welfare conditions, and a welcoming environment for both domestic and foreign investors in both urban and rural areas. Additionally, it requires dependable and dedicated leadership to succeed.

Once more, Oni and Adebisi (2021) ^[21] argue that the phrase "nation-building" is a portmanteau notion that refers to the actions and aspirations associated with fostering a feeling of national community among varied people of a state, regardless of their socioeconomic, religious, linguistic, and other distinctions. They further contend that a state intentionally works to promote unity among its citizens to the point where everyone feels and sees themselves as one. Creating national symbols, including flags, anthems, national holidays, stadiums, national airlines, national languages, and national mythology, is part of it.

Nation-building is the process of creating a nation, or a socially built or "imagined community" (Hoefte &

Veenendaal, 2019) ^[14], with the goal of achieving political sovereignty. While the people of some states, like China and Germany, had strong national identities before achieving modern statehood, in other states, like France and Italy, the establishment of a centralized state came before the nation itself, forcing political elites to create plans for nation-building. Nation-building seeks to strengthen national identities by eradicating or reducing existing ethnic, linguistic, or religious identities that are thought to be incompatible with the national identity (Hoefte & Veenendaal, 2019) ^[14]. There are several ways to construct a nation, such as through substantial infrastructure development or education policies that spur political stability and economic progress.

Political elites can use a range of tactics in their quest to build their nation. National flags, anthems, holidays, or sports teams are examples of obvious short-term (and frequently superficial) strategies. If there is no underlying sense of shared nationhood, these objects of identification are useless on their own, even though they can undoubtedly reinforce sentiments of national identity and togetherness (Hoefte & Veenendaal, 2019) ^[14]. Therefore, a more forceful and systematic approach is required if nation-building is seen of as a more difficult and protracted endeavor. In order to ensure that a new generation speaks the same language, has a similar understanding of the country's history, and shares a respect for its heroes, nation-building strategies of that type typically center on education as the primary vehicle. The history of nations like France shows that even while such policies might not have any noticeable short-term effects, their long-term effects should not be undervalued. Here, the political elite's efforts to unite the nations ethnically, linguistically, and religiously fragmented inhabitants were mainly successful. Therefore, it is evident that nation-building is a more difficult task in post-colonial governments, particularly in areas where the colonial authority mostly exploited the area to harvest resources or reap other financial rewards.

Theoretical Anchorage

Prehistoric attachments are unquestionably the biggest scourge of Nigerian nationhood and have long been seen as an unavoidable aspect of social reality (Kataria, 2018) ^[15]. Therefore, it is beneficial for scholars to theorize about how and why primordialism endures over time. Geertz's cultural primordialism and Brass's instrumentalism serve as the foundation for this investigation. Explanation of cultural primordialism as a motivating factor for the emergence and maintenance of ethnic and religious divisions is a remarkable contribution. Humans are inherently linked to the "givens" of social life, whether they be close family ties or a certain religious and/or linguistic group, according to Geertz. It should be highlighted, nonetheless, that Geertz's remark only implies that people's attachments to the "givens" of social existence are primordial in character, not that the "givens" themselves are (Oluwole & Adebisi, 2021) ^[21]. This is due to the fact that these attachments are ingrained and may be expressed in various ways.

Geertz claims that this explains why ethnic identities continue to exist in addition to national ones. The formation of the first political parties in Nigeria along ethnic-regional lines can be explained by the need to protect and preserve the "givens" of social existence of the various ethnic and religious groups during colonial and post-colonial Nigeria.

This led to the collapse of the country's First Republic in 1966, as these ethnically evolved political institutions were not adequately managed in a way that would enhance national cohesion and integration. Accordingly, Oni and Adebisi (2021) ^[21] place the political actions of early "nationalists" to preserve the political supremacy of their separate ethnic regions through the lens of instrumentalism, which views religious and ethnic identities primarily in a logical manner.

In his work on the elite viewpoint of instrumentalism, Brass (1979) ^[7] thus highlights the role of elites in the establishment and maintenance of ethnic identity. According to Brass, elites and counter-elites within ethnic groups deliberately select particular facets of the group's culture, give them new meaning and significance, and then utilize them as symbols to rally the group to fight for its rights and to outdo other groups (Brass, 1979) ^[7]. A combination of elite manipulation of these "givens" of social existence, which unintentionally fuels ethnic chauvinism, and cultural attachments that seem unavoidable for members of various ethnic groups accounts for the prevalence of ethnic identities in Nigeria despite deliberate efforts at nation-building.

History of nation-building in Nigeria

Over the years, particularly since gaining independence in 1960, Nigeria's successive administrations have implemented policies to reduce ethnic tensions, calm minority concerns, and ensure fair distribution of posts and resources as part of the country's development. To put it another way, Nigeria has worked to strengthen its country since gaining its independence. After the Civil War, which was understandably a good time to foster nation-building and strengthen national integration, some of these initiatives were launched (Odalonu & Ogu, 2022) ^[18]. One of these nation-building initiatives is the implementation of the "No Victor, No Vanquished" policy and its corresponding 3Rs (Reconciliation, Rehabilitation, and Reconstruction) mechanism. The National Youth Service Scheme (NYSC) was established in an attempt to make a comparable endeavor. By order No. 24 of May 22, 1973, the National Youth Service Corps Scheme was established in an effort to rebuild Nigeria following the civil war and promote reconciliation. Promoting national unity and encouraging and developing shared links among Nigerian youth are among the key goals of the program. Under this program, recent graduates who are thirty years of age or younger are posted to different regions of the nation that are different from their home states. The purpose of this was to help them understand and value the cultures of the people in their primary assignment locations (Igbini, 2020, p. 429) ^[11].

Accordingly, in the 1960s and 1970s, the Federal Government founded Unity Colleges with the main objective of integrating and training future leaders for Nigeria's public and private sectors who would be in charge of and cultivate the mindset of promoting national unity and maintaining a great nation (Gobo & Bolaji, 2023) ^[13]. These educational institutions promote unity, national integration, and nation-building. Therefore, regardless of their many ethnic backgrounds and religious views, schoolchildren from all over the nation and from all walks of life gather at unity schools to share knowledge and values in an effort to promote unity. More specifically, Nigeria's Unity Schools serve to strengthen national cohesion, cultivate the next

generation of leaders, and give kids from different backgrounds a chance to learn and develop together.

Additionally, Chapter 2 Section 14, Subsection 3 of the 1999 Nigerian Constitution established the federal character principle. The Federal Character Commission was established to encourage patriotism and solidarity. For clarity, the 1999 Constitution (as modified), Chapter 2, Section 14, subsection 3, states explicitly that:

There should not be a preponderance of individuals from a few states or from a few ethnic or other sectional groups in the government or in any of its agencies. This is because the composition of the federation's government or any of its agencies and the way its affairs are conducted should reflect Nigeria's federal character and the need to uphold national unity while also commanding national loyalty.

The federal character principle has been applied to the civil service, the police, the armed forces, Unity schools, and federal higher education institutions. The federal character principle's proponents think that it will lessen the socioeconomic disparity between the nation's different ethnic groups. They think that as a result, ethnic tensions and ethnicity in Nigeria will decrease.

Nigeria has also established Federal Colleges of Education, Polytechnics, and Universities as part of its nation-building endeavors. In a same vein, the National Sport Festivals were purposefully established to unite Nigerians from various origins and promote harmonious and integrated Nigerian life. Nevertheless, Igbini (2020, p. 430) ^[11] asserts that "the only great success of nation-building recorded in Nigeria is adorning the public institutions with the national symbols like flag, coat-of-arm, and pictures of the Nigeria President and Governors (within their respective states) as well as the recitation of the National Anthem in official gatherings which in effect, does not guarantee oneness but at least, it is a sign of togetherness". Though this endeavor serves as a good reminder of our national identity, it is insufficient to ensure nation-building.

Challenges to Nation-Building in Nigeria

Nation-building has been hampered since 1960 by the country's heterogeneity and the state's incapacity to adequately handle the various interests of the various groups (Falode, 2019) ^[9]. However, Nigeria has a variety of difficulties in its nation-building process, including the challenges of power-sharing, the fiscal crisis, leadership, and socioeconomic inequality (Ekundayo, 2019) ^[8]. Gambari (2008) ^[10] highlighted the obstacles Nigeria faced before establishing its nation. Nigeria has five major nation-building issues, in his opinion. These include the problems from our past, the problems of socioeconomic disparities, the problems of a suitable constitutional agreement, the problems of establishing democratic and developmental institutions, and the problems of leadership, to name a few. Below, a few of these are examined:

1. Historical Legacies

Nigeria's nation-building is hampered by the historical effects of colonial control. Nigeria was split into the North and the South during colonial control, with distinct judicial, educational, and land tenure systems in each region. Nigeria had two administrative systems, one for the North and one for the South, but major British colonies like India and the Sudan only had one. It appeared as though these two distinct nations were only connected by a common currency and

transportation network. In the 1950s and 1960s, the regional institutions modeled the education and worldview of many members of the Nigerian elite class. Some knew very little or nothing about the areas that were adjacent to them. Prejudice and fear flourished easily under these circumstances. Nigerian nationalists from various parts of the country fought each other just as fiercely as they did the British colonialists during the independence fight. Unlike Nelson Mandela in South Africa or Kwame Nkrumah in Ghana, Nigeria never had a leader who could unite the country. As an alternative, every region produced its own champions (Okorn, 2019) ^[19].

Odalonu and Ogu (2022) ^[18] further contend that the British colonial rulers split Nigeria into two distinct administrative regions, the North and the South, each with its own land tenure, local government, educational, and legal systems. In contrast, the Sudan and India, two other British possessions, had a single governmental structure. In Nigeria, the elite class took advantage of the British administration's constant adoption of the divide-and-rule system, which shaped their education and perspective on the world in the 1950s and 1960s. Because of these circumstances, prejudice, mistrust, and terror spread throughout the nation. During the independence battle, Nigerian nationalists from various regions engaged in fierce competition with one another, much as they did with the British colonialists. Therefore, Nigeria's efforts to develop a nation have been severely hampered by the British establishment of regionalism and the divide and rule system. Nigeria's founding fathers, however, attempted to address this issue by embracing federalism and promoting a philosophy of unity in diversity. Regrettably, the issue has been made worse by Nigerian federalism's inability to unite around widely held beliefs and ideals. Nigeria's attempts to construct its nation are thus still hampered by its polarizing past. The conflict between "indigenes" and "settlers" in most parts of Nigeria is a stark example of the country's historical heritage of nation-building. This separation has weakened Nigeria's attempts to forge a national nation and caused internal strife (Gambari, 2008) ^[10].

2. The challenge of socio-economic inequalities

Establishing a shared citizenship with equitable access to socioeconomic opportunities is essential to the development of a nation. According to Gambari (2008) ^[10], nation-building is once more about preventing "social exclusion," or the denial of fundamental social and economic rights to sizable portions of the populace. However, there is a significant gap in socioeconomic opportunity access in Nigeria. The wealthiest have gotten richer and the poor have gotten poorer as a result. One of Nigeria's most controversial nation-building issues is the country's extreme socioeconomic disparity and marginalization. For example, Nigeria has three different but linked aspects: income inequality, opportunity disparity, and wealth inequality. Additionally, inequality between urban and rural populations, between the rich and the poor, and between males and women are at least three different aspects. Essentially, inequalities in opportunities, education, and resources are present in every aspect of Nigerian life (Ochoga & Shishi, 2019) ^[17]. Unfair access exists to capital, justice, healthcare, education, security, and even political representation. While the state provides little benefits and leaves most people to fend for themselves, others are able to

live as full citizens. Consequently, the citizen feels that the state does not care about their well-being, which deters them from supporting it.

Once more, Odalonu and Ogu (2022) ^[18] agree that the opulent lifestyles of a select few contrasted with the squalor of the majority make the gap between the haves and have-nots all too evident. The nation's socioeconomic disparities feed suspicions and anxieties that keep our people apart. The following obstacles to nation-building are brought on by these disparities. First, social cohesion is significantly impacted by inequality. People are less likely to trust one another in unequal societies. Second, inequality contributes to crime, which is especially significant in Nigeria given the country's issues with internet scams, armed robberies, theft, and the prevalence of area boys, among other issues. Furthermore, socioeconomic disparities in Nigeria provide two interconnected obstacles to nation-building, claims Gambari (2008) ^[10]. First of all, Nigerians live distinct lives in different sections of the country due to significant levels of socioeconomic inequality. Second, the degree of social protection and provision is still inadequate by international standards, even in the comparatively better-off regions of the nation. Inequalities and marginalization are therefore a challenge to a common citizenship and nation-building, and a common nationhood cannot be attained while citizens are leading such parallel lifestyles (Gambari, 2008) ^[10].

However, there is significant variety in how these rights are exercised throughout Nigeria, and many of our residents are denied access to fundamental rights like health and education. As a result, the citizen lacks motivation to support the state and society since they believe that society does not care enough about their well-being. Second, socioeconomic disparities throughout the nation feed mistrust and anxieties that keep our people apart. It is odd that poverty and nation-building go hand in hand, regardless of how many people live in poverty (20% or 85%). It is difficult to expect a mostly disenfranchised populace that is hampered by poverty and a lack of basic necessities to contribute appropriately to the country's progress. Healthy, competent citizens build nations. For the sake of efficiency and equality, we must encourage the majority of Nigerians to have access to basic housing, health care, and education. Nigeria needs a social contract with its citizens as a basis for demanding their loyalty and support.

3. The Constitutional Challenge

It is undeniable that Nigeria has a broken constitution, which has made efforts to rebuild the country extremely difficult. Consequently, Nigeria has been confronted with the task of creating a constitutional system that has the support of the vast majority of Nigerians ever since gaining independence in 1960 (Gambari, 2008) ^[10]. Although Nigeria is a federal state, it functions more like a unitary state in reality. This is because the federal government was given more authority by the Constitution than the states and local governments. As a result, the government's authority and institutions are very centralized. Part 1 of the second schedule of the 1999 constitution, for example, outlines the duties and authority of each level of government; the exclusive legislative list has sixty-eight items rather than the prescribed eight. According to Abada et al. (2020) ^[1], the concurrent list of 30 items that outline the joint obligations of the federal and state governments includes 15 items that are identical to those found in the exclusive lists, which

include, but are not limited to, information, education, and agriculture. Ideally, the central government's and the federation's component units' powers are equal, autonomous, independent, and coordinated in directing the state's activities however, in Nigeria, the central government has an excessive amount of power and financial resources. Furthermore, the Nigerian state's secularity or lack thereof demonstrates the constitution's defection and inconsistency. Nigeria is a secular state, for example, but Sharia law and the political autonomy to create a Sharia Court of Appeal with civil jurisdiction in the Northern States were also enshrined in the constitution, which violates the Nigerian state's fundamental secularity or religious neutrality (Agbibo, 2015) ^[4]. Nigeria's democracy is founded on the Constitution, which was left to the country by previous military administrations led and controlled by Muslim military leaders from the North. One religion and region of the nation were given preference over others in the constitution's drafting. All of these have made nation-building difficult. Nigeria urgently requires a constitutional resolution that is accepted, if not respected, by the vast majority of Nigerians. It is obvious that there are numerous significant flaws in the 1999 constitution that the military left behind (Gambari, 2008) ^[10]. As a result, the Constitution has many flaws and has to be thoroughly examined and revised.

4. The challenge of building institution

The issue of developing institutions is one of the biggest obstacles to nation-building. The effectiveness of the pertinent national institutions makes a significant difference in a country's capacity to maintain economic growth without causing extreme inequality or to resolve political and social conflicts amicably. In order to achieve the country's objectives and aspirations for democratic governance and nationhood, Nigerians must establish or fortify institutions. Among the elements of institution building are the following: establishing regulations and guaranteeing rigorous adherence; employing individuals with technical know-how, competence, and ethical soundness to interpret regulations or carry out national objectives; and making sure the establishments inspire public trust by being open, equitable, and consistent (Gambari, 2008) ^[10]. Setting the rules, employing people with the technical know-how and moral character to interpret the rules or carry out the organizations' objectives, and making sure the institutions inspire public confidence by being open, equitable, and consistent are the three key elements of institution building. These are also the benchmarks by which any organization's performance especially that of public sector organizations should be evaluated. This demonstrates that the organization's overall efficacy and good operation are more significant than the act of founding it. In this sense, Nigeria must establish or fortify institutions that would support the country's objectives of sustainable development and democratic government. (1) Public integrity-promoting organizations like the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) and the Economic Financial Crime Commission (EFCC); (2) public service delivery organizations like Service Compact with Nigerians (Servcom); (3) the judiciary; and (4) economic governance organizations like banks, stock exchanges, and insurance companies.

5. The Leadership Challenge

A key component of nation-building is leadership, which should be viewed in two significant but connected ways. First, there are the personal attributes of each top leader, such as competence, honesty, dedication, and integrity. Second, there are the collective attributes of a shared goal, concentration, and aspiration for the elites' overall growth (Okorn, 2019) ^[19].

Over the years, Nigeria's hiring practices and individual leaders' performance have fallen far short of expectations. Leaders who consider themselves to be the defenders of a select few segments of the populace are not needed by the state. Indeed, according to Gambari (2008) ^[10], Nigeria needs capable and honest leadership that upholds the rule of law, has a clear sense of fair play and democratic tolerance, and, most importantly, can see past the gaudy pomp and circumstance of office if it is to succeed in nation-building. Leadership is a very crucial component, but it is not everything. Therefore, Nigeria cannot succeed at nation-building unless its leaders has the skills, moral character, dedication, and vision.

6. Ethnic and Religious Polarisation

Nigeria was created by the British by combining all of the different entities into one nation. Although there are many different ethnic groups in Nigeria, there are three main ethnic groups. They are Igbo, Hausa, and Yoruba. Ethnic and tribal ties were used as a basis for politics in the years leading up to and immediately following independence. These were evident in the pre-independence era when political parties were formed. For example, the National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC) was affiliated with the Igbo group and had an Igbo base, the Action Group (AG) was founded by the Yoruba cultural association, Egbe Omo Oduduwa, and the Northern People Congress (NPC) from Jamiyyar Arewa. Therefore, ethnicity was a significant factor in Nigerian politics both before and after independence. Even in present-day politics, there are still traces of tribalism in the political parties.

Once more, Nigerians have a strong ethnic fervor. Nowadays, there is always an ethnic undertone to everything that is done in Nigeria, including politics, employment, and the provision of social amenities. Tribal relationships are always quite strong and evident. Ethnic violence has occurred over time as a result of loyalty to one's ethnic group, and this has not been beneficial for the development of the nation. This tendency for citizens to prioritize their ethnic group over the nation is detrimental to national cohesion and development. Therefore, one of the biggest barriers to the growth of good leadership in Nigeria is ethnicity. The nation is plagued by a crisis of governance, which includes the way in which government is conducted within ethnic frameworks. The nation's ethnic politics have eroded trust in the Nigerian state's ability to safeguard all of its inhabitants. The ruling parties are therefore designed to cater to ethnic and tribal divisions, using either the dominant tribe or a suitable tribe as a check (Achebe, 2012). Increased tribal and ethnic rivalries stemming from a long-standing mistrust of the competing ethnic groups are the inevitable outcome (Ochoga & Shishi, 2019) ^[17].

7. Corruption

Nigeria has a great deal of material and human wealth. Unfortunately, they were simply looted and stolen,

including squandering on uncontrolled importation of various useless consumer goods, inflating contracts to an army of party loyalists who lacked the will and ability to carry them out, and raising the salaries of a vastly overstuffed and ineffective public service (Ochoga & Shishi, 2019, p. 287) ^[17] that lacked the proper leadership to manage such resources for the general good of the people. A multifaceted phenomenon is corruption. It has been defined in a number of ways, including acting outside the official responsibilities of a public position for personal advantage; abusing public positions or resources for personal gain; and allowing bribery, favoritism, or moral decay to permeate integrity or the status quo. According to the aforementioned definition, corruption includes accepting cash or other rewards in exchange for contracts, breaking the law to further one's own interests, diverting public funds, ignoring unlawful or unconstitutional activity, interfering with the legal system, nepotism, influence peddling, and misappropriation (Falode, 2019) ^[9]. Nigeria is blatantly corrupt in all of the ways or forms mentioned. Nation-building efforts in Nigeria were hampered by the country's inability to control and combat the various forms of corruption. During Gowon's military tenure, from 1966 to 1975, corruption was a major problem. It's true that widespread corruption in Gowon's government had a role in the 1975 coup that overthrew him. The extent of corruption during the Alhaji Shehu Shagari regime in 1980 was extraordinary. There were approximately 87.5 percent of corruption cases in the administration that went unreported. Curiously, despite the Obasanjo administration's anti-corruption policies throughout the Fourth Republic (1999-2007) and the establishment of the ICPC and EFCC to combat corruption, the corruption genie seemed unstoppable. During the Fourth Republic, political corruption flourished under several different governments. Between 2010 to 2015, under the Goodluck Jonathan government, it became independent. For instance, Adolphus Wabara, the fourth president of the Fourth Republic's Senate, was disgraced from office due to official corruption, while Tafa Balogun, the former Inspector General of Police, was charged with corrupt activities. Therefore, the state's nation-building efforts suffered as a result of its incapacity to effectively address the problem of corruption in all of its manifestations (Falode, 2019) ^[9]. The extent of the looting that occurred during the tenure of former President Muhammadu Buhari (2015–2023) is astounding. A US Department of State study characterizes corruption in Nigeria under President Muhammadu Buhari's rule as "massive, widespread, and pervasive." The report also states that the current tactics employed by the government are undermining Nigerian institutions.

Conclusion and the Way Forward

The aforementioned makes it clear that Nigeria is still not a country. As we have shown above, this is partially and primarily due to the attrition brought about by ethnicity, which has been purposefully encouraged in the face of nation-building. As previously stated, achieving nationhood offers clear advantages. It should be emphasized once more that national unity clearly lessens conflict and the wastefulness that frequently accompanies it. The peace and stability needed for economic growth and development are also produced by national integration. Additionally, it strengthens the nation and promotes social harmony.

Nation-building is a means to other goals, such as political stability, a peaceful social order, faster economic growth and development, and a focal point for national defense. It is not an end in and of itself. Therefore, the Nigerian government must not only long for but also diligently endeavor to shape and establish the foundations of nationhood. The majority of multiethnic states around the world have struggled with the issue of nation-building. With more than three hundred distinct ethnic nations, Nigeria is a multiethnic state that has had to develop policies and initiatives to foster unity among these disparate ethnicities and divisions. Primitive attachments to ethnicity and religion have been the primary issues in Nigeria's difficult nation-building process. It has been suggested that nation-building in Nigeria can only be successful through multifaceted solutions and a national consensus derived from a broad-based dialogue among Nigerians who should decide the fundamental basis of their co-existence on their own if the State would record any appreciable level of nationhood and development. Numerous studies have identified the issues that have hampered or impeded the process over the years.

In any case, de-ethnicizing Nigeria's politics, government, and public administration is a must for the country to transcend its limited geographic expression and advance to a macro level. Numerous integrative measures have been implemented, as previously noted, but both the leaders and the led have lacked the will to see these policies through to completion at the anticipated rate. Therefore, it is essential that the National Orientation Agency launch a broad education campaign about the de-ethnicization of the nation's politics, government, and public administration. Second, effective administration is necessary to enable more chances for Nigerians in general, thereby granting them access to the positive aspects of life without the need to utilize an ethnic platform to obtain them.

Third, there should be better oversight of compliance with federal character norms during the hiring process for national bureaucracy personnel, and infractions should be penalized.

Fourth, it is important to encourage the urbanization and industrialization phenomena. This will help to advance mass society, where social, economic, and political interactions among citizens are less influenced by ethnic factors.

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