

History and its Burden in Nation Building in Africa

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Abstract

The paper examines the imperative of nation building in Africa. It explains that historical experiences will help African states to master the past, present and the future as means of handling the problem of nation building. It also throws light on the concept of nations, nation building and highlighting the diverse views of many scholars on the subjects. The paper also discussed the reasons for the nation as states do not possess some or all the important characteristics or determinants of a nation. The paper highlights some of the efforts made by African leaders towards nation building. Finally, the paper also talked about the challenges associated with nation building with specific references to creation of artificial African boundaries, political instability, leadership problem and corruption. Also, recommendations of nation building are established in the paper.

Keywords: Nation, Nation building, African leaders, Africa

Introduction

A nation refers to a stable historically developed community of people with a territory, economic life, distinctive culture and language in common. It may refer to the people of territory united under single government-state. It may refer to people or tribe. It can be referred to as the aggregation of people having like institutions, custom, language, religion, ancestral background and sense of homogeneity and mutual interest (Donald, 2006). The tribes are nation since they exhibit these features. Therefore, states are unity of tribes such as Yorubas, Ibo, Hausa and others. Having defined nation, What is Nation Building? Nation building can be defined as the conscious and focused application of the collective resources, energies, and knowledge of a people to the objective of liberating and developing the psychic and physical environment we inhabit and call our own.

It entails the development of behaviour, language, values, institutions, which

explains our culture and history and solidifies and protects the present to ensure the future identity and independence of the nation (Rothchild, 2017). Nation building is thus a deliberate process or action keenly directed to develop a social, political and economic system. The present writer is inclined to define nation building as the totality of socio-economic, cultural and political programs and policies designed to infuse a sense of unity and patriotism and make life meaningful amongst a people occupying a given geographical space.

To Gambari (2010:58), nation building has many aspects. According to him, nation building is about building a political entity in a given territory based on some generally accepted rules and a common citizenship: secondly, it is also about building institutions which symbolize political entity-institutions such as a bureaucracy, an economy, the judiciary, universities, civil service and civil society organization. Above all else, however,

nation building is about building a common sense of purpose, a sense of shared destiny, collective imagination of belonging. Nation building is therefore about building the tangible and intangible threads that hold a political entity and gives it a sense of purpose (Cannor, 1962:34). Rotgak Andrew (2000:124) sees nation building as the dynamic transition, aimed at meeting up with the responsibility of providing for the citizens the basic necessities for existential survival. He goes on to assert that the achievement of this task is dependent on the mobilization of economic, political and socio-educational factors.

Ani Atamu (2005:87), defines nation building as “the process of mobilizing [the] socio-cultural, political and economic forces of a nation in order to transform the lives of the civilization” Okpako Mabel (2013:45) inclined to divide the process of nation building into vertical and horizontal dimensions. In his words:

The progressive acceptance of members of the polity, of the legitimacy of the necessity for a central government and the identification (as result of widening horizons of parochial loyalties) with the central government as a symbol of the nation. While the horizontal dimension is 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 buttressed by a sense of belonging to one political community.

Wikipedia defines nation building as constructing or structuring national identity using the power of the state; it is a process which aims at the unification of the people within the nation so that it remains politically stable and viable in the long run (Wikipedia, 2001). Welch Anderson(1998:67), rightly believes that nation building requires the inculcation of political loyalties to the system as a whole transcending the bounds of kinship, language and locale.

Odudu(2003:45) viewed nation building as the search for nationhood and a process of infusing national consciousness among the people and groups to develop or cultivate a sense of love for a given nation and to accept their commitment to the said nation . Thus, for a nation to be built, parochial or group loyalties must give way to national loyalties. As Samora Machel of Mozambique once declared “for the nation to live, the tribe must die (Green, 2008:39).

Nation building would not have ordinarily posed a problem if the people of the world know the original meaning of the word, which is a people as people having the same culture, language, common historical experience and inhabiting a geographically contiguous territory. The need for nation building, according to Dankwart Rustow, arises for two main reasons. First, the nation-states do not possess some or all the important characteristics or determinants of a nation. While some nation may not be territorially contiguous, some do not have common language. While some may not have a common history, some boundaries of nations do not coincide with the limits of national consciousness, for there may be found in some nation state ethnic minorities that do not feel the same nation allegiance like some other ethnic groups do (1987). As a result of the foregoing therefore, there is need to forge a sense of oneness, a national consciousness in these peoples and groups that found themselves living in a geographical space.

The second reason as Rustow explains is the desire to create a better life for the people through some policies including the development of strong institutions, labour, science and industries. According to Gabriel (2005:89) it is the process whereby people transfer their commitments and loyalty from smaller tribes, villages or petty principalities to the larger central political system. Almond James (1990:45), it involves the cultivation by people overtime of political attitudes, beliefs and values the development of political culture.

Many Africa States have not been able to integrate the plural societies with district ethnic, religious, linguistic, or other groups

and strata. The problem is not far from their process of creation. In the ex-colonial era, many group of people were arbitrarily sandwiched into territorial unit, which form a geographical entity called the state. Too many of the people of these states, there was no identification with states as symbol of a people, a political community. In fact, most of these groups became exposed to one another on the terminal colonial period as the colonial masters folded their flags (Thompson, 2003).

Efforts of African Leaders Towards Nation building in Africa

In discussing the historical Perspective of Nation building and challenges in Africa, attention will be focus on the efforts aimed at nation building and the challenges that mocked those efforts. In other to have a proper understanding of it, three countries are taken as case study in Africa e.g. Tanzania, Kenya and South Africa.

Tanzania: Since 1967, when Tanzania achieved their independence, efforts have been made to integrate the social cleavages for a strong nation. Some of the efforts so far are as follows: The Arusha Declaration of 1967 which was the ruling party's policy on socialism and self-reliance and essentially the country statement of African socialism. The economic policy of villagelization, collectivization and an attempts to prevent economic exploitation of Tanzania contributed to the unity and polarization because no group was favoured and all were to struggle together for the development (Bryceson, 2001).

National Language policy. Swahili language was introduced and made compulsory as official language. Swahili language was promoted in schools, government and media houses as official

language. Julius Nyerere even translated several of Shakespeare's plays and poems into Swahili language as an indigenous African language. It was part of national integration and nation building.(Harries,2987).

The education curriculum was also overhauled. The school curriculum was changed from the colonial orientation to that of post- colonial situation in Tanzania. The education system for instance was very vital and helped to promote a coherent national linguistic or ideological identity in Tanzania as part of nation building project (Cambell 2000:231).It was through the education system that swahili came to be the national language of the Tanzania people. The public schools curriculum was employed to stress more on Tanzania culture, history, tradition, norms and values and to inculcate students with a strong sense of national and Pan African identity(Lake,1996). The educational curriculum also emphasized so much on discipline as a prerequisite for nation building.

National Youth Service system was also introduced. After the completion of secondary school, graduates were required to serve two years in the national service which itself was designed to promote national unity and has since been revived to curb moral decay and instil a sense of patriotism (Meredith,1975). Many African countries of which Tanzania was also involved promoted obligatory military conscriptions and national service for secondary school and university students as a means of integrating their citizens. In Angola, for instance, all citizens over the age of 20 are required to serve 2 years in the military(Davidson, 2004). This has been the statutory since 1992. In Nigeria,

all University students have been required after graduation to join the" National Youth Service Corps" since 1973. The corps was designed to promote national unity by posting students to state other than their states of birth (Huntangton,2002).

Non Ethnic Census

The Nyerere administration embarked on collecting census data along non ethnic or religious after 1967. On the other hand, the university of Dare-salaam prohibited research about ethnicity(Horberger,1999).The government was not emphasizing much on ethnicity in public life. The environment did not underrate the power of the ethnic groups held but did successfully relegated them to private life.

Political Leadership and Ideologies

The philosophy of Julius Nyerere which was inspired by Pan-Africanist and socialist political philosophies downplayed the role of ethnic affiliation in public life instead emphasized a single Tanzania national identity(Donald, 2004:49). The Tangayika Africa National Union(TANU) was to fight against tribalism and any factors that hinder development of unity among Africans. The self –reliance and socialist system of Ujamaa was central feature of the nation building projects (Ngonyani,1994).

The Tanzania African National Union also have its policy of rotational presidency including the one of the Vice president. One will come from Zanziba and other from the mainland area in each election and a policy that also had the effect of encouraging religion balance(Philipson,1992). Furthermore, civil servant were posted beyond the home

religion and moved frequently to avoid the appearance of patronage.

Nation Building in Kenya

Kenya has the same natural case with Tanzania as observed by David Umukoro in his work, "The growth of Nation" that both countries have a similar geography and history but difference approaches to nation building policies since independence (David Umukolo, 2001). Abakan Andrew (2008:80) also noted that both countries experienced British colonial rule and inherited a common set of political administrative and economic institution. Kenya has over 70 ethnic groups and ethnicity played a significant force in politics both before after independence. Kikuyu is the most dominant ethnic group among them (Stubbs, 1999:12).

In Kenya, the former Presidents of independent Kenya favoured African Socialism in their party. The former Presidents of Kenya introduced Harambee system of funding raising in 1965 in Kenya, a feature that promoted a sense of national unity and hard work. Harambee, meaning "Let all pull together" is an indigenous tradition of self help, collective and cooperative participation of community for the growth of the nation (Woods, 1977). Although, the Kenya Ministry of Education made several attempts of nation building pronouncements in the 1960 but nothing or evidence within the school to show for it. Since election results disputed in 2007, government has embarked on national healing and integration process. A national "Cohension and Integration Commission" was set up to promote national unity and the development of economic infrastructure in Kenya. It was

set up to oversee one of the main integration projects called the Lamu Port, South Sudan Ethiopian Transport Corridor (LAPSSET) Project of 2012. (Mazrui, 1976).

This project focussed on the development of the once marginalised region of northern Kenya. Karocha Agbani points that the northern region of Kenya has historically been marginalized and left on the periphery of the Kenya national development projects. (2013:74). The on going LAPSETT projects seek to build infrastructure across the highly underdeveloped northern Kenya region including an oil pipe line, railways, roads and ports at the coastal cold town of Launce (Thomas, 2012)

South Africa

After the democratization in South Africa, various efforts were made by Nelson Mandela to bring unity to the fragmented South African society was the formation of the "Cape town Rainbow Native". The Rainbow Natives was the South Africa society constructed in the post colonial South Africa (Arnold, 2012). In the apartheid era, it was separate developmental policies in terms of racial and ethnic differences.

After the democratic transition, there was an amalgamation of various separate states in South Africa by Nelson Mandela. The African National Congress government under the leadership of Nelson Mandela encouraged reconciliation among the various tribes under the captioned "Rainbow Nation" (Shepherd, 1999)

The Rainbow nation symbolized the new South Africa, the nation constructed in the post apartheid era. Arch Bishop Desmond Tutu was also figured as one of those involved in the reconciliation and nation

building in South Africa through his appearance in a series television broadcast in which he spoke of the Rainbow people of God(Collins,1993).

The African National Congress (ANC) government and the Former President, Mandela encouraged the ritual celebration of the Rainbow Nation at “International Sports Events” such as the 1995 Rugby World Cup. Arts and Cultural event such as the 1997 South Africa music award were occasioned for celebrating the emergence of the Rainbow Nation. South Africa was complex, divided and heterogenous society with different languages, culture and religious beliefs(Carrol, 1998).

The education policy of South Africa was completely overhauled after the apartheid regime. The new education system sought to introduce new teaching methods in South Africa school with the goal to creating South Africa identity and transforming South Africa society to promote democracy”(Moyibi,1972). The South Africa School Act 1996 under ministry of education suppressed all forms of racism, segregation, sexism and intolerance. The education curriculum emphasized so much on discipline, language and religious policies among the students.

The Role of Sports in Nation Building

The South Africa government also talked about the unique position of sports in nation building hence they encouraged sports after the apartheid regime. The 1995 Rugby World Cup was held in South Africa just one after the country’s foremost democratic election. The players played under the banner of one team one nation and endorsed by President Nelson Mandela(Paul,1978). The sports became a

central project in nation building. Mandela involved sports as something that will evoke a feeling of self belonging creating social cohesion around the act of performing a sport. They argued that sports brought people together without seeing physically. Rugby was seen as a rich man’s sports reserved for the white people and Mandela encouraged sports for it. Despite all the effort towards nation building, contemporary South Africa is still divided economically and socially. Regardless of the lack of reliable data, there is widespread agreement that South Africa economic is still white dominated. For instance, 70% of the senior managers in the private sector are white(Paul,2014). On the other hand, recent racial slurs such as that by Penny Sparrow who referred to black people as monkey and comments by high court judge Mabel Johnson who suggested that rape is part of Africa culture, the prepedence of racial identities, the way the white can identify Africans (Williams,1998). Both the social manifestation, social differences and the reality of economic inequalities are obstacles to nation building.

Problems of Nation Building in Africa Creation of Artificial African Boundaries

The consequence of the Berlin West Africa Conference, 1884 – 1885, artificial creation indicated that this artificiality has created problems that bedevilled nation building in Africa today. Some of these boundaries acted across pre-existing ethnic groups, states and kingdoms. These have caused widespread social disruption and displacement. Today, some Ewe lived in Ghana, some in Togoland, some in Benin Republic. The Somali has shared among Ethiopia, Kenya and Somali. The Sanfo

are found in Mali, Cote d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso (Laiton, 2004). The examples are in multiples. The consequence of this situation is to include disputes that have plagued the relationship between some independent states such as those between Sudan and Uganda, between Somalia and Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia; Ghana and Togo, between Nigeria and Cameroon particularly over the Bakassi Peninsula (Adedeji, 1999).

There was also the factor of France's political and economic strong hold on her former colonies in particular the 1961 bilateral agreement between France and former colonies was to retain close military, economic and cultural ties (Adedeji, 1999). The aim of France was to inhibit the growth and stability of ECOWAS as a sub-region economic integration. This Franco-phone dichotomy was a divisive tendency that contributes to territorial disputes, border skirmishes, unguarded border posts, patrol smuggling, the menace of refugees and illegal aliens in Nigeria. The case of Cameroon was more illustrative than that of other Franco-phone states. It was our findings that because of the artificiality and arbitrary nature of these boundaries, each of the African states was made up of people of diverse cultural backgrounds, traditions of origin and language that pose the problem of nation building in most of African States (Bryceson, 2004).

Political Instability

Political Instability or Military rule: The frequent military interventions into politics in African states have affected nation building in Africa because an average military government is authoritarian. In the period between 1960 and 1993, there were over 60 coup d'états and not less than 20

full fledged civil wars in the continent (Deutsch, 2012). As at 1994, there were at least 12 internecine wars in Africa while there are 18 million internally displaced persons. This is not all. There have been several inter-state conflicts in the continent. There have been armed conflicts or armed clashes between Ghana and Togo, Somalia and Ethiopia, Morocco and Algeria, Benin and Nigeria, Cameroon and Nigeria, Kenya and Uganda and more (Huntington, 2015). This murderous proliferation of intra-state conflict has resulted in the death of millions, millions of refugees or displaced persons and millions more have been marginalised by repressive policies and practices. Reasonable economic activities cannot take place under these circumstances as described above. Investors generally prefer where there is peace and political stability. All the above issues are great obstacles to nation building in the African continent. It is difficult to discuss internal African problems without coming to face to face with external ones. Much of the political crises or armed conflicts have been externally motivated and funded. Events in the Congo, which culminated in the cool-blooded Patrice Lumumba, the overthrow of Kwame Nkrumah, Milton Obote and others were externally engineered (Buller, 2006). On the civil war in Angola, Mozambique, Somalia continuation of the proxy wars instigated and largely financed by the superpowers (Meredith, 2005). The end of the cold war cannot simultaneously heal the wounds inflicted in the fratricidal wars. Even the civil wars in Ethiopia, Eritrea and Somalia are at least in part carried over from the West Cold war conflicts. From the

cases cited, they are major problems facing nation building in Africa.

Leadership Problem and Corruption

On the 9th July 2011, the world celebrated the ushering of a nascent state, the Republic of South Sudan. Many commentators argued that “South Sudan” was destined to fail. It is fitting to recall former President of Kenya, Mzee Jomo Kenyatta’s take on Kenya independence as ‘Not Yet Uhuru’ loosely translated as Not Yet Independence, in 1963 (Ngonyani, 1994). Leadership problem is one of the major problems facing Africa in nation building. Many African leaders did not see themselves as servant to the people but as an opportunity of looting the treasury of the state. With this lack of direction, African elites found a vacuum in mismanaging the new republics. Poor governance and corruption becomes a common practice in Africa. The political elites turned blind eye to the rule of law and in lieu usurped the wealth of the nation. The Politicians felt the only entitlement for liberating their country from the hand of colonial masters runs from wealth and power accumulation, disrespect to institutionalism and daylight robbery of Africa wealth. For instance, in Nigeria, the military under General Ibrahim Babangida looted \$12.4 billion gulf war windfall of 1991 simply disappeared from the Central Bank of Nigeria (Philipson, 1992). According to Rapley, Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire, Daniel Arap MOI of Kenya, the junta that runs Nigeria all created kleptocracies that siphoned the resources from the crumbling infrastructures and instilled an ethos of corruption (Mazrui, 1976). Andrew also observed that Third World Dictators like Ferdinand Marcos of Phillippe and

Mobutu Sese Seko of the Congo were the ones who kept alive Swiss banking industries with confidential account (2013:78)

Every elites in the Africa becomes “thief of state” to paraphrase Sarah Andrew’s seminar work titled “Thieves of State” (Moyibi, 1972). Critical institution that could have united African States for nation building were struck by nepotism, ethnic allegiance, and incompetency in delivering services to African people. Finding employment in the public service is marred by favouritism. Instead of employing individuals on merits, the “fish big” wade through, a platoon of relatives and friends that they appoint public service jobs. These individuals most of whom have no credible qualifications and experiences are responsible for the poor service of the country, making the public service too deformed to be reformed (Paul, 2017). A basic and higher education that could have deepened the unity of Africa was crippled by lack of financial resources. It is also limited funds that have hindered the ministry of culture, Youth and Sport which could have provided bridge to the inter-ethnic animosities through annual cultural festivals and sports.

Religious Problems

Religious manipulations are some of the problems affecting nation building. There are two major dominant religious groups in Africa, (Christians and Muslims) and with some variants. There are others that do not belong to either of these two groups. The sharp divisions in the beliefs of people in these two groups have affected so many ways the issues of national unity. People think and act according to their religious principles

against the state. Loyalty is ultimately to their religion groups and not the centre (Williams,1998).In an attempt to establish firm grounds, the two religions usually clash due to their opposing doctrines. Attempts to interpret the various doctrines of the two dominant religions often end in religious riots. These riots usually claim many religious lives especially in the north where Islam is fully established. Religion crisis is a problem to nation building in Africa because people lost their lives, properties destroyed and others.

Neo-Colonialism

Neo- colonialism is the controlling influence of the formal colonial masters on their colonies after independence in all ramifications. The control involves economics, social and political aspects of the entire states. Such influence affects the ability and willingness of the states to fully develop their society at their own pace. Therefore, because of the influence of ex-colonial masters, most African states find it difficult to achieve any meaningful economic development and not been able to integrate the social cleavages abound in the society.

Problem of Ethnicity

Ethnic conflicts have afflicted many African countries before and after the achievement of independence. This indeed is a problem every African country should examine with view of coming up with permanent solution. David Laung points out that AU (Africa Union) encouraged and indirectly contributed to bloodshed in Africa by remaining silent when atrocities are committed in some countries in Africa in the name of non-interference in the internal affairs of individual countries.(2011)) In 1994 over 800,000

death occurred in Rwanda due to ethnic conflict (Campbell,2006).

The Africa Union may need to form special committee or force that will deal with human rights record of all Africa countries to avoid a situation whereby the human right are violated during ethnic tension and conflicts. Africa is a land of diverse culture with difference ethnic communities each with its own specific language or dialect(Lake,1996). It is therefore not easy for these groups to live together in harmony when they do not respect each other cultural values. This gives the leaders a big challenge of maintaining peace among the diverse ethnic communities.

The leaders need to know that peace can be maintained only when they apply the law equally among all the groups and when they distribute the available resources equally. David lamb observes that it is hard to explain Africa situation because of the fact that there is a continent where hundreds of thousand of people have been killed for other reason than they belong to the wrong party(1977). It is therefore recommended everything humanly possible need to be done to bring to an end the ethnic tensions and conflict in Africa. This may be realized where all of us endeavour to promote peace from whatever situation we find ourselves is an important element for social solidarity. Hall Johnson pointed out that regional ethnic conflicts or civil wars presented the African Union with many problems (2011).A major obstacle to development of nationhood is the diversity of ideologies and political argumentation of many ethnic groups. These varied positively as factors that contribute to the environment of the

entire nation if they have to be transformed into force of nation building.

Problem of Illiteracy

The majority of Africans are illiterates and most of them live in rural areas. This is great challenges for the growth of nation. Also most of Africans, especially those living in Villages did not have access to the mass media like televisions and newspapers, therefore, they are less aware of what is happening in the country and the world at large. Furthermore, they do not command civic education because of their low level of education. All these act as an obstacle for implementation of nation building in Africa since they are most easily tricked and they cannot make firm decisions or held leaders accountable or be aware of their rights and responsibilities.

Others challenges include, lack of transparency and accountability by the government officials, different ideologies of political parties, corruption and bribery during general elections. These are obstacle to nation building in Africa.

Recommendations:

The way forward for Africa can be as

1. Faithful implementation of the Fundamental objective Principles of state policy as enshrined in Nigeria constitution.
2. Faithful obedience to the duties, obligations and rights of citizenship.
3. Adoption of a national ideology where the interest of the masses are given priority rather those of the few. This involves the adoption of economic policies that guarantee a certain level of security to the masses
4. Distribution of national resources in a fair, just and equitable manner
5. The elimination of discrimination, statism and religious fanaticism.

6. Abandonment of the retrogressive method of implementing the federal character principles
7. Behaviour modification by African leaders. Leaders should see public office as opportunity to serve but not to steal. We should collectively dishonour ill-gotten wealth and reject such people as leaders.
8. Adoption of multiparty system that provides the people alternatives choice of candidates.

Conclusion

One may conclude that nation building in Africa involves a lot of processes. It is not only peculiar to Africa alone but the whole world. The paper defined what is a nation and nation building? It also looked at reasons of nation building. The papers also take three countries in Africa as case studies e.g Tanzania, Kenya and South Africa. The papers examined various efforts made by African leaders to reach nationhood and problems confronting them including recommendations.

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