

The Challenges of National Security and Nation Building in Nigeria

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Abstract: National security is a sine qua non for political stability and socio-economic development of building any nation. There are various factors that can enhance or destabilize the security building process of a nation at any given period of time. However, in Nigeria the economies are in abysmal state. The worsening economic conditions have been generating a mix of domestic social and political tension. Normally citizens expect their governments to provide them with political stability and socio-economic security; employment, healthcare and shelter, the non-fulfilment of which breeds discontent and social unrest or even serious political challenge. Unfortunately, Nigeria is today plagued with social disorder, insecurity, poverty, illiteracy, balance of payment deficit, poor health services, ethnic and religious conflicts, corruption, crime and criminality and political crises. All these mean that we are very insecure in terms of human well-being. In this state of the nation, nation building is elusive like a mirage! This research adopted both descriptive and analytical methods, with the aid of library and internet materials which forms part of a secondary source. Using Maslow's theory of hierarchy of needs to analyze that to proffer solution to the challenges of national security and nation building in the country, the leadership must become self aware, particularly of those items on development menu that constitute the most pressing legitimate needs of the people .

Keywords: National Security, Nation Building, Development, Good Governance, Democracy.

I. INTRODUCTION

In real terms and the life span of nation states, Nigeria is historically a youth. Haltingly there have been fits and starts with several crises rocking our nation's unity to its foundations. Some of these are noteworthy; the state of emergency declared in the old western region in the early 1960s, the civil war of 1967-1970, the imbroglio over June 12 1993 elections annulment, the post election violence of 2011 and the present day Boko Haram insurgency. What all these stand for is a reminder of how the failures in national security have impeded our efforts in nation building.

Regrettably, we seem not to have recognized that the negative use of ethnicity can hinder development, national security, nation building, enforcement of the rule of law, as well as the overall conduct and management of national affairs. There is ethno-religious induced restiveness, replete with growing violence in the nation. It must be pointed out that this restiveness continues to take its roots because some choose to exploit them for political and material gains. Thus, the real culprit in managing inter-ethnic relations is the elite manipulation of ethnicity and religion. The failure to define and agree on national rules on which to base our political and economic processes is also a contributing factor [Gambari 2009]. The composition of Nigeria as a multi-ethnic and multi-religious nation is a security challenge within the country's political environment. There are scholars who hold the view that ethnic rivalry and distrust are a consequence of colonial strategy of divide and rule, a situation that persists as a strategy for politicians for the mobilization of political support and votes during elections. Still, there are those who think that historically, African societies have been characterized by tribal cleavages even before the colonizers set foot on the continent.

Consequently, the 2008 Uwaig Electoral Reforms Report noted that the "History of Nigeria's elections showed a progressive degeneration of outcomes" with the 2007 elections being the worst since the first elections of 1922. The report also noted that politicians are becoming more desperate and daring in taking and retaining power, more reckless and greedy in their use and abuse of power, and more intolerant of the opposition, criticism and efforts at replacing them.

Many of the thugs the politicians armed and drugged for use to either grab or retain power are those who formed the nucleus of militants in the Niger Delta, Ombatse in Nasarawa and the increased strengths of armed robbers and kidnappers on our highways are also products of the same source. While the terrorist activities of the Boko Haram religious sect has taken its toll on our national security and nation building through unwanted attention from the international community, with friends and detractors alike expressing their concerns about the country's human right credentials and especially its policies towards insecurity in the nation. The most prominent among the causes are; unemployment of youths, corruption, absence of good governance and the lack of development in the northern region.

The task of nation building and national security is so difficult in Nigeria, and the fruits are patchy despite our enormous human and natural resources. This is rooted in three critical areas:

- 1) Threats and challenges posed by the environment for national security and nation building
- 2) The quality of leadership
- 3) The fragility of political and development institutions [Gambari 2009].

Objective of the Study

The objective of the study is to identify why the task of national security and nation building has been so difficult in Nigeria, in spite of the fact that the nation is blessed with abundant human and natural resources and recommend ways on how to tackle the challenges there in.

Statement of the Problem

National security and nation building in Nigeria is fraught with various problems, ranging from ethnic chauvinism to social class interests. This has constituted a clog in the wheel of socio-political and economic development of the country. The purpose of this paper is to proffer solutions to the challenges facing national security and nation building in Nigeria.

Methodology

This research study essentially made use of secondary materials for the analysis. Data are sourced from library and internet. The paper is divided into five sections; the introduction is the first section, section two is the conceptual clarification, theoretical framework occupies the third section, section four is the challenges of national security and nation building in Nigeria and section five is the conclusion and recommendations.

II. CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

A. National security

National security is the requirement to maintain the survival of the state through the use of economic power, diplomacy, power projection and political power. The tranquillity and well being of a society are necessary components of national security. According to professor Al-Mashal, national security should address "the physical, social and psychological quality of life of a society and its members both in domestic setting and within the larger regional and global system". The Nigerian 1999 constitution contain many social-economic and political rights which if fully implemented would go a long way towards ensuring national security and nation building [Oshio 2009].

Measures taken to ensure national security include:

- 1) Using diplomacy to rally allies and isolate threats
- 2) Marshalling economic power to facilitate compel cooperation
- 3) Implementing civil defence and emergency preparedness measures (including anti-terrorism legislation)
- 4) Maintaining effective armed forces
- 5) Ensuring the resilience and redundancy of critical infrastructure
- 6) Using counter-intelligence services or secret police to protect the nation from internal threats (Wikipedia 2013).

B. Nation Building

Nation building refers to the processes of constructing or structuring a national identity using the power of the state. This process aims at the unification of the people within the state so that it remains politically stable and viable in the long run. Nation building can involve the use of propaganda or major infrastructure development to foster social harmony and economic growth [Wikipedia 2013].

It is defined as the development of behaviours, values, languages, institutions and physical structures that elucidate history and culture, concretize and protect the present, and ensuring the future identity and independence of the nation [Deutsch, Karl W and Williams Foltz (Eds), 1963].

Furthermore, an important element of nationhood and nation building especially for a complex and diverse country such as Nigeria is the existence of unifying national values and symbols that bring together diverse people under a single umbrella of a national identity, giving these different people a good reason to substitute broad based national identities for primordial loyalties and identities. This nation building challenge becomes more crucial when one considers that perhaps a key factor in state failure is when citizens gradually stop identifying with that state and what it stands for and they increasingly emphasize on how very different they are from one another, as manifestations of a retreat to primordial loyalties of tribe, ethnicity, religion and region rather than a broader national identity.

III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This research study is situated within the theoretical framework of “Abraham Maslow Hierarchy of Needs”. The most famous contribution to knowledge by Maslow [1908-1970] an American psychologist was his famous Maslow’s hierarchy of needs. He identified food, water, and shelter as some of the most pressing psychological needs for human survival. An important feature of Maslow’s theory though is the acknowledgement of the complex parallel processes driving different motivations from different levels and that individual’s physical and safety needs take precedence in that order.

In development parlance, these critical needs can be broadly classified as follows: food and water, physical infrastructure, social infrastructure and security. Do the layers of governments in Nigeria know this? Even if they do, their actions suggest otherwise or at the minimum that they do not know the efficient way to allocate available resources and mobilize the public towards accomplishing national security and nation building. Nigeria being a chiefly natural resource based economy needs to use its wealth while it lasts to develop what would guarantee an enduring platform for its people to in the short term, meet their most pressing and legitimate needs such as food, water, shelter (housing) and job availability, and in the long run equip them to embrace a knowledge driven economy that can make national security and nation building sustainable in the nation.

IV. THE CHALLENGES OF NATIONAL SECURITY AND NATION BUILDING IN NIGERIA

In our quest for nation building and having a good national security, we have recorded some outstanding successes; such as keeping the country together in the face of many challenges. But these challenges continue to keep us from achieving our full potentials.

Nigeria is faced with various challenges on her national security and nation building, but some of the core challenges are highlighted and discussed below:

- 1) The challenge from our history
- 2) The challenge of socio-economic inequalities
- 3) The challenge of building institutions for democracy and development; and
- 4) The challenge of leadership (Gambari 2009).

The challenge of history

The historical legacies of colonial rule created some challenges for national security and nation building in Nigeria. Colonial rule divided the nation into North and South with different land tenure system, local government administration, educational system, security system and judicial system.

During the period of the decolonization struggle, Nigerian nationalists from different regions fought each other as much as they fought the British colonialists. From the historical legacy therefore, regionalism has been a major challenge to nation building which has also impacted national security in the country. This division has been a source of domestic tension and undermined our efforts at creating a common nationhood [Gambari, 2009].

The challenge of socio-economic inequality

In Nigeria not only are many of the citizens denied basic rights such as the right to education, security and health, there is also serious variation in the enjoyment of these rights across the country. If we take the level of immunization of children against dangerous childhood diseases, it will be noted that the South-east has 44.6%, the North-west has 3.7% and North-east 3.6%. Education and poverty levels are also important dimensions of inequalities across Nigeria, with North-west having only 5% while South-east has 39%. High levels of socio-economic inequalities mean that Nigerians live different lives in different parts of the country [Gambari 2009]. Even in those parts of the country that are relatively better off, the level of social provision and protection is still very low by world standards.

As a consequence, a largely marginalized citizenry, increasingly crippled by poverty and the lack of basic needs can hardly be expected to play a proper role in nation building.

The challenge of building institutions for democracy and development

The challenge of building institutions is one of the greatest challenges of national security and nation building. Whether nations are able to manage their political and social disputes peacefully without lapsing into conflict, or sustain economic growth without creating huge inequalities critically depend on the quality of the relevant national institutions. In this regard, Nigeria need to create and strengthen institutions that would help to achieve the national goal of democratic governance and sustainable development; these include:

- 1) Institutions for fostering public integrity: Institutions such as courts, ICPC and EFCC are created to enforce certain rules and maintain values that reject the abusive of public position for private gain.
- 2) Institutions for public service delivery: The civil service is the main instrument responsible for public service delivery. The civil service must carry out its traditional responsibilities of supporting good policies made by government; facilitate and regulate the private sector; and providing managerial leadership for operating public service enterprise. The civil service must maintain its neutrality and not meddle in politics.
- 3) The judicial institution: The judiciary is an important institution in any democratic setting. The judiciary arbitrates disputes between the various levels of government, between government and citizens, between citizens and also among private sector agents. In recent times, the Supreme Court has inspired much public confidence and respect because of the quality of its judgment, especially in some politically sensitive cases.

The leadership challenge

Leadership is an important factor in maintaining a firm national security and building a nation. The standards for recruitment and the performance of our individual leaders over the years have left much to be desired. Nigeria does not need leaders who see themselves as champion of only some sections of its population. As citizens of this country, we do not need leaders who do not understand the economic and political problems of this nation, not to talk of finding solutions to them. We do not need leaders who place themselves above the constitution and the laws of the country, but leaders who lead by upholding and respecting the law. We do not need leaders who have no sense of tomorrow, other than that of their private accounts.

Unless the leadership of this nation is driven with ability, integrity, commitment and vision, it cannot succeed at nation building and having a strong national security.

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The paper has revealed the challenges inherent national security and nation building in Nigeria. It has revealed that security holds that a people centered view of security is necessary at all levels, be it national, regional or global. The new concept expanded the scope of global security to include threats to economic, food, health, environment, personal, community and political interests. The research study has equally shown that it is the sole responsibility of the government to guarantee the security of its citizens and also as a matter of fact, it is this responsibility that gives any government its legitimacy. The paper opined that an environment has been created for unnecessary and unhealthy rivalry, particularly among the three major ethnic groups, while the country is left suffering from serious socio-economic problems. More recently, religion has become a major issue, leading to mutual condemnation. There is deep suspicion, fears and anxiety in the relationship between Muslims and Christians, leading to violence in the North. As a result of the various ethno-religious conflicts, people have been killed, injured and displaced, properties destroyed, businesses closed and investors scared away, and communities are split along ethno-religious lines.

Furthermore, the paper recommends that; there is the urgent need for good democratic process, people centered governance, a transparent and accountable leadership, effective and efficient law enforcement institutions, partnership with neighbouring countries and the international community to prevent porous borders. Above all, the government needs a social contract with its citizens as a basis for demanding their loyalty and support.

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