

Abstract

Nation-building, a central theme of nationalism, has been viewed by politicians, administrators and activists as highly desirable, if not an imperative, goal over the last two centuries. At times, nation-building was believed to be an easy and automatic process, following universal patterns which originated in the West.

Created at the beginning of the 1920's by the British, Nigeria was a state within which both British administrators and indigeneous Nigerian rulers expressed their desire to create a "Nigerian nation "out of the new state's heterogeneous population, along the lines of Western 'model'. The heterogeneous character of the country's population, however, has constituted a challenge to the idea of homogenisation, since the division of Nigerian Society, that is to say the Moslem dominated Hausa-Fulani and Kanuri-Tiv communities, the Oduduwa descendant of the Western part (Yoruba) and the Christian dominated East region (Ibo) nationality has been viewed as incompatible with national unity and has thus weakened social and political cohesion. The army, the spearhead of modernisation by technological necessity, was expected to function as a model-institution producing loyal ,disciplined, receptive and industrious subjects. Loyalty to the army, the state and the nation was to be an integral part of individuals' behaviour.

The mode of thinking behind this study is the proposition that if, in a giving state, official nation-building intentions determine actual nation-building policies, the nation achieved is then a direct effect of these policies. The aim of this study is to probe whether the actual policies connected with selected events, were guided by the actors' officially declared intentions of creating a nation in Nigeria. And to what extent corruption has played a role in the process of nation-building and the development of a viable civil society in Nigeria.

This study examines the process of nation-building by describing the intentions and assumptions of nation-building and the ways in which corruption has contributed to development or underdevelopment in the society. It analyses Nigeria's economic and socio-political failures vis-à-vis the generic problem of underdevelopment and the pervasive nature of corruption. The study also discusses and uses aspects of previous theory building in formulating an explicit assumption: the assumption that corruption in Nigeria leads to the failure of nation-building, underdevelopment and that the neo-patrimonial nature of society is at the root of endemic and systemic corruption in Nigeria.

The problem of corruption cannot be understood without considering the context in which it occurs. Consequently, the examination of corruption in this study is in the context of the legitimacy of the state, the patterns of political power and the engagement of civil society. This calls for a reflection on the role and place of the state and its apparatus in economic and socio-political development of the country. To capture the central role played by the state in the economic and political life of the nation, the study evaluates state practices and based on concrete data, explains the mechanisms for the painful paradox of Nigeria's 'self-imposed poverty.'

Finally, the study ends not only with a conclusion and a re-interpretation of the use of the military, which highlights the incongruity between the intentions and the assumptions of nation-building and specific nation-building policies but also with a consideration of transforming the system into a permanent stable constitutional democracy of empowerment. Only a stable democracy of empowerment define a workable political conception for the fulfilment of development in all its facets.

Keywords: State-making, nation-making, civil society, corruption, military, coups, nationalism, African unity, democracy, Nigeria, Great Britain, Moslems, Christians, neo-patrimonialism, predation, state, development, underdevelopment, Germany, Dictatorship, Elections.