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Defining Nigeria's Nationhood at 100 Years: The Viewpoint of Management

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Abstract

Nigeria that is described as the giant of Africa is still struggling at one hundred (100) years of age to be among the developed countries of the world. Most nations that obtained independence at about the same time as Nigeria had made tremendous studies towards technological development and industrialization. What then are the issues responsible for Nigeria's inability to become developed? These are the issues discussed in the paper.

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Introduction

Demographically, Nigeria with an estimated population of about 177,096,000 in the year 2013 is a real giant in Africa. The closest countries to Nigeria in terms of population are Ethiopia (86,614,000) and Egypt (84,605,000). The population of Nigeria is more than that of Ethiopia and Egypt put together. However, in terms of industrialization, economic and technological growth, and development, Nigeria can perhaps be regarded as a midget. The reason is that countries like South Africa with an estimated population of 52,982,000 is far more developed and independent than Nigeria. The question therefore is why is a country like Nigeria with vast natural resources, the 10th largest producer of oil and 1st in Africa and also the 9th gas-producing country in the world, having a total annual production capacity of natural gas of 92,000,000 m^3 (Energy voice, 2014) is not one of the developed nations?

According to Wikipedia (2014), Nigeria's proven oil reserves are estimated by the United States Energy Information Administration (EIA) at between 16 and 22 billion barrels. However, other sources claim there could be as much as 35.3 billion barrels. These barrels of oil translate to a lot of financial comfort for Nigeria as a nation. However this financial independence is not enjoyed by the majority of Nigerians.

Oil and gas are the major sources of revenue for Nigeria. To Ibekwe (2013), despite the efforts to diversify the economy and attract investors, Nigeria is still ranked among the stragglers in the Global Competitive Index (GCI) of 2013 by the World Economic Forum. According to the report, Nigeria dropped five places from the last rating of 115th to 120th position among the 148 countries that were profiled. The GCI measures how, institutions, policies, and other factors determine the level of productivity of a country. The scores are calculated by drawing together the twelve (12) pillars of competitiveness such as institutions, infrastructure, macroeconomic environment, health and primary education, higher education and training, goods market efficiency, labour market efficiency, financial market development, technological readiness, market size, business sophistication, and innovation.

In the Human Development Index (HDI) (2013) report Nigeria is related 153 position out of 164 countries listed in the whole world. Nigeria as a nation and the supposed giant of Africa is rated lower than other African (mostly ravaged by war) countries like Libya, Gabon, Egypt, the Republic of Congo, Kenya, Angola, Tanzania, and even Cameroon our next-door neighbour.

Nigeria is an Enigma. She is an enigma because it is difficult to understand why a country that is ranked among the first 10 countries of the world in oil and gas production is rated among the least countries of the world is 120 and 153 respectively in terms of GCI and HDI ratings. The conclusion that can be drawn therefore is that Nigeria is facing some managerial issues, challenges, and problems.

A Brief History of Nigeria and Leadership Struggle

There is no nation without a history. The history of a nation does not end only with the recorded past accounts, however, the most recent and contemporary topical issues are also histories (Otoghagua, 2007).

The story of the country today known as Nigeria started in the 16th century when Portuguese and Spanish explorers (the first Europeans) began to trade in the seaports they named Lagos and also Calabar. Trading was the primary reason why Europeans came to Africa in general and Nigeria in particular. Before they came, the people were already trading for centuries with traders from northern Africa. The European traders were interested in pepper, Ivory, and later slaves. The African slave trade was already in existence because traditionally people captured in wars were made slaves. The slaves were returned to the conquerors' territory and worked on farms.

The slave trade business was later joined by Britain and France. This thus marks the beginning of the presence of the British Empire in Nigeria. However, in 1807 Great Britain and the United States of America, due to rising anti-slavery sentiments, abolished the slave trade. The British government through her influence over companies that were trading in West Africa, like the Royal Niger Company consolidated her hold over the area of modern-day Nigeria. In 1885, the British claim to a West African sphere of influence received recognition from other European nations. With the British dominance in West Africa, it was no surprise that in 1901. Nigeria formally became a British protectorate (Wikipedia, 2014).

Nigeria as a name was adopted in 1898 to designate the British protectorates on the River Niger. The name was given by Flora Shaw who later became the wife of Lord Lugard. Nigeria is an amalgam of empires, ancient kingdoms, and caliphates. With a long history of organized administrative societies. Britain perhaps became dominant in the West African region and by implication in Nigeria as a result of the partitioning or parceling of the territories in Africa. As observed, several European countries were trading in Africa, and with the abolition of the slave trade which coincided with the Industrial Revolution in Europe, there was a territorial scramble for raw materials which Africa had in abundance.

According to Egbo (2013), the greatest threat to effective colonization of Africa was not the resistance of Africans parse, but the uncoordinated nature of their approach. Thus, in 1884, the German chancellor Otto Von Bismarck convened a meeting of all the European powers that had interest in Africa. The purpose of the meeting was to ensure a peaceful partition of the African continent which it succeeded in doing. The amalgamation of 1914 saw both the southern and northern protectorates and the colony of Lagos coming together as Nigeria. Sir Frederick Lugard (1858-1945) was the first Governor General of Nigeria between 1914 to 1919. He was succeeded by Sir Hugh Clifford (1866-1941) who reigned from 1919-1925. Other governors of Nigeria and their periods of administration are:

- Sir Graeme Thomson (1877-1933). Ruled between 1925 and 1931.
- Sir Donald Cameron (1872-1948). Ruled between 1931 and 1935.
- Sir Bernard Bourdillon (1883-1948). Ruled between 1935 and 1943.
- Sir Arthur Richards (1885-1978). Ruled between 1943 and 1948.
- Sir John Stuart Macpherson (1898-1971). Ruled between 1948 and 1955.
- Sir James Wilson Robertson (1899-1983). Ruled between 1955 and 1960.

Thus, Nigeria had eight (8) governor-generals before independence in 1960 which was the beginning of the First Republic. However, it should be noted that Sir Abubakar Tafawa

Balewa was the prime minister from 1960 to 1966. Nnamdi Azikiwe (1904-1996) was the maiden governor-general from 1960 to 1963 after Nigeria gained political independence in 1960 and became a republic in 1963. He was later president from 1963 to 1966.

The struggle for political independence in Nigeria was brought about as a result of agitation by Nigerians who had observed that the British government was exploiting the resources of the country without making any serious efforts towards developing and industrializing the country. The continuous agitation led to the formation of political parties which were along ethnic lines and thus laid the foundation for ethnocentrism and ethnicity in Nigeria today. For instance, the Nigerian People's Congress (NPC) was dominated by the Hausas/Northerners (who were predominantly Muslims). The National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC) was dominated by the Igbos (who were predominantly Christians), while the Action Group (AG) was dominated by the Yorubas who are both Christians and Muslims.

With the struggle for independence over, the seed of discord that was sowed in 1914 when Nigeria was formed and later fueled by the way and manner political parties were organized reared its ugly head. The dissatisfaction, disequilibrium and perceived corruption of the political leaders led to the first military coup in 1966. Thus, the beginning of managerial and leadership challenges that have bedeviled the country since independence.

Between 1966 (the end of the first Republic) and 1979 when the next civilian dispensation was experienced in Nigeria, several military coups brought in four (4) different heads of state. They are:

- Major-General Johnson Aguiyi Ironsi (16th January, 1966-12th July, 1966).
- General Yakubu Gowon (1966-1975).
- General Murtala Mohammed (1975-1976) and
- Major-General Olusegun Obasanjo (1976-1979).

The first coup of 1966 led to the death of Prime Minister Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, Premier Ahmadu Bello of the Northern Region, and Premier Ladoke Akintola of the Western Region. The coup which was led by Majors Ifeajuna and Nzeogwu was believed to be ethnically motivated. This further brought to the fore the growing dividing line of ethnic sentiments.

After about 13 years, Nigerians and indeed the world were tired of military rule in Nigeria, adding to the fact that between 1967 and 1970 there was a civil war. The war was orchestrated by the easterners (Biafrans) led by Lt. Colonel Emeka Ojukwu. By 1979, Alhaji Shehu Shagari was elected president and was deposed by another military coup in 1983. 1979 marked the beginning of the 2nd Republic which lasted until 1993.

Alhaji Shehu Shagari was succeeded by Major-General Muhammadu Buhari who ruled between 1983 till 1985. He was overthrown by General Ibrahim Babangida who stayed in office until 1993 when he was forced to resign after the uproar that followed his annulment of the June 12 1993 election won by Chief M. K. O. Abiola. The interregnum following the exit of Babangida brought in chief Ernest Shonekan on August 26th, 1993 (the 3rd Republic). By 17th November 1993, Shonekan was deposed by General Sani Abacha. His reign marked the beginning of another period of military rule (1993-1999).

General Abacha died in office in 1998 and was succeeded by General Abdusalami Abubakar who resigned in 1999 and handed over power to a democratically elected president.

Nigeria's 4th Republic started in 1999 with the election of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, who by 1979 as the military head of state handed power over to a civilian government. Obasanjo governed until 2007 when Alhaji Umaru Musa Yar'Adua was elected president. Unfortunately, by 5th May 2010 he died while still in office. Dr. Goodluck Jonathan the then Vice President was sworn in as president. Becoming Nigeria's 14th Head of State.

This historical synopsis is directed at the leadership tussle because Nigeria as a nation is facing the challenges she is experiencing today due to leadership failure.

The Concept of Nation and Nationhood

A nation can be described as a geographical entity that is in control of her affairs, be it economic, political, religious and cultural issues. According to Hornby (2000), a nation is a country considered as a group of people with the same language, culture and history, who lives in a particular area under one government. A nation state therefore is a group of people with the same cultural belief or language who have formed an independent country.

The characteristics of nations around the world today is not in consonance with Hornby's dictionary definition of a nation having the same language. However, nations are known to be free and independent in deciding their affairs. And citizenship of a nation is about the sense of nationhood. Thus, the sense of patriotism of members of a nation is what makes for nationhood.

Nation states or countries in today's parlance a relatively recent creations as the history of the human race focused on empires, Kingdoms (larger entities), tribes, villages, and communities (which are smaller and more cohesive). As the world evolved and things started changing, empires, kingdoms, and tribes metamorphosed into what are regarded as nations today in the name of being independent. Thus, a nation is described as a country seen as an organized political community controlled by a government. It is believed there are about 200 nations in the world. All of these nations may not share the attributes of a nation since in every nation there are minority groups that feel less loyalty or allegiance to that nation than the majority of the citizens. This could be as a result of not being treated fairly or they do not wish to be part of that nation. This scenario can be found in the Nigerian nation. It is such opinions that have led to the disintegration of countries like Yugoslavia, the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, Korea, Sudan, etc. Hence, for Nigeria not to disintegrate like these nations, there is a need for a shift in paradigm in the attitude of both the leaders and the followers.

Nigeria 100 Years' of Nationhood

Nigeria is a political mistake. This view is shared by some leaders and the led (followers). For those who share this view, Nigeria is seen as Lord Lugard's colossal error sponsored by the British government. Their reason is that Nigerians were not consulted before they were brought together as a nation. This is why most Nigerians see themselves in terms of their ethnic affiliation rather than as one nation.

The amalgamation of 1914, which was celebrated by the Nigerian government as centenary of Nigeria's existence, brought together the colony of Lagos and the protectorates of the north and south. This political surgical operation was performed in the interest of the British colonial masters without any recourse to the feelings of the empires, the caliphates, the kingdoms, or the tribes that existed in these geographical areas. It was perhaps done to continue to maintain political hegemony over Nigeria. Hence Nigeria is regarded as an artificial creation necessitated by the economic, political and administrative needs of the British government as at then and even up till now. This might be the reason why Nigeria is in a league of very few nations in the Commonwealth of Nations that is still in search of true independence, federalism, and nationhood after 100 years of existence. This view point of negativism of Lord Lugard's intention in the creation of Nigeria is derived from the Africanists school of thought that believes that nothing good came out of colonialism (*Chigbo,* 2001).

There are however people who do not share the Africanists' point of view, who believe that all the good things that have happened to Africa and in Africa is as a result of colonialism. This group is regarded as the Apologists. In line with the apologists view, Lord Lugard's intentions for Nigeria was a noble one, born out of the desire to create a nation that will one day become one of the developed nations of the world based on her available natural resources.

Nigeria will be unrecognizable to Lugard today if he was still alive for many reasons. To start with the negative manifestation of indirect rule or divide-and-rule politics he bequeathed to us and the increased agitation for the restructuring of the Nigerian state that has led to the present National Conference at Abuja, to forge a way forward would most likely leave him bewildered. One hundred (100) years after the amalgamation of 1914, the then-beautiful country founded by Lord Lugard has become the subject of endless ridicule at local (national) continental, and international levels. Why? Because Nigeria is one of the most corrupt countries in the world. She is also notorious for terrorism, kidnapping, inept leadership, religious and political intolerance, bad governance, and most recently **Open Letters by the Past President on the State of Affairs in the Country** (*Orovwuje*, 2014).

The problem of Nigeria is leadership failure which can be traced to the pre-independence era. According to Okoye (2014), the departing British imperialists sowed the seed of imposition of leaders in Nigeria. They clandestinely assisted Alhaji Tafawa Balewa to become our Prime Minister in 1960 for selfish reasons. Belewas government was toppled by the military (soldier)… Nigeria has suffered under military dictatorship for a long time. The soldiers had always interrupted our democratic governance in the past and they have contributed to our national woes largely by encouraging corruption.

Nigeria at 100 years of existence doesn't seem to have much to show by way of development. The early years of Nigeria's history seems to be better than today. To summarize Nigeria's early history, one will say that the infrastructures were working, corruption was at its barest minimum, there was responsive and responsible leadership no kidnapping, no terrorism, and neighbours trusted and cared for one another. The reverse is the case today after 100 years. Agriculture was well practiced to the extent that **Malaysia got her first palm seedlings from Nigeria. Today, Malaysia is one of the greatest producers of palm oil in the world while Nigeria is nowhere. India nationals used to come to Nigeria to make a living, however, Nigerians who can afford it go to India today, for medical care.**

According to Adeleye (2014), M. T. Mbu, the youngest cabinet minister in the 1950s stated "We did our best in the management of resources. But what do we have today. Why are we short of electricity? Why are roads bad? Why are things so bad with all the money we have?" these are questions that all patriotic Nigerians should be asking. Perhaps the answer lies in the lack of probity in our leaders and the absence of accountability by public officers. According to M. T. Mbu, 'probity' is meant for public office holders and not immunity. Immunity has led to a lot of financial recklessness by our public officeholders. Over the years, Nigerian leaders have perfected the act of squandering and looting public funds while in office and cannot be held accountable in the name of immunity.

According to Professor Jerry Gana in Adeleye (2014), we are a people who have lost our values; we have plenty of religious people, but no righteousness; plenty of piety but no holiness; plenty of leaders and leadership but no vision. It looks like at 100 years Nigeria is still a toddler who is to be perpetually fed; a crawler amid many developing nations. To build a nation that all Nigerians will be proud of, we need to imbibe and exhibit public integrity in the handling of finance; ethics and national principles that enable us to speak and stand for the truth; responsibility in the performance of duties; and respect for the rule of law. No one should be above the law (*Afianmagbon*, 2013).

Management Issues / Challenges in Nigeria

Management simply defined is the act of harnessing financial material and human resources to achieve stated goals and objectives. No organization can achieve its goals without efficient management of scarce resources. Individuals who own and run the affairs of his/her organization are aware of the important role managerial skills play in achieving the objectives for which the organization is established. An organization is a group of individuals coming together to achieve stated goals. If this definition is true, Nigeria can be said to be an

organization. As such, the principles guiding the management of an organization must be borne in mind. Some of such principles are human or humanitarian, sagacious or prudential, and executive leadership…

Amongst the principles of management, the principle of prudence is the one that every leader should bear in mind. Prudential principles entails being sensible and careful when making judgments and decisions so as to avoid unnecessary risks, especially as it affects finance. This is why Paul Mort (1946) described it as springing from the head instead of the heart (*Afianmagbon*, 2011).

The greatest managerial challenge that Nigerian leaders have is the absence of prudential principle in their managerial routines. Nigerian leaders lack prudence in their actions. The disregard for prudence is the cause of indiscipline and corruption in the handling of resources. When a leader is prudent he ensures that financial resources are judiciously utilized. According to Alhaji Bashir Tofa, a former presidential candidate in Adeleye (2014), the period between 2000 and till date has witnessed unprecedented stealing and siphoning of the nation's treasury by those at the helm of affairs. The hue and cry over corrupt practices in Nigeria shows how deeply enshrined corruption has become in the country. All other problems and challenges facing Nigeria as a nation can be traced back to the absence of prudence in the handling of public funds.

The Way Forward

Virtually every Nigerian can be corrupted given the chance and if the price is right. This is because our mindset is such that we are all waiting for an opportunity to get our share of the "national cake". Being caught embezzling public funds is no longer regard as a big deal in Nigeria. It has gotten to the extent that if a man occupies an office in which there is an opportunity to pilfer funds and he turns it down, such a man is regarded by his family and friends as stupid.

Given the above, there is a need for reorientation at all levels. Such a reorientation should be in the form of rewarding honesty as Nigerians have gone beyond being merely told that corruption is a vice that should be avoided.

Leadership by example will also go a long way to put a stop to corruption and move Nigeria forward. The unfortunate situation we find ourselves in which our leaders are more interested in how much they can make while they are in leadership positions send wrong signals to Nigerians who are aspiring to such positions. The message being sent is to do the same or more when it gets to your turn.

Nigerian leaders need to be prudent in the handling of resources. As earlier mentioned, prudential principle is one of the principles of management that should be embraced by those in managerial or administrative positions.

Conclusion

A fool at forty (40) is said to be a fool forever. May this never be the case of Nigeria who at one hundred years (100) old and not even 40 years old, is still grappling with developmental challenges and leadership ineptitude.

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