

Nigeria Stoking the Wattage of Nationhood



Most great nations and societies have explicitly codified what are broadly understood as civic theologies.

By Ademola Araoye

President Muhammadu Buhari's recent lamentation over the struggles for ascendancy by different factions of those who perceive themselves as owners of Nigeria is indeed not a completely false narrative. The struggle for the full appropriation of critical spaces: social, economic, cultural, spiritual, political, by diverse social protagonists and antagonistic ideologies is a universal truism; in spite of the paradoxes implicit in this sudden acknowledgement of an open struggle for partisan hegemony, in which the President had prominently participated and is still perceived in many quarters as a major player. These confrontations reflect the lack of an articulated consensual essence of the Nigeria state-nation space. The struggle for the appropriation of every such space:

ideo-political, religious, economic, cultural, class and even on racial and ethnic lines, however remains the permanent motif of history.

In the 1920s, in the search for a universalistic vision and mission class struggle raged all about Europe. Conceptions of the struggle founded on Marxist theory and philosophy dominated not only the narratives around economic, but also the social and political development. Experts note that for Marxists, the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles. History is the unending dynamic of the sharp interaction of the oppressor and oppressed in constant opposition to each other. The struggle is sometimes hidden and sometimes open. The challenge then of building anew a whole social order to

emancipate human society from the clutches of the bourgeoisie entailed attempts to elevate the lower classes over the ruling upper stratum of society. The struggle encapsulated the repudiation of religion. With a religious fervour of its own, this secular ideology was in favour of the solidarity of the oppressed in the process of building this whole new Social order. These visions constitute the *raison d'être* of many struggles and the essence of many states and nations mobilised by their secular ideology.

Societies mobilised through idea contestations and therefore successfully articulating competing visions of the altruistic global good or even including the possible unending national pursuit of global loot-contrived dependencies of weak states as well as societies and imperialism, for instance – are often at the vanguard of social evolution. They lead and others follow, irrespective of the moral and value judgments of the consequences of their ascendant vision(s) for the objective wellbeing of their societies in the long term, including even implications of the moral and value choices made by elite societies for the continued sanity of humanity. These conscious choices have come in many myths and terrible civic and secular hues in developed societies. Humanity has been elevated and at the same time deprived by these choices. Apartheid and Nazism come to mind. They are both linked. The false doctrine of superiority of the Aryan race uberall in the Third Reich elicited an overwhelming catastrophic impulse not only for Nazi Germany, but ultimately for the world. Israel was born out of the tragedy of these vulgar Nazi national pretensions and understanding of the essence of the *Deutsch volk*. The essence of Israel lies in its myth as the fulfillment of scriptural encryptions of a covenant of the return to the promised land. Accordingly, Israel's modern reincarnation and creation are perceived as a return home from a Diaspora to a haven of refuge founded on a religious myth. It provides the myth to sustain national coherence, whatever the internal controversies and political prejudices around the morality, justice and fairness of the policies of the State of Israel.

Meanwhile, the rise of ultra-right nationalism associated with Donald Trump's United States, a direct assault on the foundational essentials of the historic secular theology of the American nation, reminds us of the cyclical disjunctions and continuities of history and the centrality of the clashes of partisan and dominant social forces as drivers of the direction of individual states and nations. Emanating from the notion of America as a "shining city on a hill" flows the concept of American exceptionalism that has been the barometer through which the United States of America has gauged the pulse and health of the nation, especially in uncertain times of social turbulence. The concept of shining city on a hill was a vision to brand the emerging and embryonic America early in its colonial evolution. It was introduced in a 1630 sermon by Puritan John Winthrop while still aboard the ship *Arbella*, the lead vessel ferrying the early puritans to the United States.¹

Although Winthrop applied the term in relation to the envisaged character of the future Massachusetts Bay colonists "as a city upon a hill", that would be watched by the world, it was the ideal that the New England colonists placed upon their hilly capital city of Boston. The Puritans' community in New England would set an example of communal charity, affection, and unity to the world. The American nation later appropriated the concept to characterise the national community. America's exceptionalism has been reaffirmed in the twentieth century by American Presidents – from the president-elect John F Kennedy who on 9 January, 1961 acknowledged being guided by the standard of John Winthrop, to President Ronald Reagan who, on the eve of his election in 1980, proclaimed that he had quoted John Winthrop's words more than once on the campaign trail that year. He espoused his belief that Americans in 1980 were every bit as committed to Winthrop's vision of a shining "city on a hill," as were those long ago settlers.

President Reagan later highlighted that the visitors to that city on the Potomac do not come as white or black, red or yellow; they are not Jews or Christians; conservatives or liberals;

or Democrats or Republicans. Despite his stout conservative credentials, President Reagan in his 11 January 1989 farewell speech to the American nation, reiterated that in his mind the shining city on the hill was a tall, proud city built on rocks stronger than oceans, wind-swept, God-blessed, and teeming with people of all kinds living in harmony and peace.² More contemporaneously, President George W Bush and Barack Obama have invoked America as the shining city on the hill. It is against this background that Donald Trump has been largely perceived by good old grounded Americans as negating the sacrosanct and fundamental premises of the American nation. In 2016, Mitt Romney, a 2012 Republican presidential candidate, using the template of the shining city on hill condemned Donald Trump's 2016

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presidential campaign. He noted that Mr. Trump was directing anger felt by Americans for less than noble purposes by creating scapegoats of Muslims and Mexican immigrants, calling for the use of torture and for killing the innocent children and family members of terrorists. Romney further highlighted that Trump cheers assaults on protesters and applauds the prospect of twisting the Constitution to limit first amendment freedom of the press. This, Romney intoned, is the very brand of anger that has led other nations into the abyss.³ Mitt Romney warned that given Trump's temperament and lack of judgment as president, Trump's personal qualities would mean that America would cease to be a shining city on a hill.⁴

With regard to Japan, in a 1920s treatise, David Williams traces Japan's

phenomenal success to the purposeful cast of Japanese national ethos. Indeed Japan's national objectives had to be seen to stand at the heart of the collective enterprise that has characterised modern Japan. Williams notes that the success of Japan, then perceived as a poor country, pointed to an important truth: the chief factor in fostering state power as an act of collective will is the fruitful marriage of clarity of purpose and the vigorous creation of the national institutions necessary to achieve those goals. Finally, Williams advances that the success of Japan had many sources, but the striking feature of her modernisation drive has been the lucidity of her national purpose.

It is to be highlighted that as a collective force, the interaction of partisan forces, mobilised on jousting divergent ideas and visions of society impact the evolution of the system, the direction of its development and the tenor of the life of global humanity. Thus in the beginning was the idea, conceptualised and first articulated in the Word as philosophy of action. Otherwise, in the dictum of Kafka, in the beginning everything was once nothing. Ideas energise while transforming nothingness into concrete and enduring reality, for good or otherwise.

Every serious nation thus rests on a certain transcendental idea or uncontested national ethos defining its essence. It drives the national process. That is the big lacuna in the badly riled and unviable African 56 nation state system where only one or two states, if any, are mobilised on some almost transcendental notions of their concrete being driving the state and serving as the organic glue holding its multinational society together.

Beyond the full and suffocating throttle of dedication to corruption and mediocrity, what is the essence of Nigeria? Extrapolating from the odious character of its public realm, what is its secular ideology or, if you may, its civic theology? A physical throwback to the Hobbesian jungle where anything goes? A national space consecrated to unmediated fraud and malfeasance comprehensively and in the service of the vilest of

human foibles, from unconscionable leadership to depraved followership, from the defiled and polluted sacred to the dilapidated secular? To fake gods and empty religiosity? What are the sublime ideational underpinnings on which the Nigeria state space rests? In the context of this conundrum, Nigeria must be redeemed from a template for various projects of partisan coalitions determined to exploit the floundering state space to death, literally and as a metaphor. The partisan coalition of intent is mobilised more by the personal interests of members in the sharing of the public loot may be contrasted with the ideological or programmatic interests that drive a conventional coalition of political forces.

The political settlement, meaning the nature of subsisting, but constantly interim, agreements on value distribution among the dominant elites across the board, on which Nigerian politics rests is confounding. In the context of the permanent fluidity of every political settlement, the lines of convenient cleavages of the multiple nebulous coalitions are defined in conspiratorial terms of class – the coming together of economic and political elites across the nation determined to exclusively loot and share the common wealth among themselves without a qualm. A great deal of the political structures – political parties – are configured to serve these limited pan Nigerian but anti-Nigerian partisan interests. Lauretta Onochie affirms that the practice has been that Nigerian politicians belong to political parties based on how much money they can gain access to through their political affiliation. Access to oil wells and national wealth in cash and solid minerals is often on the table for sharing. Conservatives, progressives, socialists, liberals, etc. all muddle up in one messy party.⁵

In fact, some have averred that even the former ruling party, the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), was never a serious party but a group mobilised by corruption.⁶ It may be said to represent a coalition of converging personal intents. Such a coalition revolves around a commonality of intent and interests that, unlike conventional party coalitions, are not necessarily based on

ideological or philosophical principles or even common programming. The intents are often personal and amoral and may have little salience to the public good. Often these intents have deleterious consequences for the projection of the public good, both in material and non-material terms.

The case against former National Security Advisor under the PDP administration of President Goodluck Jonathan, Col Sambo Dasuki, charged with alleged money-laundering and criminal breach of trust, is illustrative. Dasuki, standing trial on a 19-count charge bordering on alleged diversion of N13.6 billion (US\$2.2 BILLION), claimed that the money, ostensibly meant to procure arms for the Nigerian military to prosecute the war against Boko Haram, was distributed to political allies across the country. Dasukigate has seen many prominent

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Nigerians across the country indicted as accomplices in the arms deal scandal. This coalition of nebulous intent transcends normally problematic ethno-religious and ethno-regional cleavages in the country.⁷

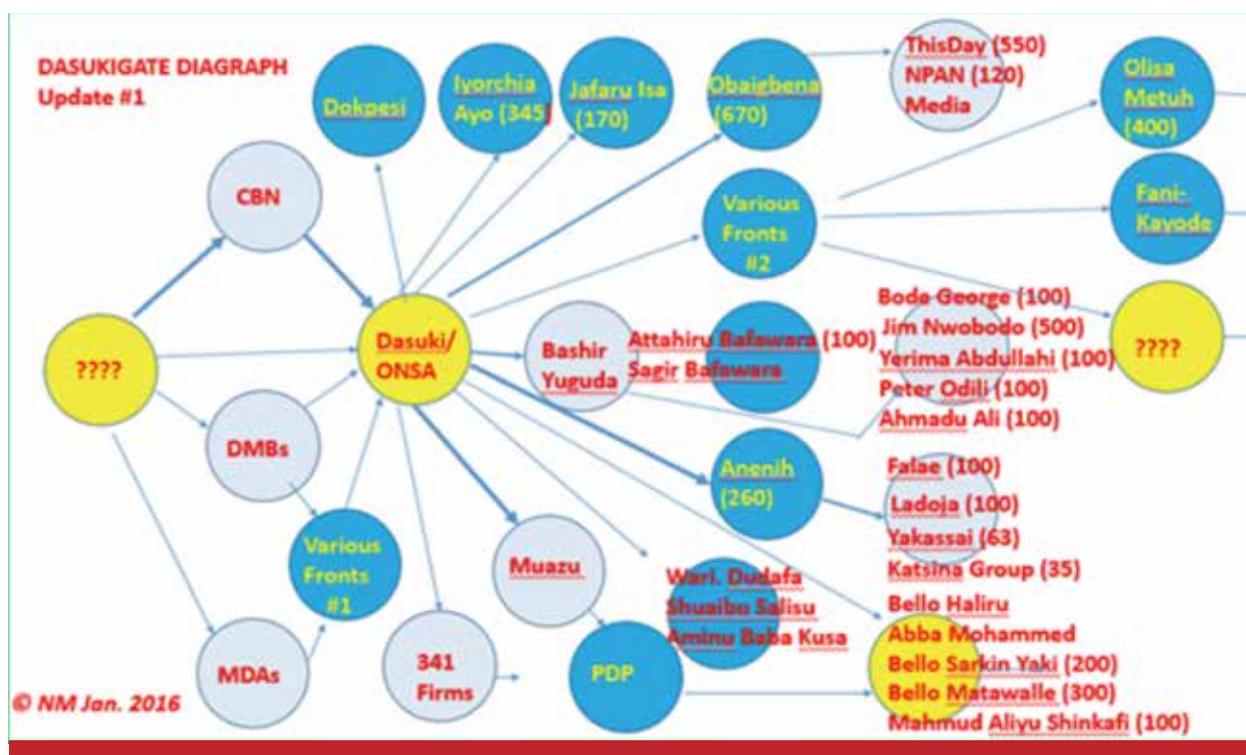
Some have calculated the opportunity cost of Dasuki gate. In 2013, the Nigerian Army manpower strength was 162,000. It can be calculated that if the misappropriated United States \$2.2 billion procured just M762 rifles, each soldier would have had four such rifles, or 25 AK-47, if AK-47 was preferred. \$2.442 billion would purchase 339 T-72 armored for each of the six army divisions and the air force could have had additional 222 AH-1 Cobra choppers or 145 F-7NI bomber jets. It could also have provided the Nigerian military forces with 751, 384 M762 automatic rifles, 4, 070, 000 AK-47

rifles, 2, 035 T-72 armored tanks, 222 AH-1 Cobra helicopters, and 145 F-7NI bombers.⁸

Accordingly, some have observed that apart from the Halliburton saga, no other corruption case in Nigeria has networked individuals previously considered sacred and untouchable the way the Dasuki gate is doing.¹⁰

The Nigerian political elite thus exhibit a key consensus of Pareto's insights on elites – that the members of the elite class will always try to ensure that the non-elites should not influence social, economic and political processes in any manner. And some families are building political dynasties. In spite of the nebulous coalition, in this national configuration is also embedded the struggle along ethno-regional lines in the violent confrontations of those who perceive themselves to be along the margins of power and who strive to dislodge those considered the dominant forces; while the latter seek to consolidate their historic holdings, religious antagonists deploying their platform for ascendance and to attain partisan privilege, the national securo-military gang aligned with some of the hegemonic forces against every other stakeholder in the affairs of the state. In this context, the state and its internal processes have been rendered as instruments of exclusive capture by partisan forces. This genre of state is thus not an end in itself. The fact that the pervasive struggles that characterise the national process are directed at partisan and exclusive appropriation is a direct result of the state's lack of a consensual essence.

Nigeria and its dominant internal contentions reflect the vulgarity of African multi-national states with no clear *raison d'être* (reason to exist). Some have attributed this state of affairs to the inability to rise above the challenges of its antecedence. These would include the motives that drove the amalgamation of the northern and southern provinces and struggles around periodic modifications of the internal construction of the outcome of the contrived union. The almost mercantilistic underpinnings of its founding would seem to have become central to the illog around the



Dasukigate's Diagram of Corruption⁹

national operating procedures of the state of Nigeria. Without consensus on what the Nigerian state stands for, the politics of total partisan appropriation of the socio-economic and political spaces has been the dominant impulse in the struggles and accordingly, the evolution of the state, its structure and its political economy.

The struggle for absolute partisan appropriation of the state space is indeed the norm in Africa – Congo Brazzaville, Burundi, Cameroon, Togo, Liberia, Gambia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Guinea Bissau... The difference is that Nigeria's size imbues it with a resilience that many of the unviable rag-flag personal fiefdoms and enclaves that arrogate to themselves the status of states in the continent do not have. Yet the crippling pathologies, internal dynamics and the dominant partisan discourses of Nigeria are representative of the pervasive lethargy at interrogating conventional wisdom and, at the same time, the many struggles of a continent that has failed, continues to fail and would continue to fail as contrived to be. Change might come only if Africa repudiates the imposed false and

vacuous pretences, reflected in their contingent sovereignty that have been conveniently appropriated by its elite, as well as the indiscriminate spiritual defections to strange places.

Nigeria and African political entities must address the lack of a *raison d'être* for their existential conditions. The internal geo-physical structure is often designed to support a peculiar political economy in the service of partisan hegemonic appropriation of the totality of the state space. In the ensuing contest, there is neither a national denominated morality gauge nor are there any agreed ethical boundaries in this Hobbesian national struggle for the total partisan appropriation of the spaces. The profusely contaminated and congested national spiritual spaces, as in most of Africa, are congenital. They have also been polluted almost beyond redemption. Nigeria's on-going intensely moral crisis is thus beyond the substantive material and concrete. It is also in the metaphysical realm. It is reflected also in the poverty of ideas or the relegation of logic and profound and critical thinking in the public realm to irrelevance in national processes.

Much of the national discourse is

mere amplified noise and cacophony. And the noise is often focused on fighting immediate brush fires to protect narrow partisan interests. Accordingly, Nigeria has been riled to its foundations by a complete absence of a national civic theology – a lack of a coherent ideational framework around which the nation can revolve. Nigeria has been auto-driven to the precipice by the multidimensional dissonance in its fractious society. The last dimension of this pervading paucity accounts for the absolute absence of a compelling *raison d'être* for Nigeria.

Most great nations and societies have explicitly codified what are broadly understood as civic theologies. Again, this is the case in the United States, France or even Germany. It is why in the United States today, the top echelon of the Republican Party is embarrassed to find a Donald Trump emerged as its presidential candidate. With the likes of a virtually uneducated Sarah Palin and her Tea Party testing the waters in repudiating the core values of the United States in the Senator McCain presidential campaign, Trump's current elevation of unvarnished extremism to a national

presidential platform has threatened the very ethical and moral foundations of America as a nation, state and society. In other countries, national civic theology is implicitly and unshakably consolidated in historic national understandings of what they stand for, as in Great Britain, even the United States, in spite of Donald Trump, and, notably, Japan. Again, some societies have struggled over the centuries as in Turkey to define a national essence to direct it.

Nigeria is thus a state groaning under the weight of a lack of civic theology. It has no transcendental values distilled into a moral and spiritual foundation essential for any modern society. Historically, civic religion was intended simply as a form of social cement or an organic glue, as an instrument to unify the state and society by providing it with civic sacred authority. The end result of this void in Nigeria is the cyclical nature of confused national debates and contentions around the constantly shifting fundamentals, including the basic structure of the state. A vacuum on the fundamentals of a non-existent national consciousness or an attempted consciousness based on a rot of nothingness has percolated down to the grassroots through equally deceptive elite self-serving rationalisations. What is, after all that cacophonous clatter on its dissolubility or non-dissolubility for example, the essence of a Nigeria?

The historic contentions around the expression of the Nigerian state is about revenue allocation and who is placed to appropriate, legally and through other means, not the largest share but the totality of this revenue at the institutional, community and personal levels. Hegemonic and partisan pretenses become instrumental to favorable placement to assure a large morsel of revenue. The acclaimed institutional protectors of the integrity of the Nigerian state, the Executive, the Judiciary, including the Bar, and the military, as with elsewhere on the continent, have always all proven to be false redeemers. The allure of stealing and corruption is central to the internal dynamic of the state. Against this background, it is legitimate to pose the question of what Nigeria, as with the

modal African state, is about beyond sharing and stealing money? And why so?

By February, 2016, *Sahara Reporters* noted that at least 9 out of 109 members of the Nigerian Senate were enmeshed in criminal cases. The nine lawmakers represented 10 percent of the members of the upper legislative chamber. The majority of the cases are related to allegations of corruption, running into billions of naira. The senators, most of them former governors, are accused of misappropriating public funds. About six of the lawmakers have been docked at various courts for trial on fraud charges. Two of the senators, however, are facing charges of forgery and drug offences, respectively, while the last one has been interrogated by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) over alleged fraud.

In the current 8th assembly, no fewer than eight senators and at least one member of the House of

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Representatives have supposedly had a brush with the law, resulting in criminal charges filed against them in the courts.

Among the lawmakers, are the leadership of the Red Chamber, chairs and deputy chairs of sensitive Senate committees.¹⁰ Also, a three-term senator and former governor of Zamfara State, representing Zamfara West Senatorial District in the Senate, who is the Chairman of the Senate Committee on Marine Transport and a member of other committees, including Interior that oversees the police, prisons, immigration and the fire service, was in January 2016 docked on a 19-count charge of corruption by the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) at the Zamfara State High Court in Gusau. The commission accused

him of diverting part of the N1 billion project funds for the repair of collapsed Gusau Dam and resettlement of the victims of flood to other purposes.¹¹

Meanwhile, two former governors have been jailed for misappropriation of public funds. These are a two time Governor of Taraba state, Reverend Jolly Tanko Nyame, who was convicted in June 2018 for diverting N1.64 billion during his tenure. Having been dragged before the Court by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) on a 41-count charge, the court held that Nyame was guilty of 27 of the 41 charges against him. He was sentenced to two, five, seven and 14 years in jail respectively after he was found guilty of offences including receiving gratification, obtaining public funds without due consideration, and criminal breach of trust. On June 12, 2018 another former two time Governor of Plateau State, Senator Joshua Dariye, was given a 14 year jail term by the same Abuja High Court. He was found guilty on charges of criminal breach of trust and misappropriation of over N1.16bn.¹²

These cases, the trial of the Senate President and the seizure of the assets of a sitting governor have elicited attempts in the Senate to confer absolute immunity on the heads of all legislative houses in the country. The initiatives have re-opened the debate on the propriety of retaining the immunity clause in the Constitution. It is this context that activist lawyer Femi Falana contends that no public officer is entitled to absolute immunity as the beneficiaries of the immunity clause may be sued in their official capacity or made nominal parties in criminal proceedings. They may also be sued to defend their elections, either in court or election petition tribunals or charged with crimes against humanity and genocidal acts before the International Criminal Court at The Hague. In conclusion, he called on the Nigerian people to demand for the abolition of immunity in the struggle for public accountability and transparency.¹³

This situation demonstrates the reality that internal political configuration and entrenched socio-political dispensations in Africa, just as in Nigeria, were designed to advance

a certain extraneous cause and causes far removed from the interests of the peoples of the continent. In the final analysis, the evolution and devolution of the Nigerian state has been driven by illogic. Apparent logics are only rational within specific contexts and challenges in time that place and limit these important developments within particular historical loci. In a longitudinal frame of time they prove ultimately short sighted. A fundamental flaw is seen at work here. The critical challenge is ideational. The common denominating void in the challenge of Nigeria and practically all the non-nation states in sub Saharan Africa is the historic incapacity to formulate a broad consensus on transcendental ideo-philosophical foundations that define the new political space to which all its constituent socio-political communities ascribe.

There is a litany of attempts in this regard. And they may sound paradoxical. Mobutu's Authenticite is an interesting example. As an iconic representation of the very worst of Africa's governance paradigm in his capacity as an unrepentant murderous stooge and proxy of neo-imperialist West in Africa, he was a precursor of life Presidency. He preceded copycats like Pierre Nkunrunziza in Burundi or Paul Biya in neighboring Cameroon or even Sassou Nguesso in the Republic of Congo, or I might even add locally Olusegun Obasanjo's attempt at unconstitutional term elongation. Mobutu Sese Seko had the good sense to attempt to institute a rallying fundamental creed of Authenticite to ground his dubious enterprise of keeping Zaire under his belt.

Leopold Sedar Senghor's strand of Negritude was tragic. His position was consistent with that of his misguided compatriot Blaise Diagne who in 1919 subsumed the salience of the unity of Africans under assimilation into French culture and national life. In 1921, at the Second Pan-African Congress that met in several sessions in London, Paris and Brussels, the only dissenting voices on African Unity were those of Blaise Diagne and Gratien Candace, both French politicians of African and Guadeloupean descent, who represented Senegal and Guadeloupe

in the French Chamber of Deputies.

They both soon abandoned the idea of Pan-Africanism because they advocated equal rights inside the French citizenship and thought the London Manifesto declaration too dangerously extreme. In effect, they effectively denied the unity of Africa as a fundamental condition for black emancipation. Reports of 1919 conference note that it took the combined efforts of Blaise Diagne and WEB Du Bois to navigate around the obstacles by the French government and organise the Pan-African Congress in Paris in February 1919. Diagne's role was crucial to the convening of the Congress. A Senegalese, Diagne was the highest-ranking African in French politics, having assisted France

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in recruiting African soldiers. As a Senegalese deputy to the French Parliament, French Prime Minister Clemenceau approved the Congress as a political favour to them; nonetheless he disapproved widespread publicity for it.

Then came Cheikh Anta Diop, a foremost African philosopher, physicist, sociologist and chemist – a rounded intellectual – from Senegal, who later formulated the seminal work on the economic and cultural basis of a federated continental African state, adumbrated that national problems in Africa were still being met with bureaucratic mentality. He was prescient in noting the lack of cultural policies worthy of the name

and that none of the new states then had adopted a systematic policy of restoration. Finally, in 1987 he observed that there had been no political work accomplished in Africa that might radically have transformed consciences or prepared them for the austere tasks required by true independence. Refusing platitudes and political gratifications, he was thrown into jail by Sedar Senghor. Mwalimu Nyerere's Ujaama, Ivorian Ivorite (as an intellectual rallying point and not the corrupted political deployment of the concept) to hold all constituent nations in the state together, have been attempts at formulating civic theological precepts at the national level. Yet Nigeria has been uniquely placed to develop a national civic theology around a truly emancipatory Afrocentric template.

It is therefore clear that the pursuit of Pan-Africanism expressed in a dedication of a national commitment to the holistic emancipation of black humanity provided one very potent idea to ground the *raison d'être* for the Nigerian state. Nigeria, by virtue of not just its population size, the sheer diversity of its internal constituents of over 250 nationalities and its splay of indigenous and imported hegemonic faiths, is best placed to codify the essence of its large presence and stature as the central continental motor to drive the development and the overall transformation of the place of black humanity in the global scheme of things. Snippets of this have featured in the Afrocentric foreign policy but the average Nigerian is yet to understand the critical place of Nigeria in the historic challenge of black humanity. These represent a potential mine of ideas and ethical imperatives on developing a *raison d'être* for the Nigerian state. If Nigeria would be the shining exemplar of the black nation state, it would then refuse to accommodate and worse still validate the kinds of moral imbeciles, ethical monstrosities, including dubious statesmen, who have laid siege on the state space and polluted and clogged its social and political firmament.

If championing the challenge of Pan-Africanism is unappealing to Nigerians, Nigeria must then craft a

more ingenious reason why it must continue to exist as one indivisible state. This is a basic minimum requirement in an era when minorities everywhere, driven by an assortment of primordial sensibilities, seek self-expression in geo-political terms. Some have concluded that a controversial agenda of forceful partisan expansion of territorial claims by an aggressive minority hegemonic force is at the heart of the bloody war of herdsmen and farmers, especially in the traditional confluences of ethnic boundaries in what used to be parts of the old monolithic North.

The good luck with Nigeria is that the global strategic imperatives demand a bulwark against the potential expansion and conquest of black Africa by radical Islam in its historic confrontation with the West. Yet, the very fact of being perceived as pro West and Christian exacerbates Nigeria's problem. As the Boko Haram phenomenon has demonstrated and highlighted by Zbigniew Brezinski, Western secular democracy is a particularly troublesome concept for Islamists as for them it implies an essentially atheistic society and state. Islamic fundamentalism also feeds off anti-Western xenophobia. Africa is not now allowed to choose, because by repudiating its own authentic spiritual essences and consigning its self to alien spiritual spaces in its massive defection from the self, Africans may have lost the freewill to choose to be itself. There is always a price to pay for choices made. That is why El Shabab and Boko Haram cannot operate in India or Japan. These societies have sustained the integrity of their spiritual essences. There is thus no vacuum in the spiritual realm for exogenous hegemonic faiths to fill.

So, Nigeria is caught in a dilemma of how best to repudiate the script of the main gladiators of co-opting Africa as willing proxies in the contemporary and millennial edition of their historic fight. Boko Haram and its affiliation with the Islamic State and El Shabab are good pointers to this danger for Nigeria. The continued repudiation of black humanity of its own spirituality in favor of hegemonic imports does not augur well for the future. Without any

raison d'être, Nigeria is pilotless in terms of ideational pivots of its continued survival. A cynical perspective would then be that Nigeria would survive only because it serves the interests of the historical rapists of the continent, and not because of its intrinsic value in itself. It is going to be an unpleasant survival for all.

It is against this background that every so often, Nigeria has acquired, in an almost seasonal and a boring mechanical character, the ritual of going through the umpteenth national conversation regarding the structure of the state. The motif driver of the engagement of the same national elite is in relation to the sharing of the national resources. By implication, it is never to formulate common understanding on

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the ingredients of an organic glue to hold together the many clashing and disparate interests in this multi-national and multi religious state. In the absence of what some have described as a civic theology to undergird the concept of the nation-state, personality cults emerge in many African rag-flag states and the ethnic and religious become the dominant emotive parameters in all. But in Nigeria has emerged a deep rooted national consensus among its dubious elite on how to bleed the country to death. And they seem to have succeeded, so far.

Less than a hundred families have brought Nigeria to its knees. The consequences are the rise and daily rise of grass roots based militancy

and irredentism outside the control of a discredited elite. These bodies represent a final repudiation of the status quo, including the odious miasma of unethical axiomatic foundations of the Nigerian non-nation state and society and the entrenched illogic of the standard operating procedures governing the national process. This is an urgent task before the Nigeria state space is shredded and joins the litter of the many hopeless small fiefdoms in Africa. These fiefdoms are led, as in the Gambia, Burundi, Congo Brazzaville, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon and others by petty minded or outright mindless illiterate dictators. In aftermath of the death of Nigeria would emerge many more unviable pretend state spaces on the continent. Therefore, warts and all, the permanence and longevity of Nigeria is still the best bet as the nucleus for the struggle for the holistic emancipation of Africa. Just perhaps, this simple idea fortified by rigorous expatiations has a potential to galvanise and give meaning to sacrifices required to sustain a Nigerian state worthy as legacy to bequeath to future generations. ■

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