

Towards National Integration in Nigeria: Jumping the Hurdles

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Abstract

Since the inception of the Nigerian nation, Nigerian governments, past and present, have made serious efforts to propagate policies and programmes that are geared towards national integration. Despite such well-intended and unity-oriented programmes and policies, Nigeria's unity has continued to be plagued and threatened by embedded socio-cultural, religious and political dichotomies. Unless efforts are made to checkmate these divisive tendencies towards national integration, the long expected and loudly proclaimed oneness and indivisibility of Nigeria will remain a utopia. This paper, silhouetted against the backdrop of structural functionalism, advocates the necessity for national integration and the factors that are militating against the much desired national unity in Nigeria. Suggestions are made on how Nigeria can achieve national integration. This paper believes that achieving national integration is contingent on jumping the hurdles of ethnicity, corruption, a narcissistic political leadership, weak institutions and others. It concludes that to claim the victory for an integrated Nigeria, the people must lead the vanguard of change and that for the continued existence of Nigeria to be guaranteed probably for another centennial, consensual agreement must be reached by its diverse ethnic nationalities.

Keywords: National Integration; Dichotomies; Ethnicity; Political Leadership; Nationalities.

Introduction

Nation-building or national integration has long been seen as an important focus for postcolonial African governments. As some scholars noted, upon African decolonisation in the 1950s and 1960s, social scientists were concerned about the need for what was then called "national integration" in societies with multiple ethnic, religious and racial cleavages (Binder, 1964; Coleman & Rosberg, 1966; Zolberg, 1967). Bandyopadhyay & Green (2009) have argued that this concern has been more recently resurrected by Miguel (2004), Collier (2009) and others who have advocated for national integration as a policy to promote state building in a continent now notorious for and rife with political instability and economic throwback.

As Ifeanchio & Nwagwu (2009) observed, Nigeria's efforts at achieving national integration have remained largely unrealised. In their words, the history of democratisation in Africa, in general, and Nigeria, in particular, has remained the history of national disintegration. Thus, the integration crisis facing Nigeria is manifest in the minority question, religious fundamentalism and conflicts, ethnic politics, indigene-settler dialectic, resource control, youth restiveness and militancy and the clamour for a (sovereign) national conference or conversation about the terms of the nation's continued unification. The status quo has convulsed the productive sector, limited the impact of government's economic programmes on the people, threatened food insecurity, complexified social insecurity, deepened the deterioration of physical and social infrastructures, distressed the living standards of a vast majority of Nigerians, militated against the educational system and resulted in the ostracisation of the generality of Nigerians and their exclusion from the political and economic space, among other glitches. The entire social matrix in Nigeria is characterised by inter- and intra-community, inter and intra-ethnic, and inter- and intra-religious strife. Some of these conflicts are as old as the history of the Nigerian nation.

Like India, a federal state with its pluralised ethnic, religious and cultural status, Nigeria is a deeply divided and plural society (Ojo, 2009). Many scholars have tried to put a figure to the number of ethnic groups within the polity at well over 250 (Attah, 1987; Onwujeogwu (1987); Kirk-Green, 1969:4; Otite, 1990; Suberu, 1998). Ojo (2009) contends that "Nigeria has a unique problem not experienced by any state in the world past or present. The problem is that of achieving solidarity in action and purpose in the midst of hundreds of ethnic nationalities each exerting both centrifugal and centripetal forces on the central issue of the nation, bound in freedom, peace and unity where justice reigns."

Although the British colonialists and the Nigerian elite that succeeded them used ethnicity to perfect their political strategies and notch up some socio-economic and political gains, as Emelonye & Buergenthal (2011) observed, poverty and ineffective governance in Nigeria today have further sharpened ethnic divisions leading to misunderstanding between ethnic and religious groups who see themselves as rivals that must be surpassed by any means, thus hampering national integration. They add that because the Nigerian state is beginning to lose legitimacy and authority, the fear of uncertainty has increased to the extent that citizens now resort to self-help,

seeking security and solidarity in their own ethnic, religious or regional affiliation and identity. Thus, a new dimension to Nigeria's ethno-religious violence is the increasing recruitment and mobilisation of ethnic and regional militias, vigilantes and other armed groups: the Oodua People's Congress in Yorubaland, the Arewa People's Congress in the north, the Bakassi Boys in the east, the Egbesu in the south, and the emergence of a supercilious army of terror merchants who represent contending interests to Nigeria's detriment. The implication of these hydra-headed conflicts is that national integration suffers, there is increasing insecurity of citizens and property in the country, foreign investment is deterred and economic development is stymied.

This paper looks at the issue of national integration in Nigeria, highlights programmes aimed at achieving it and examines innate challenges that frustrate the process of integration in the country. This paper contends that achieving national integration, which also means addressing existing challenges in its path, is critical to realising economic transformation in Nigeria and for Nigerians.

Conceptual and Theoretical Analysis

Terms used for national integration have included national cohesion, national unity, nation building or national integration (Bandyopadhyay & Green, 2009; Ojo, 2009). According to Duverger in Ojo (2009), national integration is "the process of unifying a society which tends to make it a harmonious city, based upon an order its members regard as equitably harmonious." Jacob & Tenue in Ojo (2009) describe it as "a relationship of community among people within the same political entity... a state of mind or disposition to be cohesive, to act together, to be committed to mutual programmes". Defining national integration as a process, Morrison et al. argue that it is "A process by which members of a social system (citizens for our purpose) develop linkages and location so that the boundaries of the system persist over time and the boundaries of sub-systems become less consequential in affecting behaviour. In this process members of the social system develop an escalating sequence of contact, cooperation, consensus and community" (Ojo, 2009). Etzioni (1965) has argued that a community can only be considered cohesive when it meets the following touchstones:

- It has effective control over the use of the means of violence;
- It has a centre of decision making capable of effecting the allocation of resources and rewards; and
- It is a dominant focus of political identification for a large majority of politically aware citizens.

Ojo (2009) rightly observed that these viewpoints have not answered the questions such as how would one recognise an integrated polity? How much cohesion and which commonly accepted norms denote an integrated political or social unit? How would an observer identify integration or is it dependent on some other manifestations (such as conflict) to demonstrate a lack of integration? And what institutional form will an integrated unit take? Will it be democratic or authoritarian? Would it be a centralised organisational entity with full sovereignty or would it be a loosely federal unit? Or are institutional forms irrelevant to integration? These are fundamental questions which may not be easily resolved in this study as doing so may mean a sharp digression from the focus.

Without going into the convolutions of what makes an ideal definition of this concept, in this study, national integration is seen as a process that produces an omnibus of initiatives put in place by a state, its representatives or institutions guided by respect for the unique traditions and cultural backgrounds of ethnicities sharing the same polity with the goal of harmonising all interests through a form of dialogue and representation and addressing differences that may be divisive and conflictual using the instruments of fairness, justice and equity in the sharing of resources, benefits, opportunities and responsibilities in order to guarantee stability, longevity and prosperity of the polity as long as the inhabitants decide to remain within the polity.

A conclusion that can be drawn from this discussion so far is that national integration is made possible when ethnicities within a political entity achieve integration by consensus, social structure and function in society which brings about social order. This position is supported by the theory of social functionalism. As a rule, this theory also referred to as functionalism tries to explain how the relationships among the parts of society are created and how these parts are functional (meaning having beneficial consequences to the individual and the society) and sometimes dysfunctional (meaning having negative consequences). It focuses on consensus, social order, structure and function in society. Structural functionalism sees society as a complex system whose parts work together to promote solidarity and stability; it states that social lives are guided by social structure, which are relatively stable patterns of social behaviour (Macdonald, 1997). Social structure is understood in terms of social functions which are consequences for the operations of society. All social structure contributes to the operation of society (Imhonopi & Urin, 2012). Terms developed in this theory include: order, structure, function (manifest or direct functions and latent or hidden, indirect functions), and equilibrium. Structural functionalists ask pertinent questions such as: what holds society together? And what keeps it steady? Similarly, the structural functionalist theory pays considerable attention to the persistence of shared ideas in society. The functional aspect in the structural-functional theory stresses the role played by each component part in the social system, whereas the structural perspective suggests an image of society wherein individuals are constrained by social

forces, social backgrounds and by group memberships.

One of the challenges to Nigeria's national integration is the lack of consensus. And there can be no consensus without dialogue. While some measure of social order or subdued violence has been reached in Nigeria, the ethnicities that make up the modern Nigerian state must come to the table of negotiations to discuss the future and destiny of the country, how they want to be governed, how resources need to be shared, what system of government needs to bind and guide constituent units, how power is to be shared and the redefinition of citizenship, settler and indigeneship status, and many more. Nigerians should not be under an illusion that Nigeria is one because the presence of unity as Babawale (1991) postulated is artificial. Events unfolding remind a careful observer of the prescient conclusion by Awolowo (1947), one of the progressive founders of the nation, that Nigeria is not a nation but a mere geographical expression. Any attempt to disagree with this prognosis without addressing the fundamental flaws weakening the nation-state may soon assume cataclysmic consequences.

Is Nigeria an Accident of History or a Historical Accident?

While a historical analysis of Nigeria's early beginnings has been clinically done by many writers and scholars, a common trend that runs through the various narrations is the issue that Nigeria was a colonial contraption because the present ethnicities that make up the modern Nigerian state were individually incongruent in terms of ethnic origin, religion, cultural and lingual composition, governance orientation and national aspirations. A marriage of these incompatible partners led to strange bedfellows who are different in every way except being yoked together by the green-white-green coupler.

However after over 50 years of national political independence and a centennial of marriage as a country, Nigeria still continues to grind under the weight of an impossible amalgamation that has done nothing to erase the diversities within the ethnic nationalities that make up the federation but rather has succeeded in bringing these differences in clear relief. As Imhonopi & Urim (2012b) pontificated, if Nigeria is to celebrate another centennial as a united country and is to convince its citizens that this forced union of convenience for the colonialists was not an accident of history or a marriage of unwilling partners, then genuinely convening a national conversation for representatives of the people by the political leadership to reach a consensus on the future of this artificial nation-state has become the be-all and end-all for the continued survival of the entity called Nigeria. Pushing this to the national assembly, a group of elite beneficiaries of the jaundiced Nigerian system or wishing this away as a product of dementia will further fan the smouldering embers of hate, suspicion and disunity into a sweeping conflagration.

Existing Policies towards National Integration in Literature

Bandyopadhyay & Green (2009) in their apt treatise on national integration by African and other countries to promote integration have identified the various nation-building policies put in place by governments of these nations especially upon assuming independence. According to them, some of these policies included: Changing state names like Gilbert Islands to Kiribati, Ceylon and Burma to Sri Lanka and Myanmar respectively, Dahomey to Benin, Democratic Republic of Congo to Zaire, Gold Coast to Ghana and so on; Changing capital cities' names and locations; Changing national currencies; Conscription and national service; Religious and Linguistic Homogenization; Republican and centralization policies; establishing National parties; Land nationalization among others. These policies, ranging from the serious to the ludicrous, piloted many countries, including African countries, in the pursuit of their nation-building agendas.

An Examination of Programmes Aimed at Promoting National Integration in Nigeria

Knowing that Nigeria is a host to unwilling and variegated partners, efforts have been put in place starting from the colonial era to create systems, institutions and programmes of government aimed at promoting national integration. Citing the scholarly works of Ojo (2009), Bulama (n.d.), Akpan (1990) and Ugoh & Ukpere (2012), some of these have been identified below:

Firstly, the colonial administration in Nigeria in 1954 using the instrumentality of the Lyttleton constitution introduced federalism into Nigeria as an integrative mechanism. The colonialists must have been swayed by the opinion that such a system of government was necessary to preserve both integration and stability in a deeply divided society like Nigeria. As Osaghae (1987) observed, whenever events seemed to demand that a compromise be effected between the necessity for unity and co-operation on a wide territorial basis on one hand, and the need to accommodate the legitimate claims of sub-national groups for self-rule on the other, "the temptation is to proffer a catch-all management formula such as federalism." While federalism has been applauded as a silver bullet to the ethnicity problem in Nigeria, the skewness and perversion of this typology of governance has frustrated the benefits it could have provided the nation.

Secondly, the creation of states and the land use decree were put in place to strengthen Nigeria's unity.

Immediately before the Nigerian Civil War, as a way to strengthen the reversion of the country to federalism, General Gowon resorted to the creation of more states in a bid to keep the country united. Gowon felt the problem confronting the operation of federalism in the three regions was that "The regions were so powerful as to consider themselves self-sufficient and almost entirely independent. The federal government which ought to give the lead to the whole country was relegated to the background. The people were not made to realize that the federal government was the real government of Nigeria." In order to strengthen the federal government, the regions were taken to the slab of sacrifice resulting in the creation of 12 states in 1967. Subsequently, the creation of states curtailed the domineering tendencies of the major ethnic groups and secured some measure of autonomy for the minority groups. Members of the major ethnic groups now find themselves as minorities in some new states, while those who have hitherto been minorities in the old states now find themselves as majorities in some new states. As Bulama (n.d.) noted, the old regional hegemony by the three major tribes in their respective regions is now a thing of the past. Between 1960 and 1996, creation of states within the federal system comprised 3 regions (1960), 4 regions (1963), 12 states (1967), 19 states (1976), 21 states (1987), 30 states (1991) and since 36 states in 1996. The Land Use Decree on its part vests all land in a state in the Governor of the state that holds the land in trust for the use and common benefit of all Nigerians. The rationale being that the Governor can allocate land to any applicant irrespective of his or her state of origin. However, in reality, Nigerians are discriminated against from buying certain pieces of land because of ethnic and religious considerations.

Furthermore, the National Youth Service Corps was conceived as another policy that could help unite the country. Created by Decree No. 24 of May 22, 1973, the National Youth service Corps sought to enhance the interaction among the nascent educated elite in the country scattered in different parts of the country by providing them with the opportunity of living and serving in some developmental capacities in states other than their places of origin so they could better understand the cultures, perhaps the language and general lifestyle of their host communities. Thus, while helping to develop different parts of Nigeria through their one-year compulsory national service, young educated Nigerians were to also understand more about their other "brethren" living in other parts of Nigeria, their strengths and challenges. This was to be useful for these young ones when they assume leadership position because they would be able to proffer solutions to the challenges other Nigerians are facing and be guided and inspired by the strengths of other Nigerians. However, the scheme has been fraught with ethnic consideration, favoritism and cronyism in the posting of corps members, exposure of these youths to security risks as was seen during the 2011 General Elections where many corps members of Southern descent were butchered by some angry northern youths, corruption and misappropriation of funds. As Ojo (2009) noted, another dimension to the problem facing the thriving of the NYSC in Nigeria is the problematic nature of citizenship, indigeneship and settler status in Nigeria. In this sense, many Nigerian youths have experienced more of frustration rather than integration because after serving in a particular state other than theirs, they do not expect to get jobs where they have thanklessly undergone the NYSC programme because in many cases, they would be tagged as non-indigenes and will be forced to go back to their states of origin to avoid being discriminated against. Even when they are employed, it is on a contract basis.

Another nation-building policy was the Federal Character Principle initiated by the government. The aim of the policy was to achieve the fair and effective representation of the various components of the federation in the country's position of power, status and influence (Ugoh & Ukpere, 2012). The federal character principle was later enshrined in the 1979 Constitution of Nigeria with the goal to accommodate the diverse linguistic, ethnic, religious and geographic groups in the decision-making, socio-political and economic apparatuses of the state. The policy also aimed to foster unity, peace, equal access to state resources and promote the integration of the less advantaged states for better improvement and good conditions of living in the country. Nevertheless, as laudable as the policy was there was a yawning gap between intent and actual practice of the policy, thus making it counterproductive. The policy has been criticised for introducing crass mediocrity into the public service, weak at fighting ethnicity, cronyism and corruption and has been politicized. It is thus seen as engendering instability rather than integration.

The movement of the Federal Capital Territory from Lagos to Abuja was seen as an integrative policy of government to further unite Nigerians. As Bulama (n.d.) observed, tribal-related problems formed part of the reasons that led to the choice of Abuja as the new Federal Capital Territory. According to Bulama, the underlying tribal considerations were vividly enunciated in the Report of the Committee on the location of the Federal Capital Territory. The report stated *inter alia* that:

There is no doubt that Nigeria is a federation, consisting of a large number of ethnic and language groups with differing culture and traditions. Now, Lagos is within an area traditionally belonging to one of the major ethnic groups, namely, the Yoruba ... In our view, the circumstances of Nigeria demand that the capital be not situated within a city the type of Lagos with strong connection with one of the major ethnic groups.

In contrast, as Bulama writes, Abuja was chosen upon the following considerations that:

It is our belief that one way for forging the idea of unity of this nation is by building a capital city which will belong to every other Nigerian, where every Nigerian will rest assured that he has an opportunity to live in parity with every other Nigerian, and where no Nigerian will be regarded either in law or in the facts as a "native foreigner."

As Ojo (1998) argues, both the politics and administration of the new federal capital territory have not been helpful. The arrangement is so haphazard that the Chairman and some members of the committee that recommended the new capital have openly lamented that the essence of the new capital has been jettisoned. The whole essence of the concept of a new federal capital territory as a symbol of unity and nationhood has been completely put into abeyance. In a nutshell, it appears Abuja is organised as "a revenge project" because some northern elements see it as belonging to the north.

Another effort was the introduction of the revenue sharing formula which aimed at addressing the violence taking place in the oil rich delta, Nigeria's golden goose, and was a response to quell the agitation for resource control. For instance, the 1999 constitution allocated 15% to those oil producing states via the derivation principle. Although it is early to judge the impact the policy will have on the overall socio-economic framework in the South-South, evidence of growth spurts is beginning to be seen in such states as Akwa Ibom, Delta and even Bayelsa. As long as the governors of the oil rich delta states eschew kleptocracy, funds earned through derivation could be channeled towards addressing environmental degradation, infrastructural decay and the vicious cycle of underdevelopment in existence. Beyond increased revenue allocation, the Niger Delta Development Corporation (NDDC) was established to initiate development strides for the region

The unifying National Policy on Tertiary Education is another factor that Akpan (1990) considers to be aimed at national integration in Nigeria. In this sense, Akpan argues that Nigerian universities were seen to "serve as instruments for fostering national unity". Quoting the National Policy on Education, Akpan asserted that for universities to serve as effective instruments for cementing national unity (i) The quality of instruction in Nigerian Universities would be improved with a view to further enhancing objectivity and tolerance; (ii) University development would ensure a more even geographical distribution to provide a fairer spread of higher educational facilities; (iii) Admission of students and recruitment of staff into universities and other institutions of higher learning would be on a broad national basis; (iv) Universities would be required to develop teacher and student exchange programmes to improve both inter-university communication and knowledge of the country; (v) And widespread ignorance among Nigerian groups about each other and about themselves would be remedied by instituting a compulsory first year course in the social organisation, customs, culture and history of the nations and its peoples. The award of degrees is to be contingent upon passing this course. However, Akpan rues the failure of higher institutions in the country, especially universities to be an integrative tool because (i) most universities in the country have exceeded the 30% quota for the 'locality' criterion favoring individual states where the universities are located more than other areas; (ii) universities recruit most of their students from their immediate geo-political and cultural environments. The proportions range from 34% for the University of Calabar to 65% for ABU Zaria. Interesting exceptions are found in the University of Ilorin, though located in the Northern geo-political region but draws 2% of its students from the North as compared with 51% from the South-west, and the University of Benin which though located in the Mid-West geo-political region draws almost twice as many students from the South-east; (iii) there exists a clear distinction in the pattern of student recruitment between the Northern and the Southern universities. The percentage of Northern students enrolled in Southern universities is extremely low. In the East, it rarely exceeds one percent, and in the West it varies from two to seven percent. On the contrary, the percentage of Southern students enrolled in Northern universities is quite substantial, ranging from three percent at Bayero University, Kano, to fifty-seven at the University of Ilorin. To make the universities an instrument of integration, more needs to be done to address challenges

Other measures taken by successive governments over the years to meet the yearning for national integration in the country have been:

1. The introduction of the principle of National Integration by the 1979 constitution, which was a deliberate effort to tackle the problem facing the practice of a true federalism. The constitutional approach to national integration recognizes the diverse and plural nature of the Nigerian society. The constitution is therefore directed towards combating what has been described as the "parochialism of Ignorance" that breeds suspicion and distrust among the various ethnic groups.
2. Establishment of unity Schools run by the federal government tends to promote unity in diversity.
3. Introduction of a uniform Local Government system in Nigeria is yet another measure.

Major Hurdles towards National Integration in Nigeria

While it is easy and very tempting to blame the colonialists for all of Nigeria's woes, history and recent events in the country have revealed the covert selfishness, hunger for power and primitive accumulation exhibited by the

political elite. Much worse than this, many political leaders exploit ethnicity for personal advantages. Consequently, the first hurdle in the path of national integration in Nigeria has been a regenerative breed of selfish and greedy political gladiators who seize power through the barrel of the gun or through stolen electoral mandates. As they competed for power, prestige and associated benefits, the political elite in a bid to secure the support of members of their own ethnic groups accentuate ethnic differences and demonize members of other ethnic groups. The brutal killings of youth corps members in the North following the declaration of the results of the presidential elections in 2011 speak volumes of the naked thirst for power and political position which brings out the beast in political leaders.

Secondly, corruption has so permeated the entire fabric of state that the issues that cause disaffection among ethnic nationalities in the country such as poverty, hunger, illiteracy and its attendant limited opportunities, unemployment, marginalization, infrastructural decay, homelessness and lack of access to quality health are products of corruption. Rather than look to the West to find solutions for corruption, Nigeria should begin to look to the East (Asia) where capital or severe punishment is meted out on corrupt state officials. Skewed federal system as it is being practiced in Nigeria today is another challenge for national integration. In their very thorough study on the failure of the federal system to address the question of unity, local rule and development in the country, Imhonopi & Urim (2012) argue that federalism as it is presently practiced in Nigeria suffers because of lack of fiscal federalism, over-centralisation of power at the centre, laidback or non-viable states, absence of state police, among others. More importantly, federalism in Nigeria has failed to guarantee national integration on one hand and yet fails to guarantee local rule on the other hand. According to them, although Nigeria does not have a better option for democracy, it cannot continue to administer the polity based on the existing federal arrangement.

The fear of losing control by the ruling class is another issue standing in the path of national integration in Nigeria. For many years now, the people of Nigeria have continuously canvassed for an opportunity to hold a national conversation to address the present political configuration called Nigeria all to no avail. Building on the scholarly work of Nnoli (1979), Ifeanchio & Nwagwu (2009) have contended that the ruling class in Nigeria inherited a state structure and has left it without any form of modification or moderation up until now. According to them, instead, the ruling class is preoccupied with the use of state paraphernalia for accumulating surplus without producing this surplus. The resultant contradiction is an institutionalized myopic and visionless ethnic-centered leadership with separatist and particularistic political outlook (Nnoli 1979). Fifthly, lack of political will to do the right thing by the political leadership has remained one reason the country has continued to flounder in the sea of confusion and tottering the precipice of ethnic division.

Another hurdle to realizing national integration in Nigeria is the existence of weak institutions of the state. It seems these institutions are kept weak to feather the political and economic fortunes of the ruling class. In Nigeria, it is criminal to be honest and honest to be criminal. Such weak, embryonic, sterile, insensitive and amoral characteristics of state institutions have further tilted Nigeria to the precipice. Lastly, lack of fairness, justice and equity in the country with regard to resource allocation and distribution, power sharing, enjoyment of fundamental human rights and punishment of criminals who hide under political umbrellas or bunkers created by the ruling classes takes the country backwards with regard to national cohesion.

Conclusion and recommendations

As Oyeyemi (2002) rightly observed, Nigeria is a multicultural society, a conglomerate of nations with different peoples and cultures, a basket of different religions and world-views and a country with the diverse expectations of its people. As a recipe for Nigeria's growth and development, and by extension cohesion, he recommended the need to recognize that none of the ethnic groups, big or small, shares a uniform dream about Nigeria. This is because the ethnic groups' worldviews are completely different such as their expectations from their leaders, their notions of government, their moral standards, their perceptions and understanding of religion, their ideas of how to live and regulate their lives and their goals and missions as ethnic nationalities. He expatiated this viewpoint with the example that Nigeria's heterogeneity can be seen in this wise: whereas one group would want their children to go to school, some others would want theirs to go to the farms and mosques; while a group could relate with men of another faith without any friction, another is odiously intolerant; while some are willing to move /along with the twenty-first century and be a part of the world, others want to bask in the bliss of the blind Stone Age. He admitted that although these choices are not wrong in themselves, ethnic groups must be allowed to make their different choices, being different people with different cultures, dreams, hopes and aspirations.

This cannot obviously happen until a consensual agreement is reached by all Nigerians on the future of the country. By writing in the constitution the indivisibility of the country, the military drafters of that constitution failed to respect the wishes of the Nigerian people and that sovereignty lies in and with the people. For the country to forestall a repeat of the Arab Spring in the country, the establishment must begin to listen to the

people and take steps to remedy years of wrongs and injustices.

In order to achieve national integration, therefore, not only must the government reel out fantastic policies and programmes, it must begin to build enduring institutions bigger and more powerful than the leadership. The leadership must become more accountable to the people and those members of the ruling class who fan the embers of hate, exploitation, ethnicity, marginalization and underdevelopment must be made to face the full wrath of the law. Corruption which has become endemic must be fought until it is either eradicated or forcibly punished so that those who engage in it do so at their own risk. Mass mobilization of the hoi polloi is necessary to reorient them with the right values consistent with a modern and emerging economy. Nigeria's diversity is not the problem, the managers of the state are. Nigerians must arise from the ashes of fear, wrongly inspired awe for political leaders and timidity and begin to make demands on the political leadership on what they want. For instance, the fuel subsidy strike of January 2012 sent an eruptive message to the ruling class that the people would no longer sit idly and watch them ride the country aground. The time to question the artificiality of Nigeria and to demand for a tinkering of this mammoth political edifice in line with the expectations of the Nigerian people is now. To claim this victory, the people must lead this vanguard of change.

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