Article

Proto-Nationalisms as Sub-Text for the Crisis of Governance in Nigeria

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Abstract

There are several accounts of the genealogy and manifestations of the myriad governance crises, which Nigeria continues to face five decades after independence. Although no single account is sufficient to explain the governance misadventures, one key point resonating is that progress and development have proved elusive over the years. In this article, we seek to move away from the dominant characterization of this governance crisis as deriving directly from the consequences of a monolithic oil economy, a deeply fractured and volatile political terrain, or even corrupt and patrimonial rule. Instead, the article locates the root of Nigeria's governance crisis in the queer pattern of the emergence, reinvention, and manipulation of proto-nationalisms characterized not by any nationalistic quest for independence and spatial liberation but one pursued to gain foothold in governance and to partake in its perquisites. Invariably, the post-colonial nation-states that emerged at independence in many African countries, for the most part, neither followed through with any logical expression of genuine nationalism nor mobilized toward a shared vision of nationhood. The article shows how individuals and groups within the polity soon became locked in contested and irreconcilable positions that further made the construction of a truly nationalistic identity difficult, if not forlorn. This article submits that successive post-colonial administrations unimaginatively followed the divide-and-rule traditions of the colonial state and thus failed to mobilize the popular support required for the construction of a broad-based national identity that is key to managing the protracted governance crises the country has experienced since independence.

Keywords

Africa, area studies, humanities, political economy, economic science, social sciences, comparative politics, political science, ethnicity and politics, intersectional politics, political history, politics and humanities, social movements and activism, rationality and society, sociological theory, sociology, comparative/historical sociology, peace, war, and social conflict, political economy of the world-system, political sociology

"Colonialism wasn't simply the creation of unnatural borders or unfair terms of trade, it was something experienced . . . day after day, year after year."

—President Barack Obama (July 11, 2009)

Introduction

Shortly before independence was declared, *Time* wrote of "Nigeria's impressive demonstration of democracy workability in Africa" (Crowder, 1987, p. 8). Thus, at the lowering of the British Union Jack on the midnight of September 30, 1960 and declaration of independence on October 1, 1960, expectations were understandably high-pitched that Nigeria had all it might take to lead Africa, not just as an emerging first superpower but also as a stabilizing force on the continent (Siollun, 2009). In the gratifying words of Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, the first Prime Minister, to the departing British Governor-General, Sir James Robertson, Nigerians

"are grateful to the British officers, whom we have known as masters, and then as leaders, and finally as partners, and always as friend" (Betts, 1985, p. 200). For the most part too, the prospect of a vibrant nation, especially one with the largest concentration of Black people in the world and an apparently sound agrarian economy with bountiful oil reserve waiting to be tapped, was more real than apparent.

Before long, however, the country once toasted by the international community as the beacon of liberal democratic values in Africa and the economic powerhouse of the African continent became the subject of economic difficulty, political violence, and growing poverty among Nigerians (Wittaker,

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1991). Within the first few years of independence, the new country became convulsive, at least politically, beginning with the degeneration of the constitutional crisis in the Western Regional House of Assembly. Thereafter, and in quick succession, other politically driven conflicts began to erupt: the suspension of the Constitution and declaration of state of emergency in the Western Region, intense intra-party and inter-party rivalries, trumped up treason charges against vociferous opposition leaders, and the general overheating of the polity reflecting in political violence and the attendant state repression, to mention a few.

But, then, it would seem that the contentious political climate that the country degenerated into was not anticipated, certainly not by the generation of nationalist leaders that painstakingly—but also enthusiastically—negotiated the country's independence. Indeed, there were indications that the erstwhile nationalists on whose laps the mantle of political powers fell were fully committed to the tenets of liberal democracy, albeit the British Westminster variant. Although there were moments of mixed feelings during the series of conferences to negotiate independence (Crowder, 1987), especially over the terms of engagement between and among the component political units, there was unfortunately also an implicit convergence of interest among the regional governments and their dominant political parties that several critical issues were either overlooked or swept under the carpet.

By any means, however, Nigeria was not a political basket case as the political events that unfolded in the country also resonated across Africa. For the most part too, the attainment of independence did not fundamentally transform the structure of governance in most African states. Just as well, the political class that replaced the departing colonial officers—having been tutored in the best traditions of colonial administration—was only committed to the protection of the "colonial legacy" rather than to pursue any radical agenda to uproot and replace it. Apart from upholding the colonial legacy, the nationalists embraced the authoritarian bureaucratic practices of their predecessors; *grosso modo*, the new independent African states retained the forces of authoritarianism and detachment from the public that were the key hallmarks of colonial rule. Rather than come to terms with and transcend the contradictions of the notorious past, the post-colonial states and the political elite that ran them after independence retained the essential attributes, idiosyncrasies, and characteristics of their colonial mentors.

It is against the backdrop of the earliest experiences of governance misgivings that faced Nigeria, and other African countries, that this article is set. Although there are several accounts of the genealogy and manifestations of the myriad of governance crises which Nigeria continues to face five decades after independence, our point here is that no single factor is sufficient to explain the country's governance misadventures. Yet, one key point of convergence is that

progress and development have so far eluded it due to its plethora of perennial and burdensome governance problems. In this article, we seek to move away from the dominant characterization of the governance crisis facing Nigeria as being a direct consequence of her perverted oil economy, a deeply fractured and volatile political terrain, or even corruption and patrimonial rule. Instead, the article locates the root of the country's governance crisis in the queer pattern of the emergence, reinvention, and embrace of proto-nationalisms characterized *not* by the any nationalistic demand for independence for its sake but that which simply, and implicitly, favored gaining a share of government and its perquisites without any serious commitment to values such as integrity and service.

Historical facts revealed that the so-called nationalists had dissipated little or no effort toward anticipating the fate of the state to be bestowed to them (Geddes, 2010; Olaiya, 2014). Ironically, they were prominent figures in the inter/intra-ethnic crisis that pervaded in the period of pre-independence jostling. Writing on the political experiences of Nigeria, Geddes observed that the supposedly crucial period of struggles for state formation was in fact characterized by "bitter and tempestuous" engagement between leaders of North and South:

> Strong resentment amongst minority ethnic groups at the organisation of the new state . . . rivalries which developed between the major ethnic groups and their parties in the pre-independence period . . . strong antipathies and resentments on the part of the citizens. He argued that these resentments and tensions were to result in the destabilisation of both regional and federal governments . . . [and] as Anifowose says, "It was against this back-ground of deep-rooted distrust and conflict among Nigerian politicians, that Nigeria became independent." (Geddes, 2010, pp. 4-6)

Notes on Nationalism and Proto-Nationalism in Nigeria

Nationalism as a political and social philosophy begins from the premise that the welfare of the nation-state is at the epicenter of the discourse on politics and governance. Basically, the notion of nationalism describes a collective state of mind or consciousness in which people believe that their primary duty and loyalty is to the nation, with a lot of emphasis placed on national superiority and glorification of certain national cultural virtues. Although the idea of nationalism has an atavistic past, its modern-day reincarnation is sometimes traced to the 1789 French Revolution (Virtanen, 2005). In contemporary times, the idea of nationalism operates alongside formal legal and institutional frameworks of society as ingredients for the construction of political order and social cohesiveness in any state. For a group of people to express nationalism, they must first identify themselves as belonging to a nation, that is, a large group of people with shared identities based on common history, religion, language, race, to

name a few (Ajala, 2009). In other words, where common identity and formal authority structure over a large territory (i.e., the state) exist, nationalism becomes possible.

Although nationalism is unique to the modern world, some of its elements can be traced throughout history. The earliest roots of nationalism are probably to be found among the ancient Hebrews who conceived of themselves as a chosen people, that is, a people superior to others and with a common culture and history. The ancient Greeks also felt superior to all other peoples, apart from their shared loyalty to the political community. The growth of the middle class and the thirst of that group for political power, in turn, paved way for democratic theory and practices closely connected with the emergence of modern nationalism. Drivers of the French Revolution, for instance, insisted on establishing freedom, equality, and liberty; effectively, they viewed the nation as inseparable from the people. The idea propounded by the French revolutionaries glorified the nation, and in doing so, brought nationalism into the political domain for the first time.

This article tinkers with the complexity of the problem exerted by the nature and structure of African nationalism and how that has contributed in great measure to the failure of governance in the post-colonies. We bear in mind here the caution against infinite number or loose use of what Barrington (1997) called "'something' nationalisms." Yet, the adoption of the term *proto-nationalism* is in line with the coinage of Crowder (1987), which he used to demarcate actual nationalists whose ultimate aim is to struggle for national identity and autonomous political community that is capable of self-determination from the opportunistic nationalists whose aim is to gain the rein of government. We therefore found the concept of "proto-nationalism," as enunciated in Crowder (1987), appropriate to describe the uncritical and hasty acceptance of (conditions of the) nations handed over to the so-called nationalists at independence. Nationalism, as Barrington (1997) rightly argued, is not about the patriotism to the nation-state within the framework of international state system but a people's loyalty to the ideal of shared cultural identity and self-determination. As we have thus argued later in this article, such movements hardly conform to nationalism, properly so called, which "is about two things-defining the nation and defining its territory" (Barrington, 1997, pp. 714-715). The movements that led to independence in Nigeria particularly was not geared toward ethnic or cultural identity but about a collective mobilization of all forces available for power shift from White rulers to Black ones. This is the concept of proto-nationalisms, described in Crowder's (1987) epic book and adopted in the work.

In particular, it brings to the fore the fundamental point that the nationalism that was marshaled in the struggle for independence and state making in these former colonies did not conform with known temperament of nationalism in which nationhood forms the primary motive and in which common custom and ancestry form the bedrock for struggles

to gain "territorial autonomy and sovereignty" (Barrington, 1997, p. 714). Rather, the struggles took place within the context of territoriality arbitrarily demarcated by colonialists—but that which did not correspond with the realities of each group—the boundaries either dismantled or completely obliterate existing primordial nations and replaced it with carved territories for easy administration (Olaiya, 2014). For instance, a considerable part of northern Nigeria "was part of a north African caliphate, with a number of well-organised emirates whose territories existed within and overlapped parts of the current nations of Nigeria, Chad, Sudan and Cameroon" (Geddes, 2010, p. 2). The same largely predominates in the southern Nigeria where "a number of independent kingdoms existed," which also often extended beyond present national and regional boundaries (p. 2).

Nationalism certainly cannot mean the bandying together of strange bed-fellows or attempt to mix "oil with water" (Clifford, 1921, p. 12). As Geddes (2010) pointed out,

> The naivety of planners was evident in the way in which potential problems were handled in the lead-up to independence. Despite the early warnings of writers like Awolowo and experiences of other West African postcolonial countries, it was assumed that with the establishment of democracy, tribalism and ethnic difference would fade as people learned to identify themselves primarily with the nation rather than with their own ethnic communities. (p. 3)

Considering the huge difference of ethnological, religious, and political conditions of the inhabitants (Clifford, 1921), the nationalists could have indeed seen beyond the artificial nations created from colonies. In his book titled *Path to Nigerian Freedom*, Awolowo (1947) argued that the uncritical acceptance and nature of the colonial territory known as Nigeria is bound to be fatal. According to him,

> There are various national or ethnical groups in the country . . . There is as much difference between them as there is between Germans, English, Russians and Turks for instance. The fact that they have a common [Colonial] overlord does not destroy this fundamental difference . . . All these incompatibilities among the various peoples in the country militate against unification . . . It is evident from the experiences of other nations that incompatibilities such as we have enumerated are barriers which cannot be overcome by glossing over them. (Awolowo, 1947, pp. 48-49, emphasis added)

The colonialists deliberately played down on ethnic coalescing for reasons good for selfish, albeit contingent, purposes of hitch-free administration while the "nationalists" equally played along for obvious reason of opportunistic rule beyond their kinsmen (Olaiya, 2014). As expected, in West Africa, the "nationalists" preferred to identify themselves as Nigerians rather than Yoruba, Hausa, or Igbo; Gold Coaster rather than Akan, Ewe, or Guan; Senegalese rather than Wollof; Ivoirians rather than Baoules (Crowder, 1976,

pp. 405-407). However, the intention of the colonialists was not to eradicate ethnicity but to stem the expressions of nationalism they produce and perhaps also to prevent tribal conflicts. Thus, the acceptance of the arbitrary colonial borders (and subsequent location of the processes of nation building within them) smacks of naivety and/or willful acquiesces, which became a major factor underlying the governance crisis that erupted thereafter. The colonial rulers and successors in governments desired independence without properly interrogating the inter-territoriality and intra-boundary peculiarities of the people of banded communities, their identities, and ethnic idiosyncrasy. For the most part, the emerged nation-states were so incongruent and strange to the peoples that rather than lead to the liberation of those particular spaces, the people interacted more in open aggression cum conflict or, at best, mutual suspicion (Davidson, 1992). As noted elsewhere, countless African leaders continued abrasively in the misapplications and, in fact, aggravated them with added patrimonialism and corruption flavors (Sachs et al., 2004). Sachs et al. (2004) concluded that it might be factual that the emerged "leaders hanged themselves and their fellow citizens, the rich countries often provided the rope." (p. 136)

An immediate implication of this lack of convergence between nation and territoriality was that it conferred on the nascent post-colonial leadership the right of appropriation, not just that of territory but also of unlimited discretion to exercise power. In any case, the acceptance of these frontiers also automatically created the necessity to cope with the forging minuscule nationhood from the disparate ethnic and sub-ethnic nationalities. It appears not accidental therefore that the pluralism of ethnicity in post-colonial Africa towered well above any other factor in fomenting crises of governance on the continent (Mkandawire, 2005). It might be that the nationalists also recognized the potential centrifugal impacts of ethnic pluralism but only as part of the "divide-and-rule" ploy of their colonial oppressors bent on denying them independence (Mkandawire, 2005). They failed to come to terms with the deeper structural meaning and implications of plural ethnicities for politics and governance then, and now. Perhaps they also appreciated, rightly so, that the ethnic groups in existence at the dawn of independence were just too tiny, ill developed, and in some instances thinly spread across colonial boundaries, to stand alone as modern states, not thus swayed by the implications that the situation might portend for the construction of nationhood. Another factor that seemed to have bothered pioneer nationalists was the language barrier; with scores of distinctive but mutually unintelligible dialects coexisting side by side. While they saw this heterogeneity as a recipe for disaster, they were filled with the illusion of nationhood and that was all that was necessary—if not sufficient—to bring disparate groups together under the same political umbrella, albeit one that could not be trusted with longevity and protection. They solicited an essentially European imagery of nationhood; one

inclined toward the myth of one language, one culture, one identity. It was too cumbersome to contemplate an alternative idea of nationhood protruding from a multiethnic, multilingual, and multicultural political clime. For instance, the Richards Constitution of 1946 had advocated "unity in diversity" but in practice had to contend with the underbellies of diversity between and among the nationalities that made up modern Nigeria.

Many critics have argued that the scissors effect of proto-nationalism and pan-Africanism merely celebrated the independence of African nations while ignoring, for the most part, the ethno-social and cultural basis of their existence and survival. While absolving themselves of the responsibility of aggravating governance problems in the immediate post-colonial era, the political leaders of the nascent African states were quick to remind their people that "political independence could only have meaning if it was accompanied by historical independence" (Ogot, 1976, p. 1). In spite of the fact that the independence of African states was defective from birth, Patrice Lumumba[1] was enthusiastic—even though economical with the truth—in proclaiming that

> history will have its say one day—not the history they teach in Brussels, Paris, Washington or United Nations, but the history taught in the countries set free from colonialism and puppet rulers. Africa will write her own history, and both north and south of the Sahara, it will be a history of glory and dignity. (Quoted in Cole, 2006, p. 29)

Because of the enormous challenges they faced, especially in rallying their disparate citizens toward genuine and home-grown nationalisms, post-independence African leaders refused to acknowledge that the states they inherited were undifferentiated and amorphous entities (Ochwada, 2005). They grossly simplified the character and directions of the struggles they are engaged in (Mkandawire, 2005). The reality, of course, was that nationalism as a homogenizing and unifying factor did not take adequate cognizance of the diverse composition of groups on ground in most African nations. Even with the much-touted "unity in diversity" program of Governor Richards in Nigeria and his post-colonial successors to date, other identities along class, gender, and ethnicity lines continue to thrive, often with unpleasant outcomes (Mama, 2005). The situation, in turn, resulted not only in the unending challenges of nation building and development but also that of social injustice, economic mismanagement, and deep-seated governance crisis.

It was precisely for this reason that Ngugu Wa Thiong'o once warned that for any country in Africa to advance and escape the vestiges of underdevelopment—as well as nurture a sharper vision of the future—the collective memories of its peoples (leaders and citizens, alike) must be rescued from the clutches of the colonial past (Mkandawire, 2005). Unfortunately, Nigerian nationalism did not uncritically embrace wholesale the "modernity" prescribed by the

colonial masters; none of the partakers that emerged within the radicalized environment of nationalist struggles, from Ghana to Tanzania, sought to an ideology and identity that would give governance and development in their respective countries an African soul. Witness, for instance, Kwame Nkrumah's "African Personality," Leopold Senghor's "Negritude," Julius Nyerere's "Ujamaa" (African Socialism), as well as the likes of Amicar Cabral and Frantz Fanon in Guinea Bissau and Algeria (Mkandawire, 2005).

In Tanzania, for instance, President Nyerere had deployed Ujamaa as the philosophical template for national development through the fostering of national self-reliance based on the transformation of economic and cultural attitudes. Economically, it required that everyone worked for the group as well as the self. Culturally, Tanzanians must learn to free themselves from dependence on European ideas and powers, including learning to do things for themselves and be satisfied with what was achieved. It also involved the implementation of free and compulsory education for all Tanzanians to sensitize them to the principles of Ujamaa. Despite the innovative ideas behind it, Ujamaa has been blamed for the catastrophic collapse of the economy, which left several people close to starvation and death. At the least, the wide acceptance of the idea and practice—unlike Nnamdi Azikiwe's "irredentism" and Obafemi Awolowo's "socialism" that never reached national limelight in Nigeria—pointed to the feasibility of idioms of nationalism on the continent, if property contextualized and mobilized (Iweriebo, 1996).

Our intention here is not to rehearse the literature of nationalism in Nigeria per se; we, in fact, acknowledge the sheer diversity and quality of scholarship on the subject matter. Instead, the concern is to solicit fresh and alternative perspectives on why the post-colonial state has been a victim of seemingly endless crisis. Essentially, this article located the roots of state failure in Nigeria in the queer character of modern state formation occasioned as it were, not by true nationalism but by the pursuit of parochial agenda masquerading as nationalism. The notion of proto-nationalism, in our view, best defines this strange, largely fake, typology of nationalism. In his seminal work *Nations and Nationalism since 1870: Programme, Myth, and Reality*, the British social historian E. J. Hobsbawm provided a strong theoretical anchor to moor the discourse on proto-nationalisms (Hobsbawm, 2004). According to him, proto-nationalism describes the "bonds" existing in human beings with tangential collectivities or community of interest and purpose, pursuing members' goals on a macro-political scale to the exclusion of others, whom they regard as strangers. For Hobsbawm, members in these "bonds" may not necessarily belong to the same ethnic group but still share certain feelings of collective belonging, which they vigorously pursue. Another point from his conceptualization of proto-nationalisms is that the select groups are eventually capable of converting their bonds and vocabularies of mobilization into generalizations about their desires for and engagement with the state, colonial and post-colonial.

Furthermore, another core attribute of proto-nationalism, according to Hobsbawm, is that the elites and their proto-nationalist ideas are often insulated from ethnicity, racism, or "negative views of others" (2004, p. 18). He, however, raised a *caveat* that although racism or ethnicity may not be important in developing proto-nationalism, its role become essential in gaining mass appeal by the elites, most especially when the need to democratize nationalism arises (Hobsbawm, 2004). At these crucial times, it would seem that proto-nationalists would not hesitate to draw on xenophobic sentiments for reinventing the idea of national superiority to mobilize the masses. Significantly, this perspective identified a positive correlation between archetypes of nationalism and mobilization against those considered to be out-group, arguing, in fact, that "there is no more effective way of bonding together the disparate section of restless peoples than to unite them against outsiders" (p. 18). In one instance, therefore, proto-nationalists could express repulsion against ethnicity or racism, while in another, non-hesitant to mobilize them to attract mass consciousness.

Only two out of the plethora of developments associated with proto-nationalism are particularly relevant here, especially given the manner in which they have assumed relevance and resilience, for good or bad, in post-independence Nigeria: religion and ethnicity (Norbu, 2005). It has long been established that a strong linkage exists between nationalistic struggle and religion (Hvithamar, 2009). Hobsbawm (2004, p. 68), again, insisted that religion is an ancient and well-tried method for establishing communion through common practice and sort of brotherhood between people, who otherwise have nothing in common. In terms of how the power configuration of nationalism affects the masses, he argued that religion is an issue around which members of communities coalesced in the era of proto-nationalism (Hedetoft, 2009; Hobsbawm, 2004). This is buttressed by the submission of Denzer (2007). In his article titled "Anti-Colonial Movements, Sub-Saharan Africa" published in the *Encyclopedia of Activism and Social Justice*, the author described how "[R]eligious institutions were especially resilient vehicles for the organisations of widespread resistance that often cut across ethnic groups and colonial boundaries" (Denzer, 2007, p. 6). He described how, between 1908 and 1928, the Nyabingi religious cult successfully organized and prosecuted recurrent inter-colonial rebellions in British Uganda and German (later Belgian) Rwanda. However, the struggle for independence in Nigeria hardly involved religious coloration. Except probably in the northern part, where call for unity centered on Islam as Attahiru, the Caliph of Sokoto, famously "attempted to evade certain British conquest by conducting *hijira"* in 1903 (p. 6), the major item of conflict during the decolonization period was ethnicity. It is essential to be added, however, that after independence, religion surfaced as the instrument of unity and force for the

promotion of sectional interest and of violence (Olaiya, 2014). Religious intolerance is thus a major institutional failure in Nigeria, and despite the entrenchment of secularism in the Nigerian Constitutions (1979 and 1999), religion continues to wreck ominous havoc on the Nigerian governance.

In this regard, the notion and practice of ethnicity, sometimes with religious undertone, is rampant (Omotola, 2010). Since independence, Nigeria has experienced "a catalogue of ethno-religious conflicts that resulted in an estimated loss of over 3 million lives and unquantifiable psychological and material damages" (Salawu, 2010, p. 1). Nigeria has more than 400 ethnic groups, distributed among two major religions of mainly Christianity and Islam (Salawu, 2010). Despite these formidable statistics, it does not mechanically follow that the sheer large number of the ethnic groups and tribes should translate to tribalism and ethnocentrism (Ukeje & Adebanwi, 2006). A possible explanation must therefore be in the hasty and uncritical manner in which the proto-nationalists accepted the state making without making necessary recourse to work on the psyche of the populace as a nation. As propagated by writers on proto-nationalism, modernization is a feature of proto-nationalism (Hobsbawm, 2004), but the Nigerian case runs to the contrary. Ethnicity among the majority groups and minority groups in both pre- and post-independent era has challenged the popular linkage between proto-nationalism and advent of modernization. There are countless cases of clashes among the ethnic groups, in which properties and city monuments are destroyed.

On the political scene, an institution of zoning formula is used to adopt candidates for important party positions, elective and appointive offices, without respect for democratic values or acumen. Hence, Nigeria's political and economic performance falls below par in comparison with other countries of comparable size and resources. The "federal character" principle introduced by the 1979 Constitution, and continued in 1999 Constitution, was designed to ensure the equitable representation of various ethnic groups in the national affairs, most especially insofar as federal appointments are very much concerned. Related to the quota system and Federal character policy is the educationally disadvantaged states clause,[2] which opportune indigenes of states so labeled to be considered for admission into federal educational institutions at grades far less than merit point.

However, the implementation of this principle leaves so much to desire. The problem is obviously more than the fact that "it tends to sacrifice merit for mediocrity leading to disaffection among the populace" (Metumara, 2010, p. 98), there is the non-recognition of the cultural needs and true demographic strength of the ethnic groups. Thus apart from the clueless implementation of the policy, its conception took no cognizance of the diverse ethno-cultural peculiarities of the nationalities and their drive and needs in which, for instance, the educational infrastructural needs of each state differ, and in some cases, very tremendously. The general implication of ethno-religious politicking is that ethnocentrism and lack of

patriotism reign supreme. The political atmosphere is dominated by "big men" rather than "big institutions," as identified by President Barrack Obama of the United States.[3] The vast majority of the populace is politically relegated to passive onlookers, not even voters, as the votes do not count again due to widespread electoral malpractices.

In the light of all the above, a recurrent implication of the resilience of proto-nationalism has been the characteristic lack of politicization in terms of social communication and mass mobilization in a manner that could easily key the citizenry into any broad national agenda, in a manner that is sustainable, "own-able," and patriotic. Thus, when a society is constructed from the crucible of proto-nationalism, it is unlikely for it to transcend the challenges of frequent—often divisive—particularistic interests, as the post-colonial experiences of Nigeria in the section that follows reveal.

Proto-Nationalism and the Governance Misadventures in Nigeria

There is a particularly critical genre of scholarship that argued that nationalism never took place in Nigeria (Norbu, 2005), at least, going by the definition of the concept not as popular loyalty to the states manufactured from colonial territories and its legalistic and Eurocentric characteristics dictated by colonialism but as a distinctive type of politicized social consciousness originating from within the core of the societal fabrics (Norbu, 2005). According to Norbu, nationalism connotes the mobilization of broad-based national—rather than group—consciousness to wrest power from (not to wrestle with) the imperialists. In this regard, it is seen as a "specific historical phenomenon" involving the holistic reconfiguration of the social consciousness of a nation, and beyond this, the spillover of such consciousness in the political and economic sphere as a prelude to the emergence of an industrial society (Norbu, 2005). The integration would naturally increase social communication among members within a given society. He wrote that

> nationalism is the resultant ideological expression of a highly organized and politicized society, with its both rational and non-rational foundations. Its non-rational aspects which provide protein for nationalism predates the modern nation-state and without such a psychic core, nationalism would be practically inconceivable in the modern era. *In short, nationalism cannot be invented by a minority; it has to be passionately felt by the majority*. (p. 29, emphasis added)

The thrust of Norbu's (2005) argument, therefore, was that nationalism in its essentialist form never really occurred in Nigeria not only for the predominantly bourgeois character of the struggle for independence but also for the fact that the focus was on capturing power instead of real national emancipation. This is an often ignored perspective, but one that is critical in understanding why the operators of the

commercial and industrial segments of the colonial infrastructure did not feel sufficiently threatened to leave with their political, military, and consular counterparts as soon as independence was achieved. It seemed obvious to them that the three dominant regional political parties were divided in purpose and only eager to occupy the political space leaving economic space, like the British firms like the United African Company (UAC), John Holt, Leventis, intact (Crowder, 1987). The peculiar brand of African nationalism and its connotations have been aptly canonized by Frantz Fanon in 1966. Even though Fanon was referring to Africa as a whole, his narrative bespoke the circumstances surrounding nationalism in Nigeria, more than elsewhere (Mkandawire, 2005). Fanon argued vehemently against bourgeois anti-colonial nationalism whose goal he saw as "quite simply . . . [to] transfer into native hands . . . those unfair advantages which are the legacies of colonialism." Their mission, according to him, "has nothing to do with transforming the nation; it consists, prosaically, of being the transmission line between the nation and a capitalism, rampant though camouflaged, which today puts on the mask of neo-colonialism" (quoted in Mkandawire, 2005, p. 21).

Because British colonialism formed Nigeria through a process likable to *political artificial insemination*, which brought a disparate group of peoples and regions together, the nationalism that became a political factor in Nigeria during the interwar period derived less from any sense of common nationality than pan-Africanism (Mkandawire, 2005). Indeed, the initial goal of this struggle was not self-determination but simply to secure greater participation in governance at the regional level. Inconsistencies in British policy reinforced cleavage along regional lines as regional elites simultaneously struggled to preserve the indigenous cultures of each area while embracing modernity (British ways of governance). In the North, however, the widespread appeal of Islamic religion did not only uphold the rule and legitimacy of the emirs but also ensured that the bourgeoning nationalist sentiments were decidedly anti-Western. In the South, however, the largely westernized nationalist elites opposed indirect rule, considering it an anathema for excluding them from the political space.

The Nigerian state has certainly passed through a number of hard times. Much and recurrent as the problems are, there have never been a dearth of attempts to locate the bottom line. Generally, much of the criticisms have been leveled against the politicians, who have purportedly derailed the legacy of liberal democracy inherited from the colonial masters, and the military, who have ruled the nation much more than the civilian administration and have perpetuated more socioeconomic atrocities. In terms of governance dividends, the report cards of the military have been worse than that of the politicians considering all indices for measurement of governance. The "high hope" that Nigeria will emerge as a dominant power bloc was soon truncated by military coup (Siollun, 2009). The military have wrecked most havoc in the Nigerian governance crisis as all indices of institutional collapse received more knocks even after the advent of "correction" regimes. This complements, to an extent, the belief in some quarters that the military in politics are agency of conservatism and destabilization, as well as that of economic destruction (Oyediran, 1996). Oyediran (1996) found the right quotation about the Nigerian military from Professor Billy J. Dudley, as follows:

> . . . their (the military) incapacity to rule derives, not from the fact that they lack legitimacy, but that, like the politicians they have ousted, *they get caught in the cross current of personal, lineage, clan, ethnic and other loyalties and sentiments which influenced and shaped the actions of politicians*. (p. 98, emphasis in original)

However, we intend to posit that military advent and the ultimate misadventure into the Nigerian politics are products of colonization, decolonization, and queer nationalistic struggles all of which jointly and severally configured the state of Nigeria. Broadly, we intend to argue that the origin of military rule in Africa lied with nature and style adopted in the colony, when most political resistance were finally resolved by military incursions and where constabulary police are used freely to silence all voices of dissents. A renowned historian argued that

> the many studies of resistance to colonial occupation have shown that for the most part the colonial state was conceived in violence rather than by negotiation. This violence was often quite out of proportion to the task in hand, with burnings of villages, destruction of crops, killing of women and children and the execution of leaders . . . The colonial state was not only conceived in violence, but it was maintained by the free use of it . . . Indeed if the colonial state provided a model for its inheritors it was that government rested not on consent but force. [And] not a few of those who eventually inherited power knew from personal experience. (Crowder, 1987, pp. 11-13)

This claim becomes robust by the assertion that military officers who trained and served under the colonial armies in West Africa impelled the proliferation of military coups in the sub-region; a situation that only worsened the problem of corruption (Kieh & Agbese, 2004). However, military misrule originated from the nature of colonial rule in its "deliberate discouragement of mass politics as all military and quasi-military regimes are liable to do" (Ekeh, 1996, p. 35). Ekeh (1996) argued that

> whatever legitimacy . . . the colonial authorities possessed derived . . . from the monopoly of the means of the means of violence . . . Colonial administrators were in fact "praetors" and the system of rule was authoritarian and dictatorial. (p. 35)

From the above, it seems clear that the seed of military incursion and their misrule and most certainly the civilian lack of

respect for rule of law had been sown during the colonial era only waiting to be [and did get] activated after independence.

Corruption is yet another problem for which Nigerian governance crisis has been explained. There can be no doubt that corruption and lack of accountability pervade Nigerian public and private institutions, and the corrupt practices have taken an adverse toll on the governance of the nation. We however argue that corruption in Nigeria is more of a product of modern governance system established and continually fanned by the embers of colonial aristocratic heritage, whereby the rulers live large at the expense of the people. For instance, the colonial Governor "enjoyed to the full the outward trappings of power, living in an imposing palace, driven in large limousines flying the flag, deferred to by all, and on ceremonial occasions dressed in cocked hat and plumes and a quasi-military uniform" (Crowder, 1987, p. 15). It would therefore be appropriate to argue that lack of accountability for public fund resulting in such affluent lifestyle on the part of European officers coupled with lack of proper institution of necessary checks, which made such impunity impossible in the home countries of the colonial masters, and which the hurried circumstances of the independence disallowed in the new states, are germane factors for the entrenchments and pervasiveness of corruption in the sub-region.

As far as policy failure is concerned, public policies are not arrived at by trial and errors made without the historical or socioeconomic preconditions (Mkandawire & Soludo, 1999). According to them, the initial conditions must necessarily take into cognizance the "nature of colonial rule and the institutional arrangements it bequeath the former colonies, the decolonization process, and the economic interests and policies of the erstwhile colonial masters" (Mkandawire & Soludo, 1999, pp. 2, 3). It therefore follows that to avoid the invidious socioeconomic and political manifestations afflicting most African states, a painstaking appreciation in the initial condition is essential, and that wrongly specifying these initial conditions can undermine the potentials of the policies.

Nationalism and Governance Crisis in Nigeria

A number of explanations have been outlined for the recalcitrance of governance or state failure in Nigeria. A good starting point is that there is need for a development paradigmatic shift, which would explain and offer solutions to problems of industrialization, agriculture, and other economic development component. Nationalism is deeply connected to economic development (Mkandawire, 2005). Nationalist project is an important key to nation building and economic development; the two are virtually inseparable (Mkandawire, 2005).

Another opinion is that development idea fostered on the economy is alien and therefore forlorn; an opinion that is as false as it is insulting to Nigerian intellectuals and political leaders who have toiled relentlessly to seek material progress to the Nigerian society. In fact, looking at the nationalism historiography, it is clear that development, described as the eradication of "unholy trinity of ignorance, poverty, and disease" (Mkandawire, 2005, p. 13), has always been a central focus of nationalist agenda. Indeed, a common slogan against colonialism was the failure to provide clear development framework for industrialization and mechanization of agriculture (Crowder, 1987). Yet, upon the attainment of independence, the central objectives of those lofty development ideas, muted and vituperatively propounded were derailed by the nationalists themselves from the blueprints to fulfill neo-colonialist agenda.

Nigeria's social pluralism is understandably a cog in terms of modernization, nation building, development, and governance. Babangida (2002) argued that colonialism and the political economy of the post-colonial state have engendered several dimensions of "pluralism, complexity and corporatism in the country." According to him, the social classes, which have accelerated in development since the Nigerian Civil War in response to public policies on the economy, have multiplied the segments of social stratification. Nigeria's nationalists may have recognized the fissiparous potential early and chose to ignore or banish any political or economic idea based on these identities by accepting the national frontiers as outlined by the colonialists. There were sharp disagreements among the nationalists during various debates for independence, especially between Sir Ahmadu Bello and Chief Obafemi Awolowo on issues bordering on ethnic interest (Aboro, 2005); yet, they carried on with the project "Nigeria." Even Hugh Clifford (1921), the colonial Governor who took over from Lord Lugard "the amalgamator" of the southern and northern Protectorates, accepted that the project was a mistake when he said the amalgamation was like "mixing oil with water" (p. 12). However, the British colonialists encouraged tribalistic or regional politics. It is also recognized that regional politics introduced during the colonial era remains the bane of the modern politics (Balarabe-Musa, 1996). Therefore, there can be nothing progressive about such politics as it tends to create in the political space the divisive, obscurantist, and retrogressive forces. Most significantly, he declared that the British did this to ensure that the political hegemony continues to serve foreign powers, "who keep us [Nigerians] divided so that they can subjugate us and exploit our human and natural resources" (Iweriebo, 1996, p. iv).

There are more compelling reasons to indict that the seed of ethnicity was hatched by the British colonialists. For instance, that the term *minority* was practically unknown to the Nigerian political system (Ekeh, 1996). The term only gained currency in the tense years between 1952 and 1960 that prepared Nigeria for independence from British imperial rule. But the majority/minority dichotomy that was to become the apocalypse in the political system was sown with the introduction of indirect rule. As the "master principle of

governance" in British colonies, the doctrine was actually a political instrument for organizing power in colonial Nigeria and served to recognize the cultural distinctions in each kinship grouping. However, the doctrine granted limited political space and interaction by restricting administrative actions within each locality, which explains the lack of inter-ethnic political interactions among the various ethnic groupings prior to the 1950s in Nigeria. Apart from intra-ethnic political apathy that indirect rule engendered, by dint of one rule or the other, it imposed restrictions on inter-ethnic relations even in more severe manner than it obtained prior to colonization (Ekeh, 1996). Ekeh (1996) noted that

> devotion to the theory and practice of Indirect Rule not only ossified . . . development in Nigeria, it retarded constitutional growth . . . [This is especially the case with Northern Nigeria which] continues [to exist] in peaceful isolation from the South, screened from . . . outside influences by [British] political officers and the dogma of Indirect Rule. (p. 36)

During the decolonization period of the 1950s, the majority ethnic groups dominated the politics in each of the three regions, except in the northern region where the dominant force was actually in firm grip of the minority Fulani (Ekeh, 1996). In the South, demographic advantage worked in favor of the Yoruba and Igbo to become political power holders respectively in Western and Eastern Regions, while other ethnic groupings, including Benin, Ijaw, and Efik, became minority ethnic groups. In the North, power was comfortably in the hands of the minority Fulani who exercised dominance on the Hausa, Nupe, and Ilorin-Yoruba, whom they conquered, and on the Tiv and other northern ethnic groups, "whom the Fulani did not conquered" (p. 37). In the end, the British imperialists were the gainers while the Nigerians, due largely to ethnic struggles, were largely uncoordinated and in fact unaware of the need to be.

In addition, indirect rule created a gulf between the favored traditional elites, who ruled the people, and the side-tracked educated elites, in vanguard of the people. Although it has also been argued that most of these educated elites themselves, having been schooled abroad demonstrated more of "external referential framework" and a "compromised and ambivalent psychological and ideological disposition toward the methods and objectives of the national liberation struggle" (Iweriebo, 1996, p. xv). Thus, it suffices to argue that the Nigerian nationalism lacked the pedagogy and iconography necessary for a nuanced pragmatism and consummate demand for independence. Nigeria emerged from British colonial rule with a multiparty system, which ordinarily should promote democratic governance. However, apart from the crucial fact that the political parties were not differentiated or distinguished from each other by any political or economic ideology, they were essentially ethnic and regionally based, and were preoccupied with promoting ethnic and regional interests. Two of the largest parties, the

Northern Peoples' Congress (NPC) and the Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU), represented and pursued the interests of the predominantly Muslim Northern Nigeria. The other leading parties, the National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC) and the Action Group (AG), were preoccupied with the interests of the southeast and southwest where they were, respectively, based. It follows inductively therefore that the political parties were prone to (and did) manipulate Nigeria's constitutional set up in their respective control, to wield the country's national wealth and power in favor of ethnic and regional advantage and well-being rather than distributing the nation's power and resources equitably among its nationality groups. Unfortunately, this issue continues to dominate Nigerian politics in spite of the formation of more comprehensive national parties in the late 1970s and early 1990s. The formation of the self-acclaimed "largest party in Nigeria" (PDP), among other major parties with semblances of national outlook, hardly removed the proclivity for ethnic sentiments.

Going by the crop and pedigree of the personalities involved in the struggle for independence, it is expected that they recognize "divide-and-rule" tactics of the colonialists to foster the colonial hegemony yet acquiesced to the pluralism ego by forming political parties in the wake of independence along ethnic background. With the formation of these major parties—NPC for Northern agenda, Action Congress for Western agenda, and NCNC for Eastern agenda—the seed of intense ethnic crisis that later culminated in the formation of armed ethnic militias was sown. To depict more of the lack of national consciousness in the Nigerian nationalist movement, there was no conscious effort on the part of the movement to entrench it in school curriculum for bottom–up orientation. For instance, it was only in 1969 in Nigeria, much after independence, that a "reference was made to unity, nationalism, patriotism, and the like in any of our school curriculum" (Fafunwa, 1982, p. 3).

Nationalism colored economic policies in particular ways (Mkandawire & Soludo, 1999). First, the nation-state was policy's unit of analysis. As such, the state's preoccupation was with the perceived welfare of its citizens not with maximizing some global welfare function. Second, the state would tend to favor nationals or would try to remedy inherited imbalances in the ownership of property or access to economic resources. Third, in lieu of an indigenous capitalist class, the state would assume many entrepreneurial tasks regardless of its overall ideological position. Much has been written on the relationship between nationalism, the exigencies of nation building, and policy (Mkandawire & Soludo, 1999). Suffice it to note that nationalist impulses partially explain the policies that have been identified exclusively with rent seeking (nationalization, import substitution, expenditure on education, pan-territorial pricing, etc.). Thus, nationalism could simultaneously account for some of the sacrifices and commitment behind successes and some of the chauvinism and xenophobia behind disasters. Significantly,

nationalism influences the perceptions that policies are externally imposed or likely to compromise national sovereignty or unity (Olayode, 2005).

Perhaps Nigerian nationalism as movement for political emancipation, like her cohorts in Africa, also lacked the necessary identity originality that could galvanize it and translate to development and curb governance crisis. If we go by Wole Soyinka's (1977) semiotic nationalism[4] on the construction of Africa and the misgivings he proclaimed in the word "Africa" as a basis for lack of identity and nay Africa's governance crisis, then an extrapolation to the Nigerian context would be apt. Soyinka argued, in a speech delivered at the 1977 Second World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture (FESTAC), that the moniker "Africa" lacked the indigenous materiality, reality, and distinctiveness. Another author argued that the name is, at best, a "discursive fantasy, an unstable and ambivalent sign that cannot provide a foundational basis for an identity, an invention prey to and prime for deconstruction" (Zeleza, 2006, p. 15). He further posited that Africa lacked identities, just as it did language, and that most of the states are European inventions, mutually constitutive existential and epistemic construction. As inventions, the states are denaturalized of cultural artifacts and practices and striped of primordial authenticity and essentialism. In other words, Africa is as much a superficial entity as it is a construct whose boundaries—geographical, historical, cultural, and representational—have shifted according to the prevailing conceptions and configurations of colonially created identities and power, and proto-nationalism that followed it, including pre- and post-independence pan-Africanism.

The case of Nigeria follows logically. That the name "Nigeria" was coined by a British journalist (Flora Shaw) who later became the wife of the first Governor-General of the country Sir Fredrick Lugard in 1898 (Ajala, 2009) depicts lack of definite identity. Accordingly, "the name was suggested for the collection of protectorates and colonies around River Niger" (Ajala, 2009, p. 1). Apart from the claim that Nigeria is "like mixing oil with water" by one of the authors and finishers of the amalgamation of Nigeria as a state, there are indications that the nationalists themselves were well aware of the identity crisis. For instance, Chief Obafemi Awolowo argued in 1964, while expounding his thesis on federalism, that

> Nigeria is not a nation. It is a mere geographical expression. There are no Nigerians in the same sense as there are English, Welsh, or French. The word "Nigerian" is merely a distinctive appellation to distinguish those who live within the boundaries of Nigeria from those who do not. (Quoted in Olayode, 2005, p. 9)

Ethnicity, Nationalism, and Emergence of Governance Crisis in Nigeria

There is a striking similitude in the emergence of states in Africa and how lack of national consciousness is a serious issue afflicting the governance of these states. Almost across board, the endurance of the nation-state culture as an overarching political culture is closely tied to how ethnicity is produced, transformed, and twisted in response to different circumstances and situations (Zeleza, 2006). In *Ethnicity: An African Predicament*, Francis Deng observed that virtually all modern African governance crises (and conflicts) have ethno-regional dimension (Deng, 1997). In contemporary Africa, the role of ethnicity in political systems received a knock with the ambition of Western-trained education elite "proto-nationalist," to accept the frontiers of the emergent independent African states constructed by colonial rule as constituting their countries (Crowder, 1976, p. 407). In West Africa, the "nationalists" identified themselves as Nigerians rather than Yoruba, Hausa, or Igbo; Gold Coaster rather than Akan, Ewe, or Guan; Senegalese rather than Wollof; Ivoirians rather than Baoules (Crowder, 1976, pp. 405-407). However, the intention of the colonialists was not to eradicate ethnicity but to stem the expressions of nationalism they produce and perhaps also to prevent tribal conflicts. Thus, as a creation of colonial rule ethnicity was partly responsible for sowing the seeds of democratic and governance misadventures that soon became rampant in post-colonial Africa. European colonialists set Africans against Africans by hand picking pliable collaborators, constituted by the group that Frantz Fanon (1980) calls the "benis oui oui" or the "yes yes men" (Fanon, 1980, p. 23). It also facilitated the subjugation of African masses because ethnic strife provided an excuse for repressive military and police actions by colonial authorities—developments that, in turn, triggered the spate of *coup d'état* in most West African states.

Clearly, also, the states so formed, its citizens, officials, and indeed the political parties, lacked a strong sense of nationhood that placed them on the threshold of disastrous collapse at different times (Clifford, 1921). As, from the foregoing, most post-colonial West African states are not fashioned as public property but to serve parochial and ethnic interest of those who created and control them, confusion routinely developed between notions of statehood vis-à-vis nationhood. In Nigeria, key ethnic militia groups Oodua Peoples' Congress (OPC), the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), the Arewa Boys, the Egbesu Boys, the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni Peole (MOSOP) successfully defined and controlled political outcomes in their respective regions, including the formation and administration of political parties (Ajala, 2009). But, then, ethnicity by itself is not the problem (Ukeje & Adebanwi, 2006). Instead, the problem of ethnicity derives from the manner in which it is mobilized by the political elite. The point had been pursued by noting,

> Because access to state power is recognized by most ethnic groups as a requisite for self and collective motivation, expression and reproduction, the local elites and ethnic entrepreneurs within group set the tone and agenda of politics in

ways that are parochial, beneficial to themselves principally and then to the larger group. When the opportunity to access state power is forestalled, therefore, one of the first defensive mechanisms that an ethnic group readily mobilizes is that of collective, non-violent action but it scales up steadily towards militancy and violence. (pp. 2-4)

Indeed, the Tiv ethnic protest on the eve of Nigerian independence (Crowder, 1987) runs deep to indicate that not all ethnic groups were carried along in the independence debates. It could also portend that not all germane issues were exhaustively ironed out during the decolonization process. At the very time, the Nigerian flag was being hoisted to replace the Union Jack, a deadly riot was taking place in Tivland. Thus, even if ethnicity is not a problem of its own, a mishandling of the mechanics for amalgamation of peoples of disparate cultures and tempers can only be a time bomb waiting to explode. It was thus argued that the 1914 amalgamation "was a token . . . which did not truly bring them [the two regions] into a meaningful relationship with each other" (p. 18).

Perhaps one area where the lingering effect of this dysfunctional post-colonial development most vividly expresses itself has been in the formation of political parties along ethnic lines, with the bigger and dominant political parties coming from the largest ethnic groups while smaller ethnic groups produce weaker political parties. The formation of ethnically motivated political parties, mostly through the active connivance of colonial officials, led to the implosion of political parties with evident lack of internal democratic culture and values that is at the root of the generic failure of democracies in the sub-region. In Nigeria, for instance, the three major political parties formed during the heydays of independence were along ethno-regional lines: the NPC, AG, and National Council of Nigerians and the Cameroons (NCNC) dominated by Hausa/Fulani, Yoruba, and Igbo, respectively. During the Second Republic, the major political parties were also formed along ethnic lines with the National Party of Nigeria (NPN), Peoples' Redemption Party (PRP), and Great Nigeria Peoples' Party (GNPP) representing the North, the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN), and Nigerian People's Party (NPP) representing the South-West and South-East, respectively. Although the nascent political culture that is under construction since the return to civilian rule in 1999 has shown pan-Nigeria tendencies, especially with membership and the activities of the key political parties (PDP, AC, All Progressives Grand Alliance [APGA], Progressive Peoples Alliance [PPA]) cutting across traditional sectional divides, ethnicity continues to show a remarkable resilience in political discourses and contestations as the recent hot debate on zoning within the ruling party, the PDP, shows. The inevitable, even if tentative, conclusion is that in spite of recent developments associated with the transition to multiparty rule in the sub-region, the old pathologies associated with ethnicity and other sectional expressions have not receded—in some instances, indeed,

they have witnessed a resurgence in a manner that threatens political and governance process. There is a considerable agreement that formation of parties along ethnic lines is capable of creating "real tension among the ethnic groups . . . mutual distrust among competing communities . . . and conflict of interest," which "often escalated into political violence" (Ajala, 2009, p. 16). The ultimate scenario, according to him, is that in many instances, the political violences created in the polity have "led to fundamental shifts in the Nigerian political system and political instabilities."

Conclusion

Apart from the abuse of all the constitutions (1960, 1963, 1979, and 1999) by the political gladiators and the development of "strong men" rather than "strong institutions" through manipulation of the ballot box or the barrels of the gun, the expropriation of the resources of the state by the few and the apparent progressive immiseration of the masses as a result are the lots of Nigeria in the 50 years as an independent country. Within these years, Nigeria appropriates a ready appellation and the signification of a country where there is little if any hope in all spheres of governance and economic indicators. Rule of law is practically ostracized, personal and material security is at low ebb, violent and irrepressible religious and ethno-nationalist struggles are on the progressive rise, the economy cannot compete favorably even within the region, using various economic measurements, despite the huge petro-dollar revenue accruing since the early 1970s, and, worst of all, the political environment is antithetical. Most of the above have been attributed to the plethora of military rule, invariably staged in the name of cleansing the state but which left the nation worse-off. Nevertheless, the respite of brief elective form of government between 1979 and 1983 and the last 10 years have only made a mockery of the nation's political history, deepening further the much-publicized lack of prospect for liberal democracy bestowed by the British colonial masters.

Development economists too have advanced the resource curse argument and Dutch disease syndrome as the bane of the country's oil economy that led to a monolithic economy that retarded development and bred corrupt practices and violent politics. This article debunked each of the claims in these theses and asserted that the root is indeed the colonial heritage of disparate nationalities cobbled together 50 odd years before and the insular nature of the nationalist that led to the queer nature of state making in Nigeria. Given the paucity of attention given to building national political and economic structure by the colonial rulers, the agitation for more involvement to participate in the political governance by the nationalists, which derailed the conscience of Nigerian nationalism, and the elitist nature of the decolonization process, which precluded dialogue by all stakeholders, the present governance crisis is not far-fetched.

It was precisely for this reason, as the article argued, that successive post-colonial administrations, following the divide-and-rule traditions of the colonial state, have failed to mobilize the type of popular support and collective resources required to construct a truly broad-based and inclusive national identity required to manage and transcend protracted crisis of governance in Nigeria. The article therefore advocates a composite political dialogue of all stakeholders where the stakes and shares will be exhaustively thrashed out.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

Funding

Notes

1. In an excerpt from a letter by Patrice Lumumba to his wife Pauline Lumumba in 1961 while under arrest as a prisoner in Thysville, Congo (quoted in Cole, 2006).
2. Nineteen states in Nigeria are labeled educational disadvantage states, 17 of which are from the northern part.
3. In a speech delivered on the floor of the Ghana's House of Representative on July 11, 2009, during his official visit to Africa, President Barack Obama of the United States argued that Africa needs "strong institutions" not "strong men." Accessed from http://www.america.gov, August 30, 2010.
4. Based on his speech at the Festival of Arts and Culture (FESTAC) organized by the Nigerian government in 1977.

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