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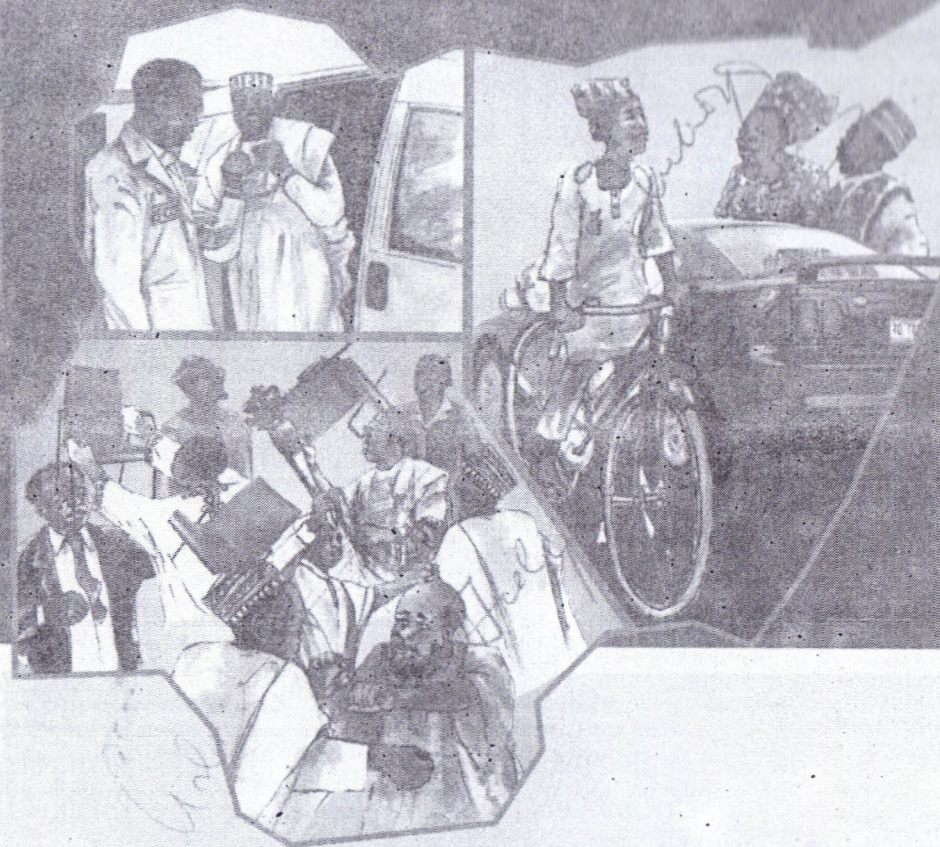
SOCIETY And Governance:
The Quest for Legitimacy in Nigeria

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CHAPTER 11

Democracy, National Question and Legitimacy Crisis in Nigeria: *Agenda for National Integration*

By Adelaja Odutola Odukoya

ABSTRACT

*T*he chapter historicizes and theorizes the immanent contradictions of the Nigerian state and its implications for the democratization project in Nigeria's fourth republic. It situates the multiplicities of conflicts witnessed since the return to democratic governance not in the valorization of 'democratic liberties or lawlessness', but in the eruption of the immanent contradictions of the Nigerian state, which hitherto were suppressed during the military interregnum, and the fallout of the militarization of popular culture and civil society. It further opines that the combination of this contradictions, coupled with the ineffectiveness of institutional devices for managing political contestations and resolution of conflicts over divergent vested interests and values are at the root of the inability of the democratization process to engender constitutionally legalized legitimation, hence the exacerbation of conflicts nation-wide. The chapter concludes with suggestions on how to engender political harmony amongst the different strata of the Nigerian state, so that democracy is not only sustained, but also consolidated

Introduction:

The creation of the Nigerian state by British imperial colonial authority has monumental effects on the socio-economic and political destiny of the over 374 ethnic groups (Otite, 1990) and micro-nationalities that were forced together to produce the conglomerate political architecture called Nigeria. Beyond the redefinition of the economic parameters of social reproduction, a new homogenous power informed by the need for the institutionalization of the political hegemony of British imperialism structurally enforced a non-consensual political existence of these hitherto autonomous social formations.

With the erosion of the different traditional order, justification and rationality for political power within these social formations, a new logic of political authority was instituted based on the rationality of the superior fire-power of the British. While the colonial authority through its officials controlled the new state at the macro-level of urban life, following the dictates of indirect rule system, colonial hegemony was instituted at the micro-level of traditional/ rural existence through the manipulation and castration of traditional authorities in obedience to imperialist logic. This not only produced two publics (Ekeh, 1975) but also a decentralized despotism under which different logic informs the existence and claims of citizens and subjects (Mamdani, 1996).

Following from the above, and coupled with the arbitrariness, authoritarianism, oppression, exploitation, pillage, and undemocratic nature of colonialism imperialism in Nigeria, colonialism in the country evinced the crisis of legitimacy of the Nigerian state from its very foundation.

Furthermore, the colonial divide and rule system, coupled with the disarticulation of the Nigerian economy, which engendered uneven development amongst the different peoples, and dependent development of the entire country, not only compound the crisis of the modern state in Nigeria, it exacerbated the sense of division amongst the Nigerian people, and makes the possibilities of creating a pan-Nigerian identity complicated. It was this scenario that makes the national question a major political issue in the nation even before independence. Sadly, the national question remained unanswered, if not complicated, forty-six years after the nation's independence. It has in fact now snow- balled into serious legitimacy crisis, and has equally continued to threaten the viability of the Nigerian project. This has provoked a rash analysis of the Nigerian dilemma, part of which was the position that the problem with Nigeria was that of misgovernment or bad governance.

The attempt at understanding the Nigerian crisis as simply that of bad governance is not only a-historical it is also escapist and ideological. It is this intellectual compromise in the analysis of the crisis of the Nigerian state that this chapter seeks to critically confront. To this end, the chapter seeks to interrogate the Nigerian crisis as the result of the complications and the contradictions engender by the non-resolution of the national question in Nigeria, the inelegant nature of its fractured democracy and by extension the legitimacy crisis of both the Nigerian dependent capitalist state and the comprador political leadership.

The rest of the chapter is structured into four sections: conceptual and theoretical framework; the Nigerian state, national question, legitimation crisis; democracy and the national question: engendering a legitimate authority; and conclusion.

Conceptual and Theoretical Framework:

Three closely related concepts are at the heart of the problems of fathoming the problematic of the national question in other to analyze its interface with the crisis of legitimacy and democracy in Nigeria, namely, nation, nation-state and nationalism.

A nation at once connotes the inclusion and exclusion of different categories of people. Those who are included are that possess its membership which is denied others for the same fact that they are culturally excluded from the ontological foundation from which it claims its origin. It is to this end that Rustow (1970) sees a nation as "a self-contained group of human beings who place loyalty to the group as a whole above competing loyalties. A nation-state is an independent state whose membership coincides with that of a nation. And nationalism is the desire to create, maintain, or strengthen such a nation-state."

The functional and positive coincidence of the nation-state with those of the nation depends on the historical conditions and political order that creates it. Such coincidence between the nation-state and the nation may be coterminous with serious crisis and engender immanent contradictions between the different social formations and nations that make up the state, and by the same token it could subject the state and its government to serious legitimacy crisis. It is also possible to promote peace, unity and national harmony. The swing of the political pendulum is a function of the ability and capability of those in-charge of the state to promote a pervasive consciousness of oneness, sense of community, justice, equity, and absence of generalized sense of domination and marginalization among the different and variegate mass of its population, if a nation-state is to develop.

It is because of the need to over-come this seeming problem that every nation-state is expected to be an inclusive umbrella for disparate and pluralist communities of people. The purpose being to create a new centre and loci of authority and political hegemony, and political rationality for people to embrace the modern state in preference to the primordial nation to which the people are culturally attached. This finds concurrence in Hans-Rudolf Wicker (1997:11) argument that, "the nation-state demands assimilation to create homogeneity inside the national borders, and tries to maintain already essentialized national thinking outside of these borders to extend the national sphere".

The desire by the nation-state to assimilate and create a homogenous political platform for its citizens is a desire to create the basis of its own legitimacy and by so doing ensure the survival and sustainability of the political system and its leadership. However, it must be noted that the assimilative imperative of the nation-state is not simply a matter of constitution legalism, but of deft political engineering, economic management, distributive and social rationality, socio-cultural development, popular political participation and inclusiveness, democracy and conscious behavioural change by the people. In other words, building a nation-state from different nations is a serious and programmatic task.

Most nations, especially, in the new states face serious problems in their attempt to surmount the problems of segregated pluralism that defines their political constitution and compositions. This inability to develop an umbrella nation, commanding in totality the loyalties of her citizens, and not sharing the loyalties of all her citizens with other centers of power defines the context of the national question, and to a large extent the legitimacy crisis of the state.

Based on the above, a number of factors are therefore germane in the problematic of the national question. First, the national question is engendered by the conflicts and contradictions in the foundation of the national state. Second, the nation-state by the existence of the national question have proven incapable of institutionalizing its enduring hegemony, hence, its continued existence is tenuous. Third, the refusal of the different nations within the nation-state to dissolve into one, not only confirms the superficiality of the state as presently constituted, it underscores the authoritarian and forced marriage which produced the state, and the continuation of such authoritarian political tradition in the conduct of the politics of the state.

Fourth, most of the nationalities within the nation-state do not feel secured, nor do they believe that the state can or continues to guarantee their corporate interests as a people. Finally, as a result of the foregoing the state and its officials not only faces serious crisis of legitimation, the different nations under the domination of the state against all odds would continually struggle for self-determination and the development of new political architectures under which they believe that their interest would be better realized. In other words, with the 'delegitimation' of the state through non-acceptance as the sole political authority, efforts would be ongoing to create new legitimate authorities outside of the state.

Commenting on the national question, Ade Ajayi (1992) argued as follows:

> The National Question is …the perennial debate as to how to order the relations between the different ethnic, linguistic and cultural groupings so that they have the same rights and privileges, access to power and equitable share of national resources.

It is therefore clear that the national question is not only relational and existential, it is a question of political economy, and consequently, must be posed in the context of power and power struggle. In other words, concern is on the control of power and in whose interests power is being used. Relevant then are the issue of power sharing, state structure, control over resources, and none the least the protection of people's individuality, cultural imperatives, nationality and self-determination (Ihonvbere, 1999:8; Momoh, 2006:3).

In a sense, the national question has to do with hegemonic and counter-hegemonic struggles by different nations with the state, and ultimately the possibility of constructing an all-embracing national platform for the survival of nationalities, the institutionalization of democracy, justice, rule of law and constitutionalism. The national question can also not be separated from the concern of restructuring the political economy which engenders popular disempowerment, economic undevelopment and impoverishment, social suffocation, authoritarian political tendencies and on the international level imperialist dependency and exploitation. None the least, the need to reorder the way the state intervenes in the above crisis and its non-automonization in the crisis among and between classes and groups are also on the agenda in the problematic of the national question.

We must however warn that the national question should never be seen as that of cultural essentialism. Before and during colonialism, and even in contemporary times, evidence supports the fact that cultural essentialism has been amenable to systemic injustice, oppression, inequality and inegalitarianism, and has not precluded intra-cultural in-fighting. The truth is that cultural essentialism is often a camouflage for class oppression and for intra-class struggle. Therefore, proposing the national question in cultural terms cannot but confuse the realities and implications of the nature and character of state power and those

benefiting from it across cultural and ethnic boundaries. Furthermore, posing the national question in ethnic terms not only robs it of its democratic content and context because of the tendency to exclusion, it impoverishes its emancipatory power, and enlists it as part and parcel of the crisis and contradictions of the social formations which it tries to address. In this way, it further aggravates the legitimacy crisis in the state.

As alluded to above, legitimation crisis is a fall out of the national question. But what is crisis of legitimacy? According to the *Key Concepts in Political Science*:

> Legitmation connotes a sense of rightfulness, approval and popular acclaim. The legitimacy of a government confers on it unquestionable obedience, that is, the authority to allocate values authoritatively. A government may be legal, but yet illegitimate. It is the citizens' free obedience of government that underscores its legitimacy. There are two senses in which the issue of legitimacy can be understood. First, philosophically, as a moral imperative on which the authority of government must be based. Second, behaviorally, "as a willingness to comply with a system of rule regardless of how this is achieved". It is important to know that the concern of legitimacy is not why the people *should* obey the state, but *why* they obey the state (Andrew Heywood (ed), (2000: 29).

Similarly, *The Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Political Science* (1991:333) sees legitimacy in terms of the "lawfulness of a regime, its representatives and their 'commands'. As it further argued, "it is a quality derived not from formal laws or decrees but from social acceptance (or acceptability) and 'appropriateness' as judged by reference to norms to which 'subordinates' accord (more or less) active assent". When

therefore there is a lack of a compulsion to obey those in authority then legitimacy is at bay.

In a further elaboration, Lipset (1969:52) argued that:

> Legitimacy involved capacity of the system to engender and maintain the belief that the existing political institutions are the most appropriate ones for society. The extent to which contemporary democratic political systems are legitimate depends in large measure upon the ways in which the key issues which have historically divided the society have been resolved.

The theoretical underpinning of legitimacy is derived from two important currents in political thought. First, on the ontological foundation of the modern state, and second, on where the sovereign authority in a state resides. Regarding the former, the modern state is generally believed to be a product of social necessity which engenders a contractual relationship amongst different people for the assurance of continuity of live and happiness under a condition of security, peace and tranquility. On the latter, the popular sovereign in a state are the people from whom officials of state derive their power and to whom they are both responsible and accountable.

Flowing from the above the issue of legitimacy of political authority is both procedural and outcome. First, in terms of procedural legitimacy, it has to do with how those in power derive their power and the authority governs. Second, outcome legitimacy seeks answer to the questions, Is the government responsible and accountable to the people?, and more importantly, to what extend are they delivering economic welfare to the people? According to Arnim Langer (2004: 11),

Legitimate stability refers to people's *perceptions* and *attitudes* regarding the authority of the state and its institutions. The legitimacy of state institutions is dependent on 'procedures' and 'outcome'. Procedural legitimacy deals with the transfer of (political) power from 'the people' to state institutions and its representatives. It is a common Western practice to link legitimacy directly to democracy. Procedural legitimacy, cannot only be acquired by means of "a competitive struggle for people's vote, but also through certain historical and traditional processes or personal characteristics.

Outcome legitimacy on the other hand refers to the functioning of the state institutions. Relevant concepts and criteria in this respect are equality, participation, good governance, rule of law and transparency. High outcome legitimacy is not the same as achieving good economic and social results and progress. Outcome legitimacy is more concerned with the people's perception of these socio-economic results and the distribution of its benefits.

The question of legitimacy is therefore posed with the above parameter in mind. Consequently, beyond been largely perceptual, legitimacy crisis is an evaluative schemata, and therefore judgmental.

There is thus a crisis of legitimacy when fundamental question about the political order in a state is raised and people express open dissatisfaction with the organization of the state and political incumbents, and not only withdraw and challenge the state and its officials, but are willing to realize their ambition for justice, equality, self-determination, rule of law and constitutionalism even outside the context of the present state

which is believed has not promoted their corporate interest even when such states is procedurally legitimate. This in a way confirms Lipson (1976:218) assertion that: "The force that is necessary to guarantee protection is not enough by itself to establish justice, still less to promote welfare".

It is thus safe to submit that legitimacy is a political commodity which is freely accord by the people of a state and could also be freely withdrawn whenever they deemed fit depending on their perception of the usage of the mandate given to the government to govern, or whether such consent was given in the first instance. It therefore stands to reason that the same weight must be ascribed to the two dimensions of legitimacy. In other words, both procedural and outcome legitimacy are of essence to the survival and stability of the state and its institutions.

Legitimation is therefore the title deeds for the authoritative allocation of values. This finds concurrence with Habermas (1975:68) position that "If governmental crisis management fails, it lags behind programmatic demands *that it has placed on itself.* The penalty for this failure is withdrawal of legitimation". What factors then engenders legitimacy crisis?

When a state and its functionaries can no longer justify and maintain the citizens loyalty and belief that there is no alternative to the existing political arrangement a crisis of legitimacy has set in. It was against this background that Lipset (1969: 52) perceptively argued that "A crisis of legitimacy is a crisis of change". Accordingly therefore, modernity if not well managed can engender legitimation crisis due to the breakdown of old layers of traditional authorities and the institutionalization of new centers of power which is not organically rooted and accepted by the people within the state. It is in this respect that the national question feeds into the legitimation crisis of the state.

According to Lipset ((1969: 53):

Crises of legitimacy occur during a transition to a new social structure, if (1) the status of major conservative institutions is threatened during the periods of structural change; (2) all the major groups in the society do not have access to the political system in the transitional period or at least soon as they develop political demands. After a new social structure is established, its new system is unable to sustain the expectation of major groups (on the grounds of effectiveness') for a long enough period to develop legitimacy upon the new basis, a new crisis may develop.

The question of legitimacy underscores the importance and centrality of the state. The tendencies for good and evil through the instrumentalities of the state is so enormous that people globally and from time-immemorial even under traditional political order seek one way or the other to authorize the incumbent to political power. In other words, political power must be rightfully given and justifiably employed to be legitimate.

As Lipson submits (1976: 219)"If the state were a "do-little" body, few would care to search the validity of its title deeds. But whenever much power is concentrated, many will insist that might be adequately endowed with right". It was for this reason that Onuoha (1999: 39) perceptively submitted that: "*Legitimacy* refers to the basis for, the rationale for, the seal of, or the acceptance of authority". The national question therefore raises serious and fundamental question pertaining to the rational for, the seal of, the title deed of, and the acceptance of state authority.

Therefore, when a nation experiences legitimacy crisis, it is obvious that the crisis and contradictions inherent in the

political community has deepened, and remain unresolved. Furthermore, the title deeds for the exercise of political authority is been contested and threatened to be withdrawn. Also, it implies that the state incubation is fractured, and the outputs of its institutions are far below popular expectations, hence its failure to receive popular acclaim. In other words, majority of the people are not of the opinion that the state as presently constituted is serving 'the greatest good of the greatest number', irrespective of the legal character of the state and the incumbents.

In the words of Ninalowo (1999: viii):

> Where there is a tension between strictly legally-derived legitimation and socio-political legitimation, there is said to be a crisis of legitimation. This is, of course, with the attendant moments of socio-economic and political instabilities, that is, immanent contradictions of underdevelopment. This importantly explains recent historical experiences in Nigeria and elsewhere in reference to dominant power blocs and resistance.

Finally, legitimacy may be understood against the three main currents of discussions concerning the modern nation, that is, the nation in totality, the necessary adjustment different people make to it, and the "margin of tolerance for deviations from this totality (Wicker, 1977: 10).

In all these three important respects, but particularly the latter two dimensions, the Nigerian state is very weak. Rather than making necessary adjustment towards embracing the state, deliberate and systematic efforts are being made to widen the gulf between the people and the state, thus aggravating and expanding the scope of intolerance of the state political hegemony. Therefore, as Ninalowo (1999:3) succinctly argued, "situations wherein there is mutual recognition and fulfillment

of conditions of social contract between the state and civil society, would augur well for the reproduction of legitimation for socio-political *status quo*". Do such conditions exist in the Nigerian context?

The Nigerian State, National Question, and Legitimation Crisis:

The structural and functional disabilities of Nigeria state which accounted for reference to her by informed analysis as a "crippled giant" is not accidental, rather, it is a programmatic outcome of the colonial experience and the crisis and contradictions that singular experience still engenders within the context of neo-colonial political conditioning. The implication of the label "crippled giant", is that the nation is unable to institute her hegemony, promote development, and institute a democratic order thus positively impact on the lives of the people. In other words, Nigeria has failed to successfully confront the crisis of nation-building despite her enormous human and material resources. Consequently, a sense of Nigerianness has not developed and does not seem to be in the making.

There are nations in Nigeria, but the nation-state is yet to emerge talk less of a sense of nationalism which is concerned with the concretization of the disparate groups in a sustainable union with primary loyalty transferred from the different micro-nationalities to the nation-state. To understand this problematic we have to critically analyze the political trajectory of the Nigerian state.

If the will of the people to live together as one is the sole criteria of statehood Nigeria would never qualify to be called a state. The will and desire to have a Nigerian state belong to forces external to the people that were forcefully merged together as Nigerian, and followed not the imperative of the social contract but the logic of colonial imperialism which was

underscored by the drive for economic. Expectedly therefore, this defines the nature and character of the state in Nigeria even many years after independence.

While the capitalist production relation was allowed to uproot and disarticulate the existing subsistence economy, deliberately, the full productive potency of capitalism was not unleashed. Contrarily, capitalist forces were limited to conditions that were enough for the country to exist as permanent satellites of western imperialism. This way, deliberate policies of deindustrialization and the development of underdevelopment were enforced, setting in motion the emergence of a dependent political. What emerged therefore as Gavin (1980:11) argued is that, "Nigeria suffered, not only from the development of capitalism, but from the backwardness of that development".

The ultimate beneficiaries of this economic fiasco which favoured the most politically powerful and technologically advanced were and still remain western capitalism. Since the logic of colonialism was economic pillage and imperialist exploitation and appropriation, deliberate and systemic attempts were made to weaken the unity and solidarity of the people, disempower them politically, make them socially disoriented through colonial legitimating ideology, and ensure that they were faithful servants and labourers for the production of the goods badly needed in the industrial economies through the monetization of their economy and compulsory taxation. The educational system and Christian missionaries were equally fully utilised to colonial advantages. In all, the colonial authority created a pervasive feeling of different nationalities in the Nigerian people through the mechanism of the divide and rule. This encouraged regionalism and ethnicity, and the desperate struggles for power amongst the different nationalities.

To ease the resistance of the people to the exploitative and accumulative agenda of the colonial power, authoritarianism was a preferred modality of governance. The domestic elite

incubated under this system not only imbibed the undemocratic character of the colonial order, the state that they inherited at independence was oppressive, authoritarian, exploitative, discriminative, unjust, illiberal, arbitrary, dependent, structurally defective, and highly underdeveloped. It was a state that is anti-people and anti-development, and subjected to the dictates of both the domestic comprador elements and their imperialist mentors.

This point at issue is that at independence the state and its processes were merely inherited with all the underdevelopment liabilities mentioned above, rather than transformed. It was therefore not surprising that at independence two characteristics of the state in Nigeria were; (a) economic statism; and (b) ethnic pluralism. (Diamond: 1988). This ugly scenario was further compounded with the discovery of oil in the Niger Delta and the consequent expansion of public finance and state propelled development agenda. Not to be forgotten was the need for the successor elite to use the state to build their precarious material base, even as they serve as junior partners to foreign capital in the economy of their own country. This provoked serious elite conflicts. Intra-elite demobilization, depoliticalization and violence go hand-in-hand with the exploitation, oppression and clientization of the popular masses.

Therefore, what accrued to the Nigerian people at independence were changes without change. The masses were not only marginalized, the excessive premium on political power ensured that development and the welfare of the ordinary Nigerians ceased to matter, with the minorities the worst hit. In place of bread that was promised before independence, the people got whips. The public character of politics was eroded, and politics became not only monetized but also effectively privatized. Thus, confirming Offe (cited in Ekweke, 1986:11) assertion that, "the bourgeois state's authority and mandate lie in the creation and sustenance of the condition of accumulation".

This logic necessarily negates democracy and promotes authoritarian and military tactics.

Following the military coup of 1966 the military unitary command structure was imposed on an already bad situation. With the creation of the twelve states structure at the eve of the Nigerian civil war, the central government became disproportionately more powerful in relations to the federating units, which became weaker from the exercise. The centralisation of power and resources at the federal level not only changed the balance of power in the federation, it successfully transformed the political algebra of the country. As perceptively observed by Suberu (1998: 277):

> By giving the Nigerian state a pre-eminent role in the use of resources and in the dispensation of patronage, these factors also elevate distributive considerations, rather than ideological or programmatic contestation into the primary impulse of political competition.

The consequent distributive federalism that was enthroned threw up the rapacious and ferocious struggles for the sharing of the national cake. Nigerian not only became a rentier state, patrimoniasm, neo-patrimoniasm, and prebendalism dictates the flow of political actions. The rentier character negatively affected the state, the logic of production, and state-society's relations. According to Ibrahim (2000):

> The major characteristic of the rentier state is that its main relationship with the society is mediated through its expenditures on the military and state security, development projects, consumption subsidies, construction, etc. In a rentier state, the government is the main recipient of external rent. The importance of access in a rentier economy

leads to what has been termed a rentier mentality, which embodies a break in the work-reward causation. Reward-income or wealth is not related to work and risk bearing, rather to chance or situation.

Given the logic of oil production which is exclusive, and with technological control in the hands of multinational oligopolies, the Nigerian state became totally subservient to the interest of foreign capital, just as its dependence in the international capitalist system deepens, and concern for peoples development was not accorded the deserved attention.

Given the structure of decadent capitalist system in Nigerian under which foreign capital is dominant, dependency institutionalized, control of state apparatus by a comprador ruling elite with the same world-view and organic interest that are harmonious with those of imperialist capital entrenched, coupled with a political order that evinced authoritarianism, depoliticization, disempowerment, underdevelopment, pauperization and immiseration of the masses, legitimacy crisis is an expected outcome.

Furthermore, given the precarious material bases of the domestic ruling classes, there was undue emphasis on politics to the neglect of economy and development. (Ake: 1996). This was because, the state equally served an instrumentalist function as a means of production with which the various factions of the ruling class attempt to enhance and consolidate their material bases. In this wise, the issue of sharing and consuming the national cake was accorded primacy in preference to the logic for producing the national cake. It was for this reason that Goffredo (1993) argued: "Not only does theft go on in the state apparatus, but the state itself is the main apparatus of theft. In Nigeria, not only do officials steal, but stealing is official". Since it is impossible to achieve this aim without reactions from the people, like all hegemonic and class power, the people were

not only divided on ethnic and religions lines, also force became necessary as a tool of governance.

Moreover, since the state was not created by the logic of production, but pillage and extraction of surplus from the people, the continued centrality of the state to the issue of primitive capitalist accumulation not only followed its extant historical preoccupation, but also precluded the need for any commitment to the development of technology and local entrepreneurship, and the emergence of a patriotic bourgeois. This increased the conflicts and contradictions between and within classes, as well as between groups and nationalities. The thirty-month civil war was one of the many manifestations of these immanent contradictions of decadent peripheral capitalism in Nigeria.

The crisis of state in Nigeria which have gained expression in corruption, political instability, communal conflicts, economic backwardness, underdevelopment, military dictatorship, political disempowerment, debt overhang, elite factionalism, etc. are to a very large extent, the product of patrimonial and rentier character of the state in Nigeria (Obi 1998, Ibrahim 2000), and the orientation of the Nigerian ruling elite which follows from the same logic, especially, the desperation for state power as a platform for primitive capitalist accumulation. It is for this reason that the Nigerian state is seen as a warfare state and producer of fissiparous and conflictual tendencies (Ibrahim, 2000; Akeredolu_Ale, 2004; Odukoya, 2005)

The subsequent military regimes as noted earlier were not any better. The reasons for the failure of the military might not be unconnected with their institutional ethos, methodologies, structure and ideological orientations, and being deeply immersed in the ethnically oriented crisis of the social formation. As Ake (1996) succinctly opined in a juxtaposition of the military with democracy:

The military addresses the extreme and extraordinary while democracy addresses the routine; the military values discipline and hierarchy, democracy, freedom and equality; the military is oriented to law and order, democracy to diversity, contradiction and competition; the method of the military is violence and aggression, that of democracy is persuasion, negotiation and consensus-building.

The undemocratic nature of the state and government and its institutions made corruption, nepotism, and mismanagement of state resources to thrive. The totality of the effects of the negation of national welfare and prudent management of the nation's economy and resources necessitated the adoption of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) by the Babangida military administration as a mechanism for managing the then aggravated problems of the decadent peripheral capitalism of the Nigerian state.

At the end of military rule in Nigeria, the state was sufficiently polarized and everybody have a misgiving against his or her neighbour in terms of the power arrangements, economic management, redistributive and social justice, rule of law and constitutionalism, etc, in the country. These underscore the serious crisis of legitimation of the state. As Momoh (2002:24 cited in Adejumobi, 2003) succinctly observed:

For the Niger Delta and oil producing minority it is oil exploitation and environmental degradation; for the Igbo it is marginalization; for the Hausa-Fulani, it is uneven development; for the minorities of the north, particularly the Middle Belt it is one of internal colonialism; for the

Yoruba it is power exclusion. Hence everybody is demanding empowerment on the basis of one assumption-xenophobia.

While people, despite military rule, were still agitating and the national question was still very much alive, the authoritarian tactics of the military was deployed to contain the volcanic effect on the political system. However, the globalization of political conditionality in terms of democratization and the dismemberment of the Soviet Union turned the table against military authoritarian regimes in Nigeria as elsewhere in the third world.

From the global context, the Soviet Union played an historical significant role. Twice within the 20th century, the Soviet Union played fundamentally significant developmental political and economic role in influencing the direction of events in the developing nations. First, was through the outcome of the Socialist Revolution in the Soviet Union, which signaled for the people of the developing nations a radical and progressive path of development outside the capitalist system.

The second was in 1989, negative though, the Soviet Union, through its engineered disintegration and balkanization, again, demonstrated the rights of minority nationalities to self-determination, freedom, and justice. Not a few minorities globally, including Nigeria, took a clue from the Soviet case, and started challenging the their respective states, calling for the radical transformation of the suffocating political order around the globe, with a view to redressing decades of injustice, exploitation, and the positive resolution of the national question, and institutionalization of popular democracy.

The Ogoni, in the Niger Delta area of Nigeria are leading example of this type of people. Also, the development of multiple ethnic nationalist movements, such as, the Oodua Peoples Congress (OPC), Supreme Egbesu Boys of Africa, Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra

(MASSOB), etc, belong to this group. These groups not only challenged the legitimacy of the Nigerian state, they were prepared to create new state formation to whom they can be loyal.

The above provides the context, contestations and contradictions that form the foundation of Nigerian return to civilian governance in May 29, 1999. While there was so much hope that democracy would redress the many wrongs of the Nigerian state, which were aggravated by the military, the fact that the nature and character of the Nigerian state remain the way it was, and the democracy that was introduced was constituted to disempower the people and ensure the continuity of the same ruling oligarchy in power, ensured that the national question remains alive, and the state still confronted by serious crisis of legitimacy.

In 1999, the democracy that was inspired by the Bretton Wood institutions was primarily oriented towards the market and expectedly was highly monetized and ensured the commodification of the people as an object to be exploited for the benefit of the speedy repayment of the bogus debts accumulated over the years by the domestic comprador elite. This informed the uncritical rolling back of the state, the state withdrawal for social provisioning and the privatization of the commanding height of the economy against the provisions of the nation's constitution.

This further concretized the "primary contradictions between the Nigerian national bourgeoisie [there is hardly anything national about the Nigerian bourgeoisie] and the Nigerian masses" (Osoba, 1978:74) as a "willing and active collaborator with hostile foreign imperialist forces to rob the overwhelming majority of Nigerians of the legitimate fruits of their labour (Osoba, 1978:74).

It was against this conspiratorial tendencies and the mortgage of the national interest by the comprador elements controlling the state that Osoba (1978) further argued that, "The

Nigerian bourgeoisie are the social engineers, fuelling and servicing the engines of economic, political and cultural oppression planted in our midst by the world imperialist powers and their multinational corporations".

The people were thus not just exploited and oppressed, even within the context of democratic politics, which has been reduced to mere electoralism and multi-partyism, the people are alienated from the mainstream of state policies, and robbed of effective political action. In this way, the elite further complicated the already complex problematic of the national question in Nigeria. Therefore, rather than being a solution and a platform for the resolution of the national question in Nigeria, democracy became part and parcel of the problem.

Part of the problem of democracy in Nigeria was in ignoring the character and nature of the Nigerian state and political economy, and the fact that it draws its strength outside the realities and struggles of the Nigerian people. This ignored the perceptive warning of Mamdani (1995:56). According to Mamdani:

> But democracy is not an artifact that can be introduced and sustained regardless of the context, either as an intellectual enterprise or as part of a foreign aid package. The guarantor of democracy cannot be constitutional safeguards engineered by consultants, but the organized presence of social and political movements which need democratic freedoms for their very existence, which will therefore struggle to defend them.

Furthermore, the liberal democracy that was imposed as Amin (1990:6) argued was "restricted to the political domain, while economic management continues to be based on non-democratic principles of private ownership and competition. In other words, the capitalist mode of production does not of itself

require democracy but rather its characteristic oppression is hidden in economic alienation affecting the entire society". Here in lies the crisis and contradictions of the nature and character of the Nigerian state, its interface with the problematic of national question, democracy and the legitimacy crisis in Nigeria. What then is to be done?

Democracy and the National Question: Engendering a Legitimate Authority:

One, the people should be returned to the centre of politics as the supreme sovereign. To this end, all encumbrances and problems limiting the people's political effectiveness need to be urgently addressed. The problems of mass poverty, illiteracy, diseases, and underdevelopment must be attacked frontally. The people should be politically, economically and socially empowered. To this end, it must be realized that the greatest wealth of the nation is her human capital and not oil.

Two, the privatization of the state, and state's withdrawal from social provisioning must stop. The state should be the leading engine of national development. The Western world despite capitalism gave the state an important role in the process of their development. The situation presently in Nigeria is similar to those that necessitated the Marshall Plan in Europe after World War II, and this was championed by the state. Hence, there is the imperative of a developmental state in Nigeria. There is however a need to radically transform the Nigerian state. The dependent and neo-colonial character and orientation of the Nigerian state cannot promote development; neither can it engender democracy and popular choice. There is therefore also the urgent need to democratize the state and its institutions. This is a call for the negation of "market democracy", which is a democracy of disempowerment and popular impoverishment.

Three, Nigeria structural deformity should be tackled. The present unitary and command federalism is a major cause of

legitimacy problem. The over-centralization and monopolization of power at the centre and by certain sections of the nation is coterminous with authoritarianism, injustice and fuels the crisis of legitimacy. Power therefore must be devolve to the lower levels of government. Functions closer to the people should be given to the levels of government closer to them. People should be given power to determine the direction of the state. Centralization of power promotes corruption, lack of transparency, irresponsible and irresponsive governance.

Four, rule of law, constitutionalism, equity and justice should be the desideratum informing the relationships between the different nationalities within the Nigerian state. The different nationalities should be given the right to self-determination and control over their natural resources subject to their making agreed contributions to the common purse of the nation. The practice of discriminative citizenship, nepotism, etc, must be redressed. As Lipson (:1976: 284) rightly posit:

> All individuals and groups in the society must be treated according to a common standard of justice in the sense that their basic substantive rights are respected and enforced. Whenever people feel that they are denied justice and that the system of government is not responsive to their legitimate claims, they will be disposed to attack it with violence; that is they will resort to extra-constitutional means.

According to Carl J. Friedrich (1970:104), every community should be a community of law and order, organic and purposive, and existential and voluntary. As he further asserted, "A community does not come into existence merely by existing, nor does it come into existence merely by being willed. Here, too, the two distinct elements have to come together and interact in order that a community may emerge". These

requirements are presently lacking in the case of Nigeria, and until it becomes ingrain crisis and contradictions are unavoidable. Consequently, deliberate programmatic actions must be taken to address the fears and suspicious amongst Nigerians. A sense of common nationality and citizenship must be consciously promoted through government actions, policies and pronouncements. Every Nigerian must be made to feel at home all over the country. A truly one nation, one destiny, one people must be consciously developed. This calls for the political-statesmen in power in place of the politicians.

Furthermore, the issue of corruption and abuse of office deserved more attention than is presently given. The cost-benefit of corruption should be negatively weighed against corrupt practices. It is the certainty of getting away from justice that has made corruption a past-time of the Nigerian comprador leaders.

Nigerians shared a generalized sense of hopelessness, skepticism, cynicism in the possibilities of the Nigerian project. This evinces the lack of a common vision, least mission. What does Nigeria collectively aspire to be, which would give the nation a purposive energy? There is the need to develop a unifying legitimating myth which people across nationalities can relate to, especially given the lack of national hero.

This would not only provide a justification for mutual co-existence, it would provide legitimacy for political authorities, and hope of a future shared and assured within the Nigerian commonwealth for all its citizens. As Friedrich (1970) argued, "A political community, much like an individual human being, needs a certain amount of hope in order to exist. Hope in the political community embodies itself in a utopian conception as to what the community should be like".

The foregoing is however not to be taken to mean that consensus pervade the totality of interactions of a political community. On the contrary, difference, dissent and contradictions are the hallmark of community pluralism and

vitality. However, this does not engender dissociation of community relationship. As Friendrich (1970:106) further argued, "In a living community in which purposes are related to evolving values, interests and beliefs there will always be vigorous dissent."

Experiences all over the world have shown that majoritarian politics is ill-adapted in ethnically divided and segmented pluralist societies. The present politics of winner-takes-all, which has reduced Nigerian politics to warfare, is not conducive for development and state legitimacy. It also makes a mockery of democracy, and aggravates the problematic of the national question. Therefore, the principle of proportional representative should be embraced as a basis for political representation. This would engender a more inclusive and popular participation in government.

Finally, the national question must be posed not as an ethnic question, but as a class question. The national question is a question of freedom, justice, equity, self-determination and democracy. The essence of the national question is to find workable solutions to the crisis of the state, of underdevelopment, oppression, marginalization, exploitation, injustices, backwardness, poverty and capitalist exploitation. These are problems without ethnic character. To this end, people across ethnic and nationalities boundaries should form trans-ethnic and trans-national alliances to reclaim political power from their mutual oppressors across ethnic divides, deepens democracy and empower the Nigerian people.

Conclusion:

In this chapter we have attempted to explicate and interrogate the interface between the nature and character of the Nigerian state, the national question it provokes, and the crisis of legitimacy that follows from this context and contestations. We have argued that the crisis and contradictions of dependent capitalism in Nigeria not only complicated the national question

problematic, it ensured the institutionalization of an inelegant democracy of disempowerment, and thus aggravated the legitimacy crisis of the state in Nigeria. We also proposed some redeeming measures to address this situation.

The danger of the ethnicization of the national question was also stressed. The need for a broad-based platform for oppressed Nigerians across ethnic and religious divides was also canvassed as a basis for the institutionalization of popular democracy, refederalization, development, social welfare of the citizenry, and combating the problems of injustices, underdevelopment, dependency, marginalization, authoritarianism, oppression, exploitation and other national crises.

Finally, any attempt to separate the national question from its democratic imperative is bound to fail, just as failure to institute popular people-centre democracy can only complicate the national problem, further divide the Nigerian people and make the Nigerian project unrealizable. In other words, we conclude that the twin issue of the national question and democracy are the core of the legitimacy crisis in Nigeria, and urgent solutions are called for if the nation is to move forward.

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