

International Relations and Nation building: The Nigerian Experience Since 1999.

Emmanuel Nonso Akosa

Department of History and International Studies

Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Nigeria.

en.akosa@unizik.edu.ng , <https://orcid.org/0009-0008-6533-4307>

ABSTRACT

The intrinsic interrelatedness between International Relations and the art of nation-building is well-established in the international system both in theory and practice. In the system, no nation-state can be said to be self-sufficient without relating with other states to drive its nation building as a systematic process. Meanwhile, the acts and manners in which nation building is anchored have concomitant effects on its external relations especially how it is perceived. A pluralistic Nigerian nation, and as a Third-World state, is far from the semblance of a nation. (Awolowo, 1987); argued that Nigeria is not a nation but a mere geographical expression. It therefore translates the uphill task for Nigeria to build its 'nation' amid both domestic and external complex forces, within the context of international relations. Due to limited resources, this study adopted a secondary collection of data readily available in journal articles, using qualitative analysis with the concept of domestic-political descriptions to x-ray how nation-building shapes Nigeria's external relations, and vice versa. This paper studied some myriad challenges of nation-building confronting Nigeria since its nascent democracy in 1999. Until Nigerians see themselves as a nation, their nation building will always be challenged abroad.

Keywords: Nation, Building, Nigeria, States, Relations

Introduction

Since its emergence as a fledgling democracy in 1999, over a span of more than twenty years, Nigeria continues to struggle in the process of constructing a nation, grappling with issues such as power distribution, assimilation, and harmonious cohabitation among others. These challenges are inherently anticipated in a diverse society like Nigeria. A diverse society implies intricate functioning and characteristics due to the multitude of conflicting interests stemming from various ethno-religious affiliations. In Nigeria's context, it accommodates over 250 ethnic groups with distinct values, customs, languages, faiths, traditions, and histories amalgamated from the Northern and Southern Protectorates to form what is now recognized as Nigeria in 1914 by the British Colonialists. The Amalgamation was purportedly for the convenience of the British Empire without the consent of the diverse groups to form a unified nation under the Crown before gaining independence in 1960.

Despite its self-governance, Nigeria has not fully leveraged its diversity. Awolowo (1987) contends that Nigeria is not truly a nation but merely a geographic entity due to the prevalence of deep-seated biases such as tribalism (or ethnicity), religious intolerance overshadowing common national identity and loyalty. On the contrary, in more developed countries like the United States of America (USA), Germany, and Canada, they have made significant progress in nation-building through advancements in technology and science. Many political experts attribute this progress largely to the consistent commitment of their governments to principles of justice, fairness, equality, and effective governance (Elijah & Usoro, 2016).

In the context of Nigeria's Fourth Republic following about two decades of military rule, the process of nation building has become more intricate and aggressive compared to the period preceding the current democratic era. The establishment of a democratic system aimed at reaping benefits has resulted in a divisive crisis due to an unfair distribution of the nation's meager resources, commonly referred to as the "national cake." Throughout various governmental terms, different ethnic groups have consistently accused non-indigenous Presidents of neglecting their interests in the nation-building process, particularly in decision-making, federal appointments, infrastructure development, and other matters. Similarly, according to Oladesu (2002), successive leaders' calls for national unity have been met with reluctance and suspicion from dissatisfied groups within the country, hindering progress in nation-building efforts. The Niger Delta region, Arewa Northern Forum, and Ohaneze

Ndigbo have frequently voiced their concerns about being excluded by the Obasanjo, Jonathan, and Buhari administrations, respectively. This exclusion has led to numerous uprisings, including the Niger-Delta militancy, Boko Haram terrorism in the North, and self-determination movements in the South East spearheaded by MASSOB and later IPOB. Notably, the South East region has endured the most marginalization among Nigeria's three major ethnic groups and has been largely left out of the nation-building process.

Theoretical Base

The underpinning foundations of this paper are based on the juxtaposition of Domestic-Political depiction and Systems Theory, respectively. The former relates to the scrutiny and understanding of how internal politics wield influence and shape a nation's decisions concerning foreign affairs and global consequences. It recognizes that nations are not unitary bodies, but rather consist of multiple players (such as policymakers) and establishments (specifically branches of government) that participate and compete for decision-making power. The concept of domestic politics highlights the importance of conceptual expectations, tangible interests, regulatory frameworks, and societal trends in molding the inclinations and positions of the administration on various global issues. The concept argues that internal players and frameworks have a significant impact on the government's leanings even before international factors come into play. Elements like the distribution of wealth within a country's economy, the economic interests of opposition factions in global agreements, and shifts in public sentiment can all influence the final stance taken by governments in global discussions. The examination of domestic politics offers insights into the complexities and mechanisms of decision-making processes at both the local and global scales (Fearon, 1998).

The Systems Theory, on the other hand, directs its focus towards the arrangement of the international system to elucidate the conduct and interplay of its constituents, namely nation-states. Kenneth Waltz stands as the chief advocate of this theory. Nevertheless, (Hamilton, 2020) posits that there exists no singular introduction to Systems Theory. Instead, the systematic analysis of international relations and its repercussions on states emerged in the latter part of the 20th century, with systemic reasoning assuming a pivotal role in international relations after the release of Kenneth Waltz's Theory of International Politics in 1979. Moreover, Waltz intriguingly elaborates on the intrinsic connection between the

international system and nation-states, where occurrences in the former mold the actions and engagements of the latter. In this context, the process of nation-building in Nigeria has been impacted by its international relations. Uji and Kigbu (2015) assert that the Nigerian government partakes in bilateral partnerships with both developing and developed nations, encompassing European and American countries as well as China. These partnerships have yielded both favorable and unfavorable outcomes for Nigeria's advancement. On one hand, China's foreign direct investments have spurred growth in sectors like manufacturing, power, and oil and gas. Conversely, Nigeria's affiliation with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has been censured for exacerbating poverty, social instability, economic inequalities, and a deterioration in living standards. Nigeria's economic diplomacy, designed to broaden the economy and allure foreign investments, has not adequately addressed the nation's developmental goals. The impact of international trade on Nigeria's economic expansion has been a mixed bag, with certain aspects carrying a beneficial and noteworthy influence, while others have proven inconsequential. Therefore, it is incumbent upon Nigeria to deliberate on broadening its diplomatic ties with nations such as China, India, and Japan, drawing lessons from the experiences of the Asian Tigers.

This paper, summarily, asserts that the adoption of domestic-political description and system theory gives an analytical understanding to this study. The former shows how internal/domestic happenings (including nation building) shape Nigeria's foreign policy actions in the international community. While the latter explains how external events -the critical developments in the international system – have impacts on Nigeria's nation building. As the study unfolds, historical realities to justify the theoretical framework will be apt.

Conceptual Issues

In the discourse on nation building as it pertains to Nigeria, this article considers the notions of Nation as well as Nation Building. What defines a nation? A nation is a collective assembly of individuals who share common cultural, traditional, historical, and often linguistic characteristics, whether they are scattered or confined within a specific geographic area. Take the United Kingdom, for example, a country primarily populated by people from four distinct nations: the English, Irish, Scottish, and Welsh. Essentially, a nation signifies a territory where all its inhabitants are governed by the same authority. Moreover, the term

"nation" can also signify a group of people who share a historical past, traditions, culture, and sometimes language, even if they do not possess their own land. It is crucial to recognize that a nation cannot thrive without a shared historical narrative that unites its population, highlighting its uniqueness in existing as a cohesive entity, where it cherishes its unity and collectively protect it. Various attributes contribute to the concept of a nation, such as a perceived interconnectedness among its members, and a "blood" tie between individuals, whether real or rooted in mythology. Additionally, a shared cultural legacy, including cultural artefacts and occasionally institutional frameworks, is considered the "heritage" of the nation, often held in high sentimental regard.

Consequently, challenges to this heritage provoke strong emotional reactions. Linguistic cohesion, represented by one or more languages linked to national identity, is equally important. The more distinct or complex these languages are, the stronger the emotional bond to them as something worth defending. In a time of widespread mass communication and the dominance of English as a global language, intense battles are being waged worldwide to protect national languages, notably in countries like Iceland and France. Lastly, a sense of belonging among members of the nation is crucial. The idea of national identity is deeply ingrained in the human psyche, and individuals who belong to a nation exhibit a profound instinctive response to any perceived or actual threat against it.

Ernest Renan, as referenced by Rundell (1992) in the publication "What is a Nation?", presented a detailed interpretation of the concept of a nation. According to Renan, a nation is characterized by a spiritual core, a soul, consisting of two inseparable elements: the past and the present. The past signifies the collective possession of a significant reservoir of memories, while the present embodies shared consent, the desire for peaceful coexistence, and the determination to uphold the legacy that has been passed down to them. Renan argues that a nation, much like an individual, arises from a prolonged history of resilience, sacrifice, and commitment. Among various forms of respect, honoring ancestors is deemed the most authentic, as it is our predecessors who have influenced our sense of self. Thus, following Renan's explanation, a nation can be defined as a group of individuals united by common goals and an agreement to live together as a society, nurturing a unique sense of belonging in their presence. Representing a unified spirit, this cohesion acts as the cohesive energy that binds them. Their behaviors are guided by emotions and principles that have been shaped by history, with a deliberate effort in the present to protect and uphold these principles for future

generations. The core of a nation resides within the very core of its people. However, if this core is tainted by ongoing conflicts and discrepancies, the nation descends into a state of political paralysis, endangering its mission of enduring unity and vitality.

Nonetheless, in the work "Marxism and the National Question," (Stalin, 1913) raises the issue of what constitutes a nation, emphasizing that nationhood goes beyond tribal and racial roots. Stalin argues that a nation must be a "historically established community of individuals," firmly placing the concept within historical, political, and social discussions that reach back in time. Nevertheless, it has been noted that the term "nation" is not a modern development, but rather has historical roots dating back to the 14th century, encompassing various notions related to lineage, territories, and birth (Harper, 2001). Notably, in the context of Nigeria, (Awolowo, 1987) contends that the Nigerian nation is simply a geographical term. He stated, "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 'Nigeria' is a distinctive appellation to distinguish those who live within the boundaries of Nigeria and those who do not." Thus, the fundamental structure of the concept has always been complex, evolving alongside changing perceptions and attitudes towards the definition of a nation. Despite these intricacies, the notion of unity has consistently been a key theme, with Egypt recognized as the earliest nation due to its shared ethnic heritage, cultural agreement, and the unity on which it was established (Gat, 2013). Essentially, the idea of a nation precedes the actual term itself, existing for many centuries prior.

However, this paper contends that nation building can be realized when individuals, who identify as part of a nation, are devoid of personal or biased interests stemming from characteristics like deep-seated emotions, prejudice, or other factors that could cause divisions. The process of nation building, especially in a diverse setting with various religious or cultural backgrounds, becomes challenging when attempting to unite individuals for a common goal. Overcoming these obstacles to maintain their collective identity necessitates collaborative endeavors. A populace with a strong sense of national pride, ready to set aside differences arising from conflicting interests, are unmistakably distinguished by their steadfast commitment. It is this shared dedication that drives their desire to contribute to nation building. Nation building is a commendable pursuit undertaken by individuals who harbor a shared goal of upholding the principles of a nation, particularly a nation-state. These

individuals, recognized as nation-builders, prioritize the national interest of their political context above personal, religious, or tribal motivations.

The Impacts of International Relations on Nigeria's Nation Building

The foreign relations of Nigeria are a direct result of its internal politics and policies. The perception of Nigerians on the global stage is heavily influenced by the actions of individuals within the country. Failure to foster a sense of unity and purpose among Nigerians will hinder their recognition and respect by external entities as a cohesive population working towards common goals. Neglecting the duty of nation-building leads to a loss of credibility internationally. Nigeria's foreign policies reflect its national interests, with a key focus on safeguarding these core values to play a significant role globally. The international community evaluates Nigeria based on its domestic response to issues such as citizen security and welfare. Nigeria has historically concentrated on assisting other nations while its own citizens receive minimal support. Africa has been a primary focus of Nigeria's foreign policy, with substantial investments made in liberation movements, conflict resolution, and peacekeeping endeavors. Despite these efforts, Nigeria faces internal challenges including security threats, ethnic and religious tensions, poverty, and unemployment. Unfortunately, the support and appreciation from nations Nigeria aids are often lacking, resulting in Nigerian citizens abroad being vulnerable to xenophobic attacks and persecution.

Moreover, Nigerians are viewed by the global community as lacking trustworthiness due to their participation in illegal financial dealings, drug trafficking, human trafficking, terrorism, and kidnapping, among other offenses. The external perception of Nigeria suggests a significant inclination towards criminal activities and corruption. Consequently, Nigerian nationals encounter intense scrutiny and inspection when present at major international airports. Nigeria is essentially a reflection of its surroundings, which is a result of the internal policies enforced by our nation, perpetuating ineffective governance and leadership. This domestic environment, characterized by corrupt behaviors, inadequate governance, and poor leadership, has led citizens to believe that sacrificing for the country is unnecessary. This sentiment stems from the country's failure to sincerely address the welfare of its people, instead witnessing continuous misappropriation and mishandling of public funds by government officials, widespread corruption among public figures, authoritarian practices in governance, and the prevalence of nepotism and favoritism in the political structure. These

elements have contributed to a lack of patriotism among citizens, who no longer feel inclined to contribute to the advancement of a nation that does not prioritize their well-being. Consequently, many individuals choose to migrate to other countries, resulting in a brain drain phenomenon for Nigeria. The government's inadequate investment in infrastructure and essential services has led to widespread illiteracy, disease, and poverty. As long as these challenges persist without proper intervention, citizens will not have a genuine motivation to make sacrifices for the nation.

Nonetheless, Nigeria is facing the challenge of being a mono-economy nation, a situation that has had a severe impact on its foreign relations. This is primarily because Nigeria heavily relies on a single commodity for over eighty (80) percent of its foreign revenue. As a result, Nigeria is greatly dependent on importing more than ninety (90) percent of its consumption, including agricultural goods, which historically formed the foundation of its economy. Furthermore, Nigeria lacks a thriving manufacturing industry, further intensifying its dependence on one primary source of income, namely crude oil. The worrying consequence of this dependency is currently evident as crude oil prices decrease in the global market and production declines due to disruptions caused by militant activities in the Niger Delta region.

Consequently, Nigeria is technically experiencing an economic downturn. The citizens are currently enduring significant hardships and are suffering from hunger. With this situation ongoing, Nigerians will encounter increasing challenges in participating in nation-building, especially at a time when the commitments for change by the government led by Muhammadu Buhari are hindered by various miscalculations concerning foreign exchange policies. Among the recent economic challenges faced by Nigerians, significant increases in the prices of goods and services (43 percent), petrol pump prices (18 percent), transportation costs (10 percent), Naira devaluation and foreign exchange crisis (8 percent), inadequate electricity supply (7 percent), irregular salary payments (4 percent), and higher electricity tariffs (3 percent) stand out. These statistical findings, as reported by NOI Polls, are supported by recent inflation figures released by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), which indicate that headline inflation reached approximately 16.5 percent in June 2016, the highest level in over six years (Premium Times, 2016).

The challenges of nation building in Nigeria

To analyze the obstacles faced in the process of nation building in Nigeria, this research confirms that time and space present inherent challenges. Undeniably, the diverse nature of Nigerian society is identified as the main hindrance to nation building, not only within Nigeria but also in other contexts. In a diverse society, as stated by Van Den Berghe (1964), the social structure is segmented in a manner that lacks a common set of values, shows rigid group definitions, and experiences conflicts or lacks integration. For instance, Nigeria, with its 6 geo-political zones, over 250 distinct ethnic groups, and 3 major religions, each having its own conflicting value systems, fosters a culture of competition for development and power, particularly evident during political transitions. This stands as the primary challenge.

Supporting Van's assertion, Gambari (2008) contends that despite some achievements in nation building, such as maintaining unity in the face of numerous challenges, Nigeria continues to face obstacles stemming from its historical background, socio-economic disparities, flawed constitution, tribalism, and leadership issues that hinder its full potential. Historically, the amalgamation of Nigerians under colonial rule has influenced the nation's orientation, portraying a divided people based on regions and religions. The colonial era established Nigeria for administrative convenience rather than fostering unity, leading to the perception of nation building as an intricate task. The lack of political interaction between the northern and southern regions, their distinct administrative structures, and differing political cultures highlighted regional preferences over national unity. During Independence, the elite class of the 1950s and 1960s were predominantly shaped by regional institutions, resulting in limited understanding and affinity towards neighboring regions.

In such circumstances, prejudice and fear thrived easily. During the decolonization period, Nigerian nationalists from various regions engaged in conflicts among themselves and with British colonialists. Unlike other nations with central unifying figures like Kwame Nkrumah in Ghana or Nelson Mandela in South Africa, Nigeria saw each region producing its own leaders (Gambari, 2008). Nigeria has persistently produced leaders who show little regard for the unity of our nation, resulting in deep divisions along ethnic and religious lines. The founders of modern Nigeria were divided, leaving a legacy that hinders nation-building efforts due to a lack of unity and togetherness essential for progress. Despite 40 years of Independence and the democratic era since 1999, issues related to regional and tribal affiliations persist and have worsened.

Another obstacle to nation-building is the political disunity and lack of coherence in governance. In the past, regional politics implemented a zoning system allocating the presidential ticket to a candidate from the southwest and the vice-presidential candidacy to someone from the north. This system, which posed a threat to Nigeria's unity in the early years of independence, led to severe crises and ultimately the civil war of 1967-1970. Former Nigerian leader, Olusegun Obasanjo, expressed regret over the proliferation of armed groups due to fractured unity in the country, emphasizing the urgent need for unity, national cohesion, and a common purpose. It is crucial for the media to promote unity in diversity and a shared sense of purpose.

Despite our historical background, we must prioritize the interests of Nigeria over personal biases to become effective nation builders. Embracing the principles of federalism and addressing issues such as the 'indigene' and 'settlers' dilemma are crucial steps towards overcoming historical challenges, as highlighted by Professor Gambari in a 2008 lecture on nation-building in Nigeria. Addressing socio-economic inequalities is essential for nation-building, as disparities in quality of life and economic opportunities among citizens hinder progress and create a wide gap between the privileged and the marginalized. The socio-economic rights enshrined in the constitution often remain elusive, leaving many citizens facing unemployment and struggling to find viable opportunities for economic advancement.

Accessing the most fundamental necessities of life has become unattainable for the majority of Nigerians. According to Gambari (2008), socio-economic disparities throughout the nation breed fears and suspicions that create divisions within our society. This is evident when examining the disparity in immunization rates of children against dangerous childhood illnesses, with the South-East at 44.6%, the North-West at 3.7%, and the North-East at 3.6%. Similarly, disparities in the education of girls are apparent, with the South-East having an enrollment rate of 85%, South-West 89%, South-South 75%, North-East 20%, and North-West 25%. Education and poverty levels are also significant factors contributing to inequalities across Nigeria. In the 2020/21 academic year, only 5% of university admissions were from the North-West, while the South-East had 39%. In terms of poverty, 95% of Jigawa State's population is classified as poor, compared to only 20% in Bayelsa State. The prevalence of socio-economic inequality has exacerbated the high crime rates among youths, who make up over seventy percent of the population (Akuche, 2016).

Insecurity has emerged as a critical obstacle to nation-building, as poverty intensifies due to the lack of necessities for survival. Citizens are preoccupied with thoughts of survival rather than contributing to the nation's development. Concerned Nigerians question how the country reached such a dire situation where safety is nonexistent, and the problem continues to worsen unchecked. Insecurity has unfortunately become a norm. The government's neglect of its citizens has led to a lack of concern among the populace about the nation's progress. The social contract between the State and its citizens remains a theoretical concept in need of realization. The south-west grapples with a rise in cybercrime and herder-farmer conflicts, the south-east faces secessionist agitation, kidnapping, and attacks by unknown assailants, while the south-south deals with militancy and environmental protests. The north-east is plagued by humanitarian crises caused by Boko Haram extremism, while the north-west struggles with banditry, kidnapping, illegal mining, and ethno-religious violence. In 2020, over \$40.6 billion in foreign investments were diverted from the Nigerian economy due to insecurity, as reported by the global terrorism index (The Cable, 2022).

In a correlated development, a significant challenge in the process of nation-building in Nigeria is the constitutional dilemma. The Nigerian constitution has failed to represent the wishes of the populace, as it has historically been crafted by a select few in power to safeguard specific interests rather than the overall national interest. The constitution serves as a foundational document outlining the organization and governance of the State, granting it the necessary authority to function effectively. However, the Constitution's established structures have been a source of doubt and complexity. The fundamental principles on which our constitution is built have presented considerable obstacles, posing a hindrance to the nation-building effort. The type and framework of government outlined in the constitution remain pivotal concerns. While there is a debate advocating for federalism as the suitable governance system for Nigeria, many aspire to practice true federalism, while others argue in favor of a unitary system of government instead. Gambari (2008) notes the enduring challenges faced by federalism from proponents of a unitary government and those favoring a confederal arrangement. Those who claim to support federalism but operate in a unitary manner, negating the division of powers among different levels of the federation, are considered detrimental to Nigeria.

Linked to the federalism predicament is the issue of fiscal federalism, which stands out as a particularly worrisome concern. Gambari raises pertinent inquiries on this front, questioning

the fair and just basis for revenue sharing, the federal government's authority to withhold state funds without consent, and the continued control of local government allocations by state governments. These are fundamental queries that lack unanimous agreement.

Moreover, the structural layout of the Nigerian federation raises apprehension. While there is a consensus that Nigeria should function as a federation, there exists a lack of clarity on the specific nature of this federation – whether it should be defined territorially or ethnically, as some advocate. The Nigerian populace is divided on the ideal number of states or federating units, with some content with the current 36 states, others advocating for additional states in their regions, and yet another faction proposing a reduction in the number of states.

Another challenge emerges from constitutional provisions such as the Federal Character Principle and Quota System, which have sparked discontent and demands for restructuring from various segments of the nation. This discontent prompted former President Dr. Goodluck Jonathan to convene The 2014 National Conference to address some of the deficiencies within the Constitution. The conclusion of the conference is now a matter of the past as it was overshadowed by ethnic sentiments. Likewise, there has been a significant discourse among the populace regarding the type of governance (democracy and the presidential system) and power-sharing formula among the government levels. While some advocate for a return to the Westminster model for Nigeria, which is the parliamentary system, others argue against altering the American-style presidential system in place since 1979. The topic of Nigerian democracy also highlights the existing setup. Calls have been made for a two-party system by some, while others have pushed for the multi-party system currently in operation. Despite the majority of Nigerians supporting democratic principles such as government formation based on the majority's will, adherence to the rule of law, and respect for citizens' basic freedoms, there is an underlying discontent that has led some to implicitly yearn for military rule or ineffective civilian administrations due to the absence of democratic values and benefits. The Nigerian perspective and implementation of democracy are not uniform, indicating a lack of consensus on this crucial issue (Gambari, 2008). Whether it pertains to accountability, credibility, or adherence to the rule of law, the recently conducted 2023 Presidential Election by INEC, the electoral body, was deemed undemocratic according to the European Union Report.

Inadequate institutions and corruption pose significant obstacles to the nation's progress. Nigeria's main downfall lies in the failure to establish robust institutions for democracy and

development. The lack of strong institutions within the Nigerian State has led to increased corruption within the political system due to their weakness. Upholding probity, accountability, transparency, and integrity are key components of strong institutions, and if we aim to construct durable democratic foundations, leaders and citizens must exhibit commitment and patriotism. The three branches of government and their respective agencies need to be reinforced and aligned with democratic values. For example, the Independent National Electoral Commission should operate independently without government influence, and agencies like the Code of Conduct Bureau (CCB), the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), and the Independent Corrupt Practices and other related offences Commission (ICPC) must actively combat corruption. The Judiciary must maintain its independence, and the legislature must fulfill its duties in lawmaking. The principle of separation of powers should not just exist in theory but be practiced.

In Nigeria, instances have occurred where the executive branch meddled unnecessarily in other government arms and used coercive measures against the opposition. This interference with supposedly independent institutions has hindered their ability to support democracy and enhance the political system's development. Lack of robust democratic institutions will result in development being merely a facade, hindering the flourishing of democratic values like rule of law, good governance, and human rights, thus rendering nation-building an unattainable objective.

Leadership Challenge: The assertion that Nigeria possesses everything except for effective leadership is indeed a harsh reality. This is primarily due to the fact that individuals in leadership roles in Nigeria often exploit their positions for personal gain rather than for the benefit of the public. This behavior has led to inconsistent actions in public offices, as well as the prevalence of power abuse, nepotism, favoritism, and tribalism or sectionalism. Nigerian leaders prioritize self-enrichment over the well-being of the populace and the nation, with their personal interests often taking precedence over the interests of the Nigerian State. Once in power, they exhibit unrestrained behavior, becoming consumed by the authority bestowed upon them and engaging in embezzlement, misappropriation, and mismanagement of public funds. The scourge of poor leadership has hindered Nigeria's development, with poverty and underdevelopment emerging as pervasive afflictions in the country. The focus of our leaders is on embezzling funds and transferring them overseas, a practice that significantly contributes to underdevelopment through capital flight. The reckless and irresponsible

conduct of Nigerian leaders in positions of authority reflects their disregard for serving the public interest. The absence of responsible governance is a significant issue, with citizens often lamenting the lack of accountability and responsibility displayed by leaders once they assume positions of authority granted to them by the people. The abuse of power by these leaders has resulted in human rights violations against the populace. Nigeria urgently requires competent leadership characterized by a commitment to nation-building, respect for human rights and the rule of law, accountability, responsiveness, and responsibility towards meeting the needs of the people and fostering the nation's progress and development.

Recommendations/Conclusion

In the art of nation building, Nigeria faces a combination of internal and external challenges among them is how it is perceived in the comity of nations. The image of Nigeria abroad is very far from “Good People, Great Nation,” its global rebranding campaign during the Yar’adua/Jonathan government. Before then and still now, every Nigerian is seen as a criminal suspect by the West. While amid its fellow Africans, Nigerians are envied and victimized, perhaps, due to its largest population and biggest economic status, by those who were supposed to have been hospitable in reciprocity for Nigeria’s benevolence in fighting against the Apartheid. It is on these prejudices that this paper is calling for the refocusing and re-defining of Nigeria’s foreign policy to fit the dynamics and global challenges of the 21st century. Therefore a dire need to refocus and re-define the content, principles and objectives of Nigeria’s foreign policy for it to overcome the challenges of the times. Nigeria needs to consistently expand its external connections strategically, politically and economically to attract the needed foreign partners that can assist it overcome the challenges of terrorism, economic recession and technological backwardness.

Fighting corruption, Dr Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala says, is dangerous. It is so because corruption has been identified as one major cankerworm that has derailed nation-building efforts in Nigeria. The fight against it should be unbiased and non-partisan without fear of life or compromise. There should be no sacred cows. Objectivity, fair play and the love of the country should, however, be the guiding principles. Nipping it in the bud the anti-corruption crusade is the assurance that Nigeria is on track since its nation building lies on it.

Revamping the economy through economic diversification in non-oil sectors to fill the gaps orchestrated by solely dependent on oil for its foreign exchange gains, is anticipated. It is not encouraging that Nigerians are culturally depended on foreign goods as being “the original” which has a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) effect on the naira economy. Relatedly, the national debate on the sale of national assets would only be tantamount to sacrificing the geese that lay the golden eggs. Facing all these will resolve the highlighted socio-economic inequalities that resulted in poverty and insecurity, therefore, providing jobs for the teeming unemployed youths that chunk the 65% of the population, perhaps, through entrepreneurship, which will boost the manpower needed for the nation building.

Meanwhile, the Nigerian constitution needs a review so that all interest groups can discuss the issues in the constitution and address them squarely, if not, the country will continue to face the challenge of nation building stemming from the skewed constitution. At this juncture, this paper calls for revisiting the 2014 National Conference (Confab) Report so that the said constitution review will accommodate the amendment.

Finally, addressing weak institutions and corruption, the various institutions of government must be strengthened and efficiently functional, especially the democratic institutions. It is when these institutions -the judiciary, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), the Code of Conduct Bureau (CCB), the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), the Independent and Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) - are strong that we can witness good governance, economic stability and patriotic leadership that will salvage all other discussed challenges. In all, failure to take up the aforementioned responsibilities, Nigeria and its nation building will always be challenged abroad.

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