

NATIONAL GOALS AND OBJECTIVES: TOWARDS A NATIONAL RESPONSE TO POLITICAL RIVALRY IN THE CONTEXT OF NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The Nigerian quest to have a system of government that is potent has continually being marred by individual political interests at the expense of national interest. Political rivalry is considered as a threat which has continued to linger on the minds of citizens whose patriotism hangs on the Nigerian common goals and objectives. Although many approaches have been utilized to curb the scourge of political rivalry in Nigeria, yet individual party interest seems to be life and well in the Nigerian political atmosphere. This paper premised on the Nigerian National goals and objectives as the catalyst for neutralizing the scourge of political rivalry and its stubborn effects on national common interest. This contribution is actualized through a systematic review of relevant materials explored within the Nigerian national policies and other secondary recourses that have unpack corresponding views on the subject under consideration. Other supporting discourses include an overview of the Nigerian context, Nigerian political system, national policies on national aspirations, political parties in Nigeria, political rivalry in Nigeria, scourge of political rivalry in Nigeria and national response to political rivalry in Nigeria. The paper concluded that as an institution, the judiciary and other forms of law enforcement agents in Nigeria can be more viable if focus is fully placed on practical implementation and actualization of the Nigerian common goals and objectives irrespective of individual party or political affiliations.

Keywords: National, goals and objectives, response, political, rivalry, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

The effort and commitment of the Nigerian system of government to actualize a dependable and viable system of government has often been flawed by individual political ambitions at the detriment of common interest. The obstruction mostly expressed connotation of rivalry in the way politics is being practiced in Nigeria. The ugly situation is mostly attributed to the Nigerian context which is evidently characterized by negative application of pluralism. Contextually, Nigeria is based known as a multi-lingual, multi-religious, multi-ethnic and multi-political nation when compared with other nations in Africa and particularly the in the western milieu.

Political rivalry comes to fore when politics is practiced on the basis of religious, ethnic, language or party interest. In view of the seemingly projection of individual goal and objections based on the elements of pluralism in Nigeria and how this has adversely affected the smooth implementation of the Nigerian policies which are often documented and reviewed with the sole aim of achieving national goals and objectives.

Taking into account attempts by government to respond to the scourge of political rivalry in Nigeria, this paper called into question the Nigerian response and its potency in mitigating political rivalry and its effects on common development goals and objectives. In the quest to discover the roots causes of rivalry in the Nigerian political arena, the paper highlights the various elements that constitute the Nigerian context. Attention was given to the contentious atmosphere within the political sphere which is characterized by religio-cultural and socio-political interests. These interests often result into division, factions and violence between conflicting parties. Understanding the Nigerian political system as captured in the paper forms part of the background towards examining the Nigerian national goals and objectives. The policies are documented and reviewed based on contextual inferences and institutional demands with the aim of achieving national goals and objectives.

While highlighting the Nigerian quest for human holistic development, the paper examined policies on national aspirations and the modalities proposed by government towards the realizing its goals and objectives. Political rivalry in the Nigerian polity as delineated in this paper connotes envy and competitiveness in the quest for political opportunities among partisan politicians. Such political indifferent attitude is rooted in the attempt to project individual sentiments that are detrimental to common goals and objectives. Conceptually, Nigerian national goals and objectives and its nexus with Nigerian aspirations and particularly national development plans remains the driving force among political aspirants and flag bearers. The paper concluded that the scourge of political rivalry can be neutralized when partisans are guided by national development plans which aim at achieving a collective goal and objective.

THE NIGERIAN CONTEXT

The complexity of Nigeria as the most populated Nation State in Africa is attributed to its multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, multi-cultural and multi religious character. In all, it has about 390 ethnic groups. Three quarters are from the Middle Belt and forty-four of these are from central Nigeria. According to Ogunleye (2021), the pluralistic nature of Nigeria contributed greatly to the eruption of different forms of conflict experienced in most parts of Nigeria.

According to Oyebode, (2022) Nigeria's complex socio-political identities have been exploited by those who wish to use its ethnic and religious diversity as a reason to engage in violent conflict against human life. He further stated how Nigeria is today a context engulfed with religious and ethnic intolerance. Sometimes beginning from a simple misunderstanding, they can metamorphose into religious, communal, and ethnic conflagration Nigerian urban and semi

urban areas have been affected most by these religious and multi ethnic conflicts. Whenever conflicts of this nature reoccur, they erupt much more and claim many more casualties.

In the light of this reality, ethno-religious and socio-political conflicts in contemporary Nigeria are attributed to the contentious environment shaped by multiplicity of religions, socio-economic instability, Political rivalry and grave individual interest for amassing wealth at the expense of human dignity. Kolapo and Njoku (2022) further hold that, ethnic and religious conflicts against human life are attributed to such ill-gotten power, superiority, wealth linked to the religious and ethnic identities. This is contained in the discriminatory attitude of those in power. In recent decades religious and ethnic affiliation have become major criteria for appointments to key offices, the military, the police force, the civil service, enrolment in schools, colleges and universities the military, the police force, the civil service, enrolment in schools, colleges and universities, and so on.

In a report on Nigeria at 2050, Nigeria is rated as the most complex country in Africa. This is attributed to its over increasing population and its multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, multi-cultural and multi religious character. In all, it has about 500 ethnic groups. Three quarters are from the Middle Belt and forty-four of these are from Plateau State. As pointed out in this report, the pluralistic nature of Nigeria has contributed and will greatly contribute to forms of violence and poverty due to its pluralistic nature. The report further holds that due to the pluralistic nature of Nigeria, ethnic culture have wrongly been utilized to breed tribalism, manipulation of religious sentiments, regionalism, religious fundamentalism, and political tension which has left the country in a trail of destructive violence that does not only threatened the integrity of Nigeria but also threatens human life (Yebona, 2022).

This contentious situation according to Nirmalasari and Sarwono (2021) presents an atmosphere of rancor and domination within the Nigerian community. They further argued that, violence can be triggered through symbols because they can speak and provoke the people's emotions which mostly result into violence. Accordingly, the violence in Nigeria does not only seek to destroy or cause physical damage to lives and properties but also has psychological connotations that undermine human dignity due to cultural, religious, or political affiliations.

Human Rights Watch (2021) while searching for the root causes for rancor and prejudice which helped to contribute to use of violence, could conclude. The leaders of Christian indigene groups often openly accuse the Hausa- Fulani of attempting to take over their land, "dominate" the minority groups, and impose Islam on the region. They also point to the willingness of the Hausa-Fulani to resort to violence to achieve these ends.

From the forgoing, the context of Nigeria assumes an environment favorably disposed for breeding political tension and other forms of violence against human life. As highlighted, ethnic and religious rivalry presents an atmosphere of despair and uncertainty not only on economic emancipation of the Nigerian citizens, but also affect the realization of the Nigerian development goals and objectives.

NIGERIAN NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

National development planning represents a contextual research and potent plans which prioritize particular activities utilizing available resources towards achieving well articulated goals and objectives (Alweendo, 2017). While delineating the conceptual understanding of the Nigerian national development plans, Tedaro, argued that development planning should be seen as a composition of multi-dimensional process involving structural, attitudinal and institutional changes.

Thus development plans encompasses mercenaries set in place to accelerate economic sustainable growth that has the capacity to cope with new trends towards achieving political, economic and social objectives. It is described as government response towards improving the standard of living of citizens of a particular government (Iheanacho, 2014). According to Ejumudo (2008) planning is as old as mankind involving all facets of human endeavor. Thus, planning has continually become the center stage in almost every human society and since it embraces aspects of human activity, it can conceptually be described as a means to an end (Ejumudo, 2008). In principle, planning presupposes pro-activeness and time consciousness on when and how activities are carried out with the sole aim of achieving national goals and objectives.

Although attempts were made to develop a national development plan before Nigeria got her independence, this paper focused on the national development plans aftermath Nigerian independence. The selection of the category is based on the idea that before independence national goals and objectives were master minded by colonial administration which seemed to project colonial goals and objectives at the expense of Nigerian development plans. Comparatively, development plans initiated after independence are man by the Nigerian Government and the processes of implementation coordinated by government policies and institution which are saddled with the responsibility of enforcing national policies towards actualizing national goals and objectives.

Historically, the first National Development Plan which was between the years 1962-1968 was launched after independence in 1960. The desired objectives included, cultivating a favorable environment where national income could be equally distributed irrespective of ethnic, religious, political affiliations, economic growth could be accelerated, generation of savings for viable investments nationally and internationally and uplifting standard of living for Nigerians with particular emphasis on food security, housing and development of viable infrastructure of the nation (Onyenwigwe, 2009). As documented and impressive as this plan could be, history have shown that this development plan was weaken ethnic rivalry which led to civil war from (1967-1970) (Iheanacho 2014).

The second development plan was constructed immediately after the civil war around 1970-1974. Taking into account the contextual background of Nigeria, the development plan centered on the restoration of peace Nigeria had enjoyed before. Thus, it was captioned, National development plan of reconciliation, reconstruction and rehabilitation. Although, this plan

recorded a significant improvement, yet was marred by vagueness, incompetent leaders, lack of finance, corruption and mono-cultural oil economy between (1975-1980). Other development plans include the National development plan that was captioned development of oil boom plan. The non-realization of the objective of this plan was attributed to religious, political and ethnic rivalry.

The fourth development plan (1981-1985) constructed aftermath military intervention in 1966. It was aimed at consolidating the third development plan in its targets and policy formations. It recorded a significant development on generating funds through petroleum revenue. However, due to dwindling resources, high cost of living, and unemployment, most government projects were abandoned. The dwindling resources were also attributed to individual interest such as religio-cultural and socio-political bigotry and mismanagement of public funds (Adedeji 1989).

From the foregoing, it can be argued that although the series of the National development plans were well articulated, constructed, recorded and often reviewed yet they were pressured and made into a public disappointment in the face of underdevelopment in all facets of life in the Nigerian polity. From the inferences, the failures are attributed to achieving individual goals and objectives at the expense of common goals and objectives.

NIGERIAN POLITICAL SYSTEM

The Nigerian political system cannot be told devoid of referencing the attainment of Nigerian independence and its probable reconstruction and inculcation of a distinctive political system that appeals to the religio-cultural and socio-political context of Nigeria. Comparatively, although the Nigerian political system cannot be completely distanced from the west after independence, yet it was an attempt to identify with the Nigerian peculiarities. It was a political style that created space only for the elite class whose ideologies metamorphosed into a political culture that projects the practice of democracy that seek to realize individual party goals and objectives (Brown 2013). By definition, the Nigerian political system is a whole which embodies the formation of Government by and for the people. In other words, it is a government which is democratic in nature. As copied or borrowed from the west, the formation of a democratic government requires well informed and functional political parties each projecting its goals and aspirations. Party goals and objectives are expressed in what is democratically called party manifestos which are usually underpinned by the parties' quest to provide democratic dividend to the populace.

It can be argued that the Nigerian political system as highlighted seems to be entrenched in its inherent challenges that have the capacity to mar Nigerian development plans and make a caricature of the development of Nigeria in all human spheres. While taking into account the challenges of the said political system as practiced in Nigeria, (Jinadu, 2011) delineates that while political parties propagate their individual interests, it should not negate the tenets of Nigerian sovereignty and national goals and objectives. In other words, every political party

within the political system should be informed by goals and objectives that are rooted in the Nigerian national goals and objectives. The various arms of government as spelled within the Nigerian political system were aimed at not creating institutional interests at the detriment of national interest. The executive, legislative and judiciary are institutions working in synergy with the Nigerian quest to provide good governance and sustainable development. The aim is to further provide interdisciplinary approaches towards achieving the Nigerian goals and objectives (Brown, 2013).

Although the Nigerian political system was well constructed, structured and defined yet the achievement of the national goals and objectives remains improbable. The assertion is attributed to indifferent dispositions of political institutions which are saddled with the responsibilities to enforce and implement institutional precepts towards achieving collective goals and objectives. Political parties which constitute part of the Nigerian political system have become entities and exercise independent interests at the expense of national interest. The attitudinal divergence is expressed in the way and manner in which political campaigns are conducted. Extreme propagation of parties' goals and objectives by party stake holders and members has nursed animosity, resentment, bigotry and rivalry. There is no gainsaying that the continual incubation of bigotry and rivalry within the Nigerian political system has the potentials to relegate national goals and objectives to the margins (Mangvwat, 2008).

POLITICAL RIVALRY IN NIGERIA

Political rivalry denotes an unhealthy atmosphere within a nation's political system. Such atmosphere is characterized by forms of competition, contention, enmity, conflict, challenges, jealousy and antagonism (Stephenson, 2013). Political rivalry can also be described as a contest between two political interest groups with cutting edge divergence in their ideologies. It is an attempt to exclude a political opponent by using derogatory statements and messages with the aim to inflict discouragement and some forms of political defeat.

Contextually, Nigeria is known for its pluralistic character and how the multiplicity in its religio-cultural and socio-political background has brought contention in the political atmosphere. The institution of multiple political parties in Nigeria before and after independence seems to have contributed in the political rivalry experience in Nigeria. Historically, intense competition rivalry broke out, when political parties were name after some elites and regions. The competition was further nursed and express through a religio-culturally influenced constitutions. Political parties which were supposed to enhance national unity and peaceful co-existence have turn into independent elements for discrimination and hegemony.

SCOURGE OF POLITICAL RIVALRY IN NIGERIA

Historical antecedence has reveal skirmishes of party rivalry in the formation of the four republics after independence. In the first republic from 1960 to 1966, there were three parties

Action Group (AG), National Council for the Nigeria and the Cameroun (NCNC) and Northern People Congress (NPC) (Orugbani, 2005). The three parties represented three regions with three flag bearers representing the interest of their regions at the expense of national goals and objectives. The Second Republic (1978-1983) evolved after thirteen years of military rule. Although the transition resulted to sustainable development which produced a constitution, creation of states and election into states and houses of federal assemblies, yet failed due to the loss of confidence in the electoral system. The third Republic (1985-1993) was constituted by the announcement of one military regime and the beginning of another. For the fear of the unknown, the Babangida administration reduced the number of parties from five to two in the quest to draw attention to the collective interest of Nigeria. General Badamasi declared that his administration

Will not handover political power to any person or persons no matter how distinguished or wealthy but rather to a virile civilian political organization which is openly committed to the purpose of power in the national, nations interest? Those who think otherwise and who are parading themselves as presidential candidates for 1992 would be disappointed in the end (Alkali, 1999).

From the forgoing, it can be inferred that national goals and objectives seemed to be made top priority and national unity for sustainable development was made a center stage in the quest to offer good governance. However, the cancellation of the presidential primaries of 1992 and subsequent cancellation of the entire election called into question the government enthusiasm to achieve collective objectives through a credible election. This is further deduced in the Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida broadcast as saying,

It is no longer news that the events which proceeded the armed forces decision constitute a set back to the transition programmes and pose a serious dilemma to me not only as a person but also as general and officer of the Nigerian Army...no less a dilemma our country men and woman who looked forward to that date, January 2, 1993, when our country was suppose to commence the full stage of the transition programmes and from other democratic nations around the world (Alkali, 1999).

The annulment of the election and refusing to declare M.K.O. Abiola as the elected president of Nigeria even though it was an election that was conducted devoid of ethno-religious sentiments yet was annulled. The electoral commission was falsely blamed in order to mop up the mess towards satisfying an individual interest at the expense of national goal and objectives (Falola, 2001).

The Fourth Republic was a composition of series of elections ranging from 1999, 2003, 2007 and 2011 which despites their structural adjustments yet seemed to be impotent in terms of democratic quality and sustainable development. While sorrowing and lamenting in the disposition of party philosophies and ideologies towards the collective interest of

Nigeria, Dkihru states parties' indifferent attitudes towards the Nigerian goals and objectives. The multiplicity of parties no matter how well constructed they could be have succeeded in promoting individual or party interest more than collective interest (Adingupu, 2012).

In contemporary Nigeria, political party rivalry was the order of the day. This negative connotation is expressed through head speeches and messages by party extremist and fundamentalists whose quest to project party interest more than national interest was undoubtedly noticed (Tamuno, 2015). Taking root right from skirmishes of party rivalry in the First Republic, political parties were initiated and build based on religious and ethnic affiliations. The dispositions of some parties towards others are confrontational and only seek to threaten democratic governance in Nigeria (Cinjel, 2015). Consequent to the contentious atmosphere political rivalry pose to the political system of Nigeria, it can be argued that the development plans as highlighted earlier become fantasies and complete illusion.

TORWARDS A NATIONAL RESPONSE TO POLITITCAL RILVARY IN NIGERIA

In view of the dwindling peaceful co-existence and holistic development in Nigeria, more cogent measures must be put in place to neutralize all forms of threats impeding the tents of good governance. Political rivalry and its scourge against Nigeria's aspirations, call for a national response that has the capacity to curtail this ugly situation within the Nigerian polity.

While acknowledging the idea that government response to situations in Nigeria is not monolithic, this paper focuses on Nigeria's collective goals and objectives as the center where other interests will inhabit and find their definition. In other words, collective goals and objectives should be clearly defined and translated in the language every citizen can read and understand. In the Nigerian quest to actualize national unity and sustainable development, this paper calls for a deliberate reflection on the Nigerian goals and objectives and be considered as the panacea to the contentious atmosphere political rivalry has posed to the tenets of the Nigerian government.

Consequent to the Nigerian civil war in the year 1970, national unity and peaceful co-existence in the Nigerian society were adversely affected. Religio-cultural and socio-political intolerance was the order of the day. In response to this mayhem the government initiated and articulated cogent goals and objectives which if implemented have the capacity to curb rivalry of any sort in Nigeria. Taking into account the role of education in nation building, these goals and objectives were endorsed in 1973 as the necessary resource for National Policy on Education which was later published in 1977 as a working document. It was later pronged into five development goals and objectives for building a

government that could stand the test of time (Eneh 2000). Below is a synthesis of the five development goals and objectives re-instated:

- a. Free and democratic society:** In view of the contentious atmosphere pose by the civil war and the pluralistic nature of Nigeria, this goal and objective seek to create and promote inclusivity, equity and opportunities for all citizens irrespective of the affiliations. It further emphasizes full documentation, enlightenment, and implementation during and after the emergence of any government in Nigeria (Gultung, 1994). Although this goal and objective seem to be marred by political rivalry and political bigotry, corruption and projecting individual party interest yet its potency is still undiluted and has the capacity to neutralize current party rivalry that has resulted into conflicts of different forms in Nigeria.
- b. Just and egalitarian society:** Just and egalitarian society connotes a conviction that everyone is equal and should have equal rights and opportunities. Chapter four of Nigerian constitution re-iterates this objective and made it binding on every citizen of Nigeria. The right of every citizen irrespective of his or her political party and whatever interest that party projects must still be subservient to this goal. As enshrine in the constitution, dignity of human life must be the top priority of every political leader in Nigeria. Penalties for violation of this goal are enforced by all enforcement agencies in Nigeria (Yusuf, 2017). While acknowledging the harm political rivalry have posed this goal, this paper calls for a quick return and immediate utilization and enforcement by the judiciary and be considered as one of the ultimate panacea curbing the scourge of political rivalry in Nigeria.
- c. United, strong and self-reliant society:** This goal and objective is an expression of the Nigerian quest to initiate national unity, unshakable and formidable government that can stand the test of time and a clarion call of all citizens to contribute towards sustaining the independence being celebrated annually (Ayodeji and Odukoye 2014). The potency of this goal cannot be underestimated because it jeopardizes resentment, animosity and bigotry which are sustained by religious, ethnic and political sentiments. It has the capacity effect human capacity development towards actualizing a self-reliant society and if it is enforced and properly implemented can neutralize political rivalry that have adversely affected the tenets of the Nigerian government.
- d. Great and dynamic economy:** A great and dynamic economy encompasses government capacity to produce, engage in trade with the sole aim of generating funds for the smooth running of the government. The second development plan as highlighted earlier initiated by General Yakubu Gowon was sorely constructed to re-construct the broken wall of hostility due to the civil war and to eradicate corruption and organize parties that can contribute in actualizing the achievement of the Nigerian goals and objective not party interest that today is being projected above national and collective interest (Eneh,2000). Dynamic economy infers an economy that is diversified alongside petroleum and other sources of income to the Nigerian government.

e. A land full of bright opportunities for all citizens: This goal constitutes the Nigerian hope in its hopelessness aftermath the civil war. It is an expression that seeks to give attention to the natural resources which if harnessed and developed can create cogent opportunities for all citizens (Yusuf, 2017). Opportunities for all citizens imply a re-iteration on equality and upholding the rights of all citizens irrespective of their religio-cultural or socio-political affiliations. If this is properly implemented, the idea is that all citizens will have ample employment opportunities thereby curtailing idleness that breeds criminality among today's young Nigerians. The enforcement, implementation and actualization of this goal will contribute towards mitigating political rivalry since most unemployed young Nigerians are used to breed violence and conflicts as an expression of political rivalry by party elites and party flag bearers.

CONCLUSION

Political rivalry as expressed and demonstrated by political parties in the pluralistic context of Nigeria calls for a cogent national response to ensure good governance and sustainable development. Although there could be alternative responses, this paper offers a distinctive response which takes root in the Nigerian development plans. Through a synthesis of the five cogent Nigeria's development goals and objectives, this paper re-discovered the potency of these goals in mitigating the current political rivalry in the Nigerian political atmosphere. Thus, a quick enforcement and implementation of these goals by the Nigerian institution can save Nigeria from the scourge of political rivalry.

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