



# NIGERIA AND THE GLOBAL ECONOMY SINCE 1900

ESSAYS IN HONOUR OF  
PROFESSOR  
OLUTAYO C.  
ADESINA

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# Contents

<i>Foreword</i>	ix
<i>List of Contributors</i>	x
Chapter 1: Introduction <i>M. Muritala, Mutiat Oladejo, F. Ajiola and W. Alabi</i>	1
SECTION A: PERSPECTIVES ON COLONIAL ECONOMY IN NIGERIA	
Chapter 2: Migrant-Indigene Employment Challenge in Colonial Lagos: Informal Sector Perspective <i>Monsuru Muritala</i>	11
Chapter 3: The Urban-Rural Transportation Network in Ibadan in the 20th Century <i>Wasiu Alabi</i>	28
Chapter 4: British Colonial Economic Policies and Oil Palm Plantations in Nigeria <i>Noah Echa Attah</i>	47
Chapter 5: Kolanut Trade in Osun Division of Western Nigeria, 1900-1960 <i>Abiodun Ajayi</i>	64
Chapter 6: Colonisation and Urbanisation in Owerri, Nigeria, 1902-1930 <i>Ononiwu Oparah</i>	74
Chapter 7: Colonial Taxation, Protest and Migration in Igalaland, 1904-1960 <i>Okpanachi Amodu</i>	97
Chapter 8: <i>Iya Alaso</i> in the Commercial Exchanges of Textile Trade in Western Nigeria, 1930s-1970s <i>Mutiat Oladejo and Dhikru Adewale Yagboyaju</i>	119
Chapter 9: Roles and Conditions of African Middlemen During Colonial Rule, 1930-1960 <i>Rosemary Akpan</i>	131
Chapter 10: Crafting Nigeria's Path: World War II, Imperial Forces, and the Dynamics of PostColonial Dependency <i>Oluwakemi A. Adesina and Jacob Olaoluwa Adesina</i>	153

Chapter 11:	The Police, Labour Protests and Nationalist Agitations in Colonial Nigeria, 1945–1960 <i>Saheed Amusa</i>	169
Chapter 12:	The “Peasant Proprietor”: World War II and Colonial Industrialisation Process in Nigeria <i>Olusegun O. Olaniyi</i>	183
Chapter 13:	Plantain Trade and the Growth of Apomu Indigenous Economy, 1900–2015 <i>Adedire Adegboyega</i>	194
<b>SECTION B: NIGERIA AND GLOBAL ECONOMIC INITIATIVES</b>		
Chapter 14:	African Enterprise, Foreign Business and Economic Development: The Relationships Between the United Africa Company (UAC) and Local Entrepreneurs in Nigeria <i>Dmtri Van den Bersselaar</i>	205
Chapter 15:	Statistical Pan-Africanism: The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa in the 1960s <i>Gerardo Serra</i>	226
Chapter 16:	The Structural Adjustment Programmes and the Nigerian Economy, 1980–2000 <i>Felix Oludare Ajiola</i>	245
Chapter 17:	Foreign Aid, Democracy and Development in Nigeria Since 1999 <i>Adeola Jesuye Iyanuoluwa and Oladayo Bode Akanbi</i>	262
Chapter 18:	Reimagining Women in Development and Social Transformation in Ibadan, Western Nigeria <i>Olusola Ojo</i>	282
<b>SECTION C: NIGERIAN ECONOMY SINCE INDEPENDENCE</b>		
Chapter 19:	A Historical Evaluation of Government Economic Policies and Nigerian Economic Growth, 1960–2010 <i>Babatunde Olabiyi Osiyale and Jamiu Kolawole Audu</i>	309
Chapter 20:	An Historic Survey of the Nexus Between Economic Development and Nation Building in Nigeria, 1960–2015 <i>Henry Olalekan Adebodun</i>	344

Chapter 21:	Nigeria and Russia Since 1960: A History of Bilateral Relations <i>Kayode Omotade and Adeola Oluwafemi</i>	357
Chapter 22:	Poverty and Inequality Reduction Within the Frame of Nigeria's PostColonial Economic Development <i>Jacob Olayemi Ogunniyi</i>	372
Chapter 23:	Economic Impact of COVID-19 on Academics in Nigeria's Public Universities <i>Fehintola Tunbosun Akinwale</i>	394
Chapter 24:	Global Coronavirus Pandemic and its Lockdown Antecedent: An Explorative Impact in Lagos <i>Moses I. Olatunde Ilo and Olayemi Jacob Ogunniyi</i>	409
Chapter 25:	Mass Transit System and Economic Development in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja <i>Umunnakwe Cherish, Osoria Vanessa and Akanbi Oladayo</i>	428
Chapter 26:	Where is the Border? Food Security and the Trans-Border Yam Flour Trade in Òyó North, Nigeria <i>Jacob Olusola Bamigbose</i>	446
SECTION D: SOCIOECONOMIC THOUGHTS ON NIGERIA		
Chapter 27:	The Right Hand in Indigenous African Economic Thought: Case of the Benin People of Southern Nigeria <i>Idahosa Osagie Ojo and Victor Osaro Edo</i>	461
Chapter 28:	Lumpen Childhood – <i>Almajirai</i> Phenomenon in Northern Nigeria <i>Taofiki Aminu, Mas'ud Bello, Yusuf Amuda Jimoh and Aliyu Muazu</i>	483
Chapter 29:	Ladipo Market Mosaic: The Dynamics of Social Networks and Commerce in a Nigerian Market <i>Olumide Ekanade and Tinuola Ekanade</i>	497
Chapter 30:	Nation-Building, Economy and the Challenges of Religion in Nigeria, 1914-2010 <i>Ayodele Samuel Abolorunde (formerly, Aborisade)</i>	523
	<i>Index</i>	551

## CHAPTER THIRTY

### Nation-Building, Economy and the Challenges of Religion in Nigeria, 1914-2010

Ayodele Samuel Abolorunde (formerly, Aborisade)

Nation-building is an unending adventure at building a nation to a point where citizens of such a nation are easily identified with it. The concept remains controversial in terms of definition among scholars. According to Onuoha and Ikechukwu, nation building is a paramount obligation that requires the involvement of many participants before it can achieve its objectives of national unity, poverty reduction and economic development.<sup>1</sup> In his argument, Okafor asserts that nation-building as a process demands universal public values, principles of public trust, ethical standards and transparency.<sup>2</sup> Sinclair Dinnen sees nation-building as a process of developing a shared sense of identifying various groups making up the population of a particular nation.<sup>3</sup> Alesina, Bocconi and Reich in their argument, postulate that the business of nation-building is revealed when citizens share the same sense of homogeneity, uncommon values, preferences and interact with each other.<sup>4</sup> From the above, we can say that “Nation building” is an unending work in progress with uncommon dynamism that demands perennial nurturing and new ideas.<sup>5</sup>

From the above, nations-building involves comprehensive efforts of various groups that make up an entity. It is anchored on the pillar of thrust which the

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<sup>1</sup> J. Onuoha and Ikechukwu, M.U. (2014). ‘Political Scientists and Nation Building: The Nigerian Experience.’ *International Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities Research*, Vol. 2 Issue 4, pp. 36-46.

<sup>2</sup> C. Okafor (2018). ‘Dysfunctional Public Administration in an Era Increasing Public Service Delivery Expectations: A Puncture to Nation Building Efforts.’ *Journal of Nation Building and Policy Studies*, Vol. 2 No. 1, June, pp. 5-24.

<sup>3</sup> D. Sinclair (2006). Technical Report of *Nation Building on State Fragility in Melanesia*. Retrieved from the Website of ResearchGate on the 29th of September, 2020.

<sup>4</sup> A. Alesina, Reich, B. and Bocconi, I. (2015). *Nation Building. Being an unpublished work*, p. 1.

<sup>5</sup> O.N. Ojoajogwu (2014). ‘Religion as a Catalyst of Nation Building in Nigeria.’ *Net Journal of Social Sciences*, Vol. 2 (2), p. 73 pp. 71-76.

citizens demonstrate towards those in charge of their political destiny. It could be defined as an important strategy of ensuring the loyalty of the citizenry through the formulation of viable economic policies by those who determine their political and economic destiny. Nation building serves as a veritable platform through which socio-cultural peculiarities of various groups that make up a nation melt with minimal level of disunity. It is an obligations that reduce threatening challenges that are capable of disintegrating a nation. Nation-building is an important tool of preventing a nation from the threat of disintegration.

Religion on the other hand is an organised system of beliefs and set of rules that determine the way of worshipping God/god. It is a code, cult and communion that enable man to establish a contact with the Celestial.<sup>6</sup> Religion is a critical tool that enhances the understanding of contemporary social life due to its capacity of revealing perpetually the experiences and practices of many individuals; it is an important aspect of different institutional processes which include politics, gender relations and socioeconomic inequality which play vital role in the culture of public as well as social change.<sup>7</sup> Mbiti describes religion as a process through which each person has its own set of beliefs and practices that cannot be insulated from his/her life.<sup>8</sup> Religion according to Bolajidi Idowu is a belief system which comprises of socio-cultural orientations such as songs, myths, folktales proverbs and philosophical world view of people of a particular society.<sup>9</sup>

Religion is a conglomeration of cultural systems, belief systems and world view that establishes symbols that ensure constant relationship between humanity to spirituality and sometimes to moral values. Many religions have explanatory signs, traditions and sacred histories to give meaning to life or to explain the origin of life or the universe.<sup>10</sup> Religion therefore, can be defined as how world view of people in a society is implemented through their

<sup>6</sup> J.K. Ayantayo (2019). 'Sociology of Religion as An Academic Discipline.' J.K. Ayantayo (ed.), *Religion, Ethnics and Development A Festschrift in Honour of Prof. Akpenpuun Dzuruga*. Ibadan: Hope Publications, p. 20.

<sup>7</sup> M. Dillon (ed.) (2003). *Handbook of Sociology of Religion*. New York: Cambridge University Press, p. 23.

<sup>8</sup> J.S. Mbiti (1969). *African Religion and Philosophy*. London: Heinemann Books.

<sup>9</sup> E.B. Idowu, *Olodumare: God in Yoruba Belief*. London: Longmans, 1962, p. 5.

<sup>10</sup> O.N. Ojoajogwu (2014). 'Religion as a Catalyst of Nation Building in Nigeria.' *Net Journal of Social Sciences*, Vol. 2 (2), p. 72 pp. 71-76.

conviction that such implementation of the world view will bring their desired expectation into manifestation.

The significance of religion in nation building process cannot be underestimated. This could be traced to the biblical relationship between believe which the children of Israel had in God Almighty. The relationship sustained the way the biblical Israeli nation emerged. As the Almighty God was preparing to establish the nation of Israel due to their believe in Him on the one hand, He empowered the children in their battle for survival against the children of Amalekites as this historic feat remained the consciousness of the children of Israel during the time of Moses and Joshua.<sup>11</sup> The moment Joshua succeeded Moses, the critical aspect of his decision in terms of building the nation of Israel through the division of land among the various tribes of Israel as instructed by God in Canaan land was anchored on the historical antecedent of the kind of relationship which existed between God and the forebears of the Children of Israel, that is, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.<sup>12</sup>

Around the 5th century A.D in the Roman Province of Gaul, the present day Switzerland and France, the Germanic tribe called the Franks was able to sustain its quest for viable nation building process when it consulted the Christian God before securing victory over another Germanic tribe.<sup>13</sup> It was that victory that laid the foundation of what was later known as the Carolingian Empire around the 9th century in Europe.<sup>14</sup> Between the 16th and 17th centuries, many European fled the continent of Europe for the new world in search of greener pasture due to many reasons, one of which was the search for religious freedom. It was the basis of this quest for religious freedom and other forms of freedoms that led to the birth of the American nation in the 18th century.<sup>15</sup>

In Africa around the Sudanese Savannah, the leadership of Tekruh kingdom in collaboration with Sudanese and Arab scholars administered that kingdom

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<sup>11</sup> See the Book of Exodus Chapter 17 Verse 14 in the Old Testament.

<sup>12</sup> See the Book of Joshua Chapter 1 Verse 6 in the Old Testament.

<sup>13</sup> P.K.N. Ugboajah (2016). *Foundations of European Civilisation, 800-1500*. University of Ibadan Distance Learning Centre Course Development Series Ibadan: Distance Learning, p. 5.

<sup>14</sup> P.K.N. Ugboajah (2016). *Foundations of European Civilisation, 800-1500 . . .* p. 8.

<sup>15</sup> For details on American History and Nation Building, see Adebayo Adeogun (2003). *The United States from Colony to Nationhood*. Lagos: Free Enterprise Publishers.

in accordance with its past which cannot be separated from its religious orientation in the 11th century.<sup>16</sup> When in the 14th century, Mansa Musa, the Emperor of Mali (1312-32) persuaded the King of Yatenga through a diplomatic channel that Islam would be suitable for him and his country, the Mossi ruler response was that the history of his country's would shape his decision to accept or refuse the religious offer of Mansa.<sup>17</sup> The history in this context was consistent with the belief system of Yatenga. The Asante royal family of the ancient Ghana Empire used to the fullest, the importance of its origin to rule the state.<sup>18</sup>

This origin was deeply embedded in the belief system of the Asante ruling house. The greatness of the old Oyo Empire which lasted for over three hundred years was not unconnected with its novel political arrangement which equally brought stability to the Empire. The stability and greatness of the Empire were deeply rooted in the belief system which prevented an Alaafrican from becoming too powerful through the checks and balances obligations of the Oyomesi council who had the power to open a calabash for an Alaafrican whose powers undermined the interests of the Empire. The opening of calabash to such an Alaafrican compelled him to commit suicide in order to pave the way for another Alaafrican whose power was equally regulated by the Oyomesi in council.<sup>19</sup> The candour and glory of the Empire without any doubt, rested the religious beliefs that never allow any form of tyranny.

By 1900 when an entity that later became Nigeria was colonised by the British, some of the political and administrative decisions of the British were shaped by the religious beliefs of their subjects, that is, Nigerians. For instance, the administrative separation of both the southern and northern Nigeria by the British was highly connected with the difference in the religious beliefs of the people of the two regions. This explains why missionaries were prevented from penetrating deeply into the northern part of the country due

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<sup>16</sup> J. Vansina (1981). 'Oral Tradition and Its Methodology' J. Ki-Zerbo (ed.), *UNESCO General History of Africa Methodologies and Africa Pre-History, Volume 2*, California: Heinemann, p. 155.

<sup>17</sup> H. BouBou and Ki-Zerbo, J. (1981). 'The Place of History in African Society,' J. Ki-Zerbo (ed.), *UNESCO General History of Africa Methodologies and Africa Pre-History, Volume 1*, California: Heinemann, p. 44.

<sup>18</sup> J. Vansina (1981). 'Oral Tradition and Its Methodology' . . . p. 151.

<sup>19</sup> For details on Oyo Empire, see Akinjogbin, I.A. and Ayandele, E.A. 1980. 'Yorubaland Up to 1800.' In Obaro Ikime (ed.), *Groundwork of Nigerian History*. Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books Nigeria PLC.

to the monolithic nature of the North in terms of religion. One can postulate that the British through religion sowed the seed of divisive tendencies into what later became the Nigerian project even before its take-off in 1914. In their argument, J.F. Ade-Ajayi and Gbadamosi submit that the zeal for the implementation and success of indirect rule in the North were germane to Lord Lugard and his successors who were convinced that allowing a religion such as Christianity could serve as a potential nursery of interaction with northerners who were predominantly Muslims.<sup>20</sup>

Desperation for the success of British imperialist agenda in Nigeria was paramount to the British bureaucracies, both in Nigeria and London, even when they undermined the activities of the Christian missionaries whom the British used as the harbinger of colonialism in Nigeria. The implication this clandestine agenda of the British was to prevent further interactions of the predominantly Christian South from the predominantly Muslim North from 1900 to 1914 when the amalgamation of Nigeria took place. The British readiness to use the North as an appropriate plank of experimenting indirect rule explains the reason why the North was somewhat preserved from the evangelical mission of the Christian missionaries. The success of that experiment in the North necessitated its replication in other parts of the country as this led to different versions of indirect rule in Nigeria depending on the socio-cultural peculiarities of the people involved.<sup>21</sup>

It was after the amalgamation of 1914 that the Nigerian Council was created for the rest of the country which by implication meant that traditional rulers of various groups that make up Nigeria, who also served as the representatives of their people met for the first time since colonialism began in Nigeria in 1900.<sup>22</sup> The failure of the council and other constitutional arrangements in the country's history was not unconnected with the inherently divisive orientations which the British quest to preserve the North from further

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<sup>20</sup> T.G.O. Gbadamosi and Ade-Ajayi, J.F. (1980). 'Islam and Christianity in Nigeria.' In Obaro Ikime (ed.), *Groundwork of Nigerian History*. Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books Nigeria PLC, p. 352.

<sup>21</sup> A.E. Afigbo (1966). 'Similarities and Differences of the French and British Administrations in West Africa in the Period before the Second World War.' In J.C. Anene (ed.), *Essays in African History 19th and 20th Centuries*. Ibadan: Onibonoje Press Publishers, p. 99.

<sup>22</sup> G.O. Olusanya (1980). 'Constitutional Development in Nigeria, 1861-1960.' In Obaro Ikime (ed.), *Groundwork of Nigerian History*. Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books Nigeria PLC, p. 520.

interaction with the rest of the country on religious grounds sowed into the orientations of the various groups that make up the country even up to its independence in 1960.

Thus, literature abounds on the importance of nation building and the Nigerian project in terms of the studies of various regions in an entity that later became Nigeria as well as its eventual emergence,<sup>23</sup> Nation building and the problem of inter-group relations in the country,<sup>24</sup> way forward out of the challenges of building the nation,<sup>25</sup> the Nigerian society and its history,<sup>26</sup> Challenges of integration of various ethnic groups,<sup>27</sup> the study of history and nation building in Nigeria.<sup>28</sup> Challenges of leadership and followership of the Nigerian state,<sup>29</sup> the crisis of nation building in Nigeria through the

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<sup>23</sup> See O. Ikime (1979). *Through Changing Scenes: Nigerian History Yesterday Today and Tomorrow*. Inaugural Lecture Delivered at the University of Ibadan, Ibadan: Ibadan University Press.

<sup>24</sup> O. Ikime (1985). *In Search of Nigerians: Changing Patterns of Inter-Group in An Evolving Nation State*. Presidential Inaugural Lecture Delivered at the 30th Congress of the Historical Society of Nigeria, at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, on 1 May, 1985.

<sup>25</sup> S. Abubakar (2008). 'The Challenges of Nation-Building: Nigeria, Which Way Forward?' C.B.N. Ogbogbo and O.O. Okpeh (eds). *Interrogating Contemporary Africa Dike Memorial Lectures 1999-2007*. Ibadan: Historical Society of Nigeria c/o Department of History, University of Ibadan, Ibadan,

<sup>26</sup> J.F. Ade-Ajayi (2008). 'History and Society,' C.B.N. Ogbogbo and O.O. Okpeh (eds.), *Interrogating Contemporary Africa Dike Memorial Lectures 1999-2007*. Ibadan: Historical Society of Nigeria c/o Department of History, University of Ibadan, Ibadan.

<sup>27</sup> S.A. Ajayi (2013). *The 1914 Amalgamation and the Challenges of National Integration in Post-Colonial Nigeria*. 1st Professor J.A. Atanda Memorial Lecture Series No. 1, Ibadan: Book Wright Publishers.

<sup>28</sup> C.B.N. Ogbogbo (2015). *Historical Society of Nigeria, The Study of History and the Nigerian Nation*. Presidential Inaugural Lecture Delivered at the 60th Congress of the Historical Society of Nigeria, at the University of Abuja, on 12th October, 2015.

<sup>29</sup> S. Akinrinade (2016). 'A Society Under Pressure: Thoughts on Leadership, Followership and the Re-Invention of the Nigerian State.' Being the Professor Kenneth Dike Memorial Lecture Delivered at the 2016 Congress of the Historical Society of Nigeria, University of Port Harcourt. *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, Vol. 25.

neglect of history,<sup>30</sup> the Nigerian nation building project and social scheme,<sup>31</sup> Philosophical interrogation of religion as an important part of African affairs,<sup>32</sup> Spread of Pentecostalism and nation building in Nigeria since the country's independence in 1960.<sup>33</sup> Religion as a political tool for development,<sup>34</sup> Pentecostal movements in Nigeria.<sup>35</sup> Religion and sociological orientations in Nigeria,<sup>36</sup> Christian religion and family.<sup>37</sup> Religion and national develop-

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<sup>30</sup> C.B.N. Ogbogbo (2018). *In Defence of Tradition*. An Inaugural Lecture Delivered at the University of Ibadan, Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, p. 22.

<sup>31</sup> J. Olomajeye (1980). *The National Youth Service Scheme and the Fourth National Development Plan*. In National Service for the 80s Report on the Proceedings of the Workshop on the National Youth Service Corps Scheme Kano, Kano State. 26th -28th May, 1980, pp.16-19, Emenako, G. (ed.) (1986). *12 Years of National Youth Service Corps in Nigeria: 1973-1985*. Lagos: National Youth Service Corps Directorate Headquarters. Momoh H.B. (1992). *Imperatives of National Service in the 90s. A Collection of Speeches Vol. 1*, Abuja: National Directorate Headquarters National Youth Service Corps, Enegwea G. and Umoden, G. (1993). *NYSC: Twenty Years of National Service*. Abuja and Lagos: National Youth Service Corps Directorate Headquarters and Gbajumo Publishing Company Limited, 1993, Asein, S.O. (1993). *Call to Service Twenty Years of the National Youth Service Corps Scheme 1973-1993*. Ibadan: Sam Bookman, Amos, O. (2002). *NYSC Priority Redefined*. Okigwe: Jane-Mos Communications.

<sup>32</sup> O. Oha (2016). 'Signs, Wonders and Endless Wondering: Godwin Sogolo and the Question of Religion in Contemporary African Society' O.A. Oyesile and F Offor (eds.), *Ethnics, Governance and Social Order in Africa Essay in Honour of Godwin S. Sogolo*. Ibadan: Zenith Book House Ltd., p. 20.

<sup>33</sup> A.S. Abolorunde (2019). 'Pentecostalism, Religious Enterprise and the Challenges of Nation Building in Nigeria, 1960-2010.' J.K. Ayantayo (ed.), *Religion, Ethnics and Development: A Festschrift in Honour of Prof. Akpenpuun Dzurgba*. Ibadan: Hope Publications, p. 208.

<sup>34</sup> O. Rotimi (2019). 'Religion as a Sociological Tool for Political Development in Contemporary Nigeria. J.K. Ayantayo (ed.), *Religion, Ethnics and Development: A Festschrift in Honour of Prof Akpenpuun Dzurgba*. Ibadan: Hope Publications, p. 393.

<sup>35</sup> I.D. Ayegboyin (2017). *Taxonomy and Revolution in African Christianity: The Nigerian Experience*. An Inaugural Lecture Delivered at the University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria, Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, p. 19.

<sup>36</sup> J.K. Ayantayo (2018). *Rescuing God From His Abductors*. An Inaugural Lecture Delivered at the University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria, Ibadan: Ibadan University Press.

<sup>37</sup> Ewherido Anthony (2016). 'Family and New Evangelization: Revisiting Pope Francis Evangelii Gaudium.' *Bodija Journal: A Philosophical-Theological Journal*.

ment,<sup>38</sup> and ethnic/religious insurgencies and nation building Nigeria.<sup>39</sup>

This paper therefore focuses on religion and the challenges of nation building starting from 1914 when the amalgamation of the country took place up to 2010 when the nation had its golden jubilee celebration. The study notes that discussion on nation building in Nigeria have been centred around leadership–followership crises, intergroup relations and socio-economic problems embedded in nation building without deep interrogation of how religion had impacted on the country's nation building. This exclusion makes this study very important because the use of religion as a tool of interrogating nation building in Nigeria gives deeper understanding of embedded unity and fissiparous tendencies of the forces of the Nigerian society. The conventional wisdom on the subject matter of nation building and religion in Nigeria focuses more on socio-economic crisis,<sup>40</sup> as well as the negative perception of Nigerians about the country's nation building.<sup>41</sup>

However, Ekendu *et al*, drawing on the strength of myriad of crises that have enveloped the country's nation building challenged the conventional wisdom by maintaining that various stakeholders of the country's nation building project usually bury the differences inherent in their religious and cultural orientations for the overall benefit of the country.<sup>42</sup> C.N. Ibenwa corroborates this evidence by arguing that despite the problems associated with religion, the positive contributions and inherent benefits of religion have the capacity to contribute to the country's nation building.<sup>43</sup> In a similar vein, Sayed Malik notes that Arabic language through Islam, which today is one of

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<sup>38</sup> C.I. Ekendu *et al* (2016). 'An Evaluation of the Role of Religion in the Development of Nigeria.' *Developing Countries Studies*, Vol. 6 No. 10, p. 82.

<sup>39</sup> M.E Egharevba and Iruonagbe, C.T. (2015). 'Ethnic/Religious Insurgencies and Nation Building in Nigeria.' *International Affairs and Global Strategy*, Vol. 29.

<sup>40</sup> O. Rotimi (2019). 'Religion as a Sociological Tool for Political Development in Contemporary Nigeria.' J.K. Ayantayo (ed.), *Religion, Ethnicity and Development: A Festschrift in Honour of Prof Akpenpuun Dzurgha*. Ibadan: Hope Publications.

<sup>41</sup> J.K. Ayantayo (2018). *Rescuing God From His Abductors*. An Inaugural Lecture Delivered at the University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria Ibadan: Ibadan University Press.

<sup>42</sup> C.I. Ekendu *et al*. (2016). 'An Evaluation of the Role of Religion in the Development of Nigeria.' *Developing Countries Studies*, Vol. 6 No. 10.

<sup>43</sup> C.N. Ibenwa (2014). 'Religion and Nation Building: A Critical Analysis.' *International Journal of African Society, Culture and Traditions*, Vol. 1 No. 2, p. 6.

the two prominent religions in Nigeria has unified the Yoruba people of Nigeria and their diverse cultures either as Muslims or Christians through its penetration of the Nigerian society in general and Yoruba in particular.<sup>44</sup> Odulele Rotimi notes that religion as an important aspect of societal values has the capacity to ensure political stability and development through the inculcation of sense of morality, commitment service, public accountability and love into the psyche of the citizenry and any religion that fails to display this virtue according to Rotimi is a failure.<sup>45</sup> Obododimma Oha notes that a religious system is a system of organised structure of representations which explains how things seen and unseen came to be.<sup>46</sup>

Apart from Ibenwa's work which examines religion and its inherent conflict of division among various groups of the Nigerian state, extant studies have not comprehensively paid attention to the challenges of religion and nation building in Nigeria beyond the level of conflict in the country. This neglect reduces our comprehensive understanding of the myriad of problems which emanate from the country's quest to attain viable nation building project. The main thesis is to demonstrate that part of the country's nation building challenge is embedded in religion. It is a contribution to the study of Nigeria's colonial and postcolonial history. The study is divided into five sections: the first deals with the introduction, the second deals with religious practices in the Nigerian geographical area up to 1914, the third, colonial rule and religion in Nigeria, 1914-1960 the fourth, politics, economic management and religion in Nigeria, and fifth, the conclusion.

### Religious Practices in the Nigerian Geographical Area up to 1914

The entity that later became Nigeria had diverse ethnic groups with sophisticated belief systems which engendered their socio-political structures. The belief systems of these over 250 ethnic groups shaped their world view in terms of what obtains here on earth and hereafter. Through these belief systems political and socio-economic alliances were formed to ensure peace

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<sup>44</sup> S.H.A. Malik (2017). *In the Service of the Language of the Qur'an*. A Valedictory Lecture Delivered in the Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies, University of Ibadan, Ibadan on the 26th September, 2017, p. 16.

<sup>45</sup> O. Rotimi (2019). 'Religion as a Sociological Tool for Political Development in Contemporary Nigeria' . . . p. 399.

<sup>46</sup> O. Oha (2016). 'Signs, Wonders and Endless Wondering: Godwin Sogolo and the Question of Religion in Contemporary African Society' . . . p. 27.

and tranquillity. These various groups recognised the existence of the supreme Being who has the power to control things that happen in the physical and the spiritual long before contact was made with Islam and Christianity<sup>47</sup> which happen to be the two major religions of the entity that later became Nigeria when contact was made with the outside world. The influence of this traditional religion helped greatly in shaping social, political and economic adventures of the people of an entity that later became Nigeria.<sup>48</sup> Young people before the advent of Islam and Christianity in an area that later became Nigeria mastered their religious beliefs, economic and social skill for the purpose of their journey through life from their parents and the larger community as the wisdom instilled into these young people was embedded in oral traditions, customs of their community, moral behaviour, test of personal character such as courage, endurance as well as the wisdom of elders.<sup>49</sup>

In fact, African religion, including the people of an entity that later became Nigeria before contact was made with the outside world, was deeply entrenched in the culture and world view of the people.<sup>50</sup> The pre-Islamic and Christianity era in Africa, including Nigeria was deeply rooted in local manifestations which promoted unity at all levels as this enhanced their belief in God, (The Supreme Being) belief in divinities, belief in spirits, belief in ancestors, belief in practice of magic and hereafter.<sup>51</sup> Scholars have argued that while some of the world's most prominent religions such as Christianity, Islam Hinduism were established by certain individuals, African religion in general emanated through African responses to situations of their lives and experiences which

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<sup>47</sup> Rimamsikwe Habila Kitau *et al.* (2013). 'Religion in Nigeria from 1900-2013.' *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences*, Vol. 3 No. 18, p. 46.

<sup>48</sup> Rimamsikwe Habila Kitau *et al.* (2013). 'Religion in Nigeria from 1900-2013' . . . p. 47.

<sup>49</sup> K. Shillington (1989). *History of Africa, Revised 2nd Edition*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 359.

<sup>50</sup> S.K. Olaleye (2019). 'African Indigenous Religions as a Catalyst for Social and Economic Development.' J.K. Ayantayo (ed.), *Religion, Ethnicity and Development: A Festschrift in Honour of Prof Akpenpuun Dzurgha*. Ibadan: Hope Publications, p. 440.

<sup>51</sup> For details of African traditional belief systems as cited in Olaleye, S.K. (2019). 'African Indigenous Religions as a Catalyst for Social and Economic Development.' See E.B. Idowu (1973). *African Traditional Religion (A Definition)*. London: SCM Press Limited. See also, Mbiti, J.S. (1967). *African Religions and Philosophy*. London: Heinemann Educational Books Limited.

threatened their existence and the search for the solution to these life threatening situations necessitated the evolution of traditional belief which improved African societies and their lives.<sup>52</sup>

By the 12th century, Islam had penetrated Kanem Borno due to commercial contact of the Empire with the Berbers traders of North Africa and the Kanem, Islam as a religion penetrated other Hausa States in the 15th century as the religion of the elite before its wide acceptance by all in the Hausa City States after the 1807 Jihad by Uthman Dan Fodio.<sup>53</sup> It is worthy of note that as Islam began to entrench among various Hausa city states, the religion became intolerable to the traditional belief of the people among the Hausa city states. This by implication created a paradigm shift in terms of the world view of the people that occupied the area that later became Nigeria.

In the south-western Nigeria, the home coming of Muslim slaves who returned from Cuba, Brazil and Sierra Leone due to the influence of Hausa Fulani slaves on them settled in a place like Lagos were able to elevate the status of the religion due to their mastery of carpentry, tailoring and baking, their settlement in Lagos helped to raise the status of Islam from being a religion of the people of lowly birth as they were able to blend European and western ideas with African cultural orientations among their fellow Muslims.<sup>54</sup> In the hinterland of Yorubaland, Islam spread as a result of the influence of Muslim teachers and preachers from Kano, Borno and mainly from Ilorin on eastern Yorubaland, Nupe, Niger Benue confluence and Akoko in the second half of the 19th century.<sup>55</sup> The rationale behind the spread of Islam was not also unconnected with the support the religion enjoyed from traditional rulers and chiefs of various Yoruba hinterland communities who were willing to stabilise their towns and communities through harmonious religious orientations.<sup>56</sup> Due to the tolerable nature of Islam with traditional belief systems, the

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<sup>52</sup> S.K. Olaleye (2019). 'African Indigenous Religions as a Catalyst for Social and Economic Development' . . . p. 440.

<sup>53</sup> Rimamsikwe Habila Kitau et al. (2013). 'Religion in Nigeria from 1900-2013' . . . p. 47.

<sup>54</sup> T.G.O. Gbadamosi and Ade-Ajayi, J.E (1980). 'Islam and Christianity in Nigeria' . . . pp. 347-348.

<sup>55</sup> T.G.O. Gbadamosi and Ade-Ajayi, J.E (1980). 'Islam and Christianity in Nigeria' . . . p. 348.

<sup>56</sup> T.G.O. Gbadamosi and Ade-Ajayi, J.E (1980). 'Islam and Christianity in Nigeria' . . . p. 348.

traditional African authorities served as catalysts which mobilised most of their subjects into the Islamic belief both at the coastal town of Lagos and Yoruba hinterland.<sup>57</sup> As Islam penetrated the sub-Saharan Africa, including the entity that later became Nigeria, Qur'anic and indigenous beliefs were to an extent, tolerable of each other as this enabled parents to encourage their wards to master both beliefs.<sup>58</sup>

Despite the intolerable nature of Islam to traditional religion in the North, the impact of the religion on documentation and the capacity of the people to write was monumental. It was through Islam that proper documentation of the history of the people of northern Nigeria began. This however, does not obliterate the capacity of the people to document their history through oral traditions before the advent of Islam but as intolerable as Islam was, it helped in the reconstruction of the history of the people. By the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the European explorers had started hovering around what later became southern Nigeria when the Portuguese made attempt to Christianise the people of Biafra and the city states such as Niger Delta, Brass, Bonny and Calabar.<sup>59</sup> By 1842, missionary activities had spread to Badagry and Abeokuta through the evangelisation of Wesleyan Methodist under the leadership of Rev. Thomas Freeman and his assistant, William de Craft.<sup>60</sup>

Such activities were extended to the Old Calabar in 1846.<sup>61</sup> The year 1846 also coincided with the period when the Anglican and Methodist missionaries were accepted in Egbaland before penetrating other parts of Yorubaland while the Presbyterian led by Hope Waddell, the leader of the Scottish missionaries and other members of his team penetrated Calabar with schools being established in the Yorubaland and southeastern area.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> K. Shillington (1989). *History of Africa Revised, 2nd Edition* . . . p. 358.

<sup>58</sup> K. Shillington (1989). *History of Africa Revised, 2nd Edition* . . . p. 359.

<sup>59</sup> For details of the early European attempt at Christianizing the southern Nigeria, see, Ayandele, E.A. (1966). *The Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria 1842-1914: A Political and Social Analysis*. London: Longman Group Limited. See also, Ajayi, J.F. (1965). *Christian Missions in Nigeria 1841-1891: The Making of New Elite*. London: Longman Group Limited.

<sup>60</sup> T. Adamolekun (2008). 'Main Trends in the Church Growth in Nigeria' . . . p. 4.

<sup>61</sup> E.A. Ayandele (1966). *The Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria 1842-1914: A Political and Social Analysis*. London: Longman Group Limited, 1966, p. 4.

<sup>62</sup> T.G.O. Gbadamosi and Ade-Ajayi, J.F. (1980). 'Islam and Christianity in Nigeria.' In Obaro Ikime (ed.), *Groundwork of Nigerian History*. Ibadan: Heinemann Books Nigeria Publications, 1980, p. 350.

In the northern part of an entity that later became Nigeria, the missionary activities of Rev. Samuel Ajayi Crowther and Dr William Balfour Baikie in collaboration with certain elements of intelligent young men were successful in 1857 as this led to the establishment of Niger Mission by Crowther.<sup>63</sup> By 1861 when Lagos was made a Crown Colony by the British, they began the colonisation of Nigeria an entity that later became Nigeria. In Yorubaland, the missionaries were also used as channels of peace by the British. In what later became the northern part of Nigeria, the activities of Ajayi Crowther became entrenched in Nassarawa and Yola in 1876 as the Emirs of these two towns allowed Crowther on the condition that their people would have access to western education.<sup>64</sup>

As the penetration of Nigeria continued unabated by the traders and missionaries, rivalry among various European powers necessitated the need for the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885. The conference ultimately positioned the British as the coloniser of an entity that later became Nigeria. It is plausible to state that the cession of Nigeria to the British further diminished the quantum of success brought by the Christian Missions into Nigeria. This is because the cession of an entity that later became Nigeria transformed the religious relationship of the Nigerian peoples from a peaceful one to economic and political confrontations. These confrontations led to an implosion which made various Nigerian groups to view Christianity as an attempt to sustain European religious dominance over various groups after the Berlin Conference. Such examples were how the protests by the people of an area that later became Nigeria led to the establishment of Native Baptist Christ and United African Church in 1888 and 1889 respectively.<sup>65</sup>

Consequently, the British placed the administration of Nigeria under the Royal Niger Company with Sir Taubman Goldie as its leader while missionary activities in different parts of the country assisted the British greatly in the conquest of Nigeria.<sup>66</sup> From the period when the area that later became

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<sup>63</sup> T.G.O. Gbadamosi and Ade-Ajayi, J.E (1980). 'Islam and Christianity in Nigeria' ... p. 350.

<sup>64</sup> T.G.O. Gbadamosi and Ade-Ajayi, J.E (1980). 'Islam and Christianity in Nigeria' ... p. 351.

<sup>65</sup> T. Adamolekun (2008). 'Main Trends in the Church Growth in Nigeria.' *European Scientific Journal*, October Edition, Vol. 8 No. 23, p. 5.

<sup>66</sup> Michael Crowder, *West Africa Under Colonial Rule*. London: Hutchinson and Co. Publishers Limited, 1968, p. 60.

Nigeria was ceded to the British, the importance of missionary exploits as the harbinger of British interest was subsumed by the commercial activities of the European trading firms of British origin.<sup>67</sup> The influence of the trading firms and their traders grew to a point that London was favourably disposed to their views concerning Nigeria than the missionaries.<sup>68</sup> The commercial pre-eminence of the firms further attracted the interests of the British such that rivalry among these trading firms such as Liverpool and the Royal Niger Company accelerated the lobbying capacity of the trading firms.<sup>69</sup> The dwindling of the influence of the missionaries in Nigeria in the post 1885 period was not unconnected with the military conquest of various groups of Nigeria, a feat that was monumental than that of the missionaries.<sup>70</sup> This feat could be seen in the way the R.N.C. forced the Chiefs of Asaba to put an end to immolation of slaves in 1888 and subsequently handed over these slaves to S.M.A missionaries.<sup>71</sup> It was the British expedition under the leadership of Sir Ralph Moore which defeated Nana Olomu of Itsekiriland in 1894 as this provided the opportunity for Presbyterian missionaries under Bishop Tugwell to penetrate Itsekiriland.<sup>72</sup>

From the foregoing, the role of the missionary activities in the destruction of the slave trade and the subsequent emergence of legitimate trade which was adopted by the European powers, including the British, prepared the ground for the protection of their economic interests in the area that later became Nigeria. In the estimation of the British, the consolidation of their commercial interests in Nigeria depended largely on political decisions that were influenced by the commercial considerations given to the trading firms. These decisions were embedded in the military expeditions carried out by the

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<sup>67</sup> S.U. Fwatshak and Ayuba, J.M. (2014). 'Amalgamation Discourses in the "Lugardian House" During Nigeria's First Centenary.' In S.U. Fwatshak and Olayemi Akinwunmi (eds.), *The House that 'Lugard Built': Perspectives on Nigeria's First Centenary: The Pains, Gains and the Agenda for the Future*. Jos: Jos University Press Limited.

<sup>68</sup> M. Crowder (1968). *West Africa Under Colonial Rule* . . . p. 60.

<sup>69</sup> M. Crowther (1968). *West Africa Under Colonial Rule*. London: Hutchinson and Co. Publishers, p. 118.

<sup>70</sup> M. Crowther (1968). *West Africa Under Colonial Rule* . . . pp. 127-131.

<sup>71</sup> E.A. Ayandele (1966). *The Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria 1842-1914: A Political and Social Analysis* . . . p. 114.

<sup>72</sup> E.A. Ayandele, *The Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria 1842-1914: A Political and Social Analysis* . . . p. 113.

Royal Niger Company and other trading firms while the penetration of various Nigerian societies by the missionaries especially in the southern Nigeria, further enhanced the achievement of these commercial objectives. This scenario supports the view of E.A. Ayandele that the military expeditions launched in southern Nigeria into the first decade of the twentieth century began the halcyon days of Christian mission.<sup>73</sup>

As argued by Vaughan, the impact of Muslim and Christian movements on the various Nigerian societies provided the structural and ideological frameworks for the rationalisation of colonialism in the first half of the 20th century as the two religions shaped political and social actions as well as the complications of identities of various groups that make up Nigeria.<sup>74</sup> By 1900, the British officially began the colonisation of Nigeria while northern, southern and Crown colony of Lagos existed separately. The whole essence was to avoid the lumping of people whose religious beliefs and orientations differed. As the need for administrative convenience began to dawn on the British, Protectorate of Southern Nigeria and the Crown colony of Lagos were merged together in 1906. This merging may appear as the quest for administrative convenience of the British on the surface, a deeper interpretation of this could be viewed from the believe that Christianity and Islam had penetrated the southern part of the country almost in equal measure and the possibility of conflicting religious orientations will not complicate the administration of Lagos as a crown colony and the Protectorate of southern Nigeria.

This explains why the missionaries' activities in the North were restricted by the British due to the monolithic cultural outlook of the region which equally suited the British political and economic interests in Nigeria. However, administrative encumbrances compelled the British to eventually amalgamate the Protectorates of southern and northern Nigeria together in 1914. Despite the amalgamation, the British still used religious dichotomy of the various groups to perpetuate their dominance of Nigeria. This explains why the religious outlook and the system of administration of the North which were monolithic in nature became the template through which the indirect rule was implemented in the country.

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<sup>73</sup> E.A. Ayandele (1966). *The Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria 1842-1914: A Political and Social Analysis* . . . p. 115.

<sup>74</sup> O. Vaughan (2016). *Religion and the Making of Nigeria*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, p. 2.

### Colonial Rule and Religion in Nigeria, 1914–1960

The amalgamation of Nigeria in 1914 was one project that was anchored on the monolithic religious and cultural orientations of the North and this explains why the success of the indirect rule system which accompanied the amalgamation was monumental in the North. The British having realised the extent of the success of the indirect rule in the North developed the attitude of predilection towards that region in their administration of Nigeria. Since the missionaries had assisted the colonialists in the conquest of Nigeria in the 19th century, the 20th century presented rather, complex and complicated pictures between the two agents of imperialists, that is, the colonial regime and Christian mission. This was complex because the transition from the imperialist agenda of the missionaries to the real evangelical of Christian faith through the provision of social amenities such as education for the new converts appeared divisive between them and the colonial administrators. While the missionaries were ready to accelerate their evangelical work in different parts of the country, the colonial government restricted their movement in the North.

This was not unconnected with the readiness of the British not to tamper with the Islamic religion of the North coupled with the monolithic nature of cultural outlook which suited perfectly well, the indirect rule. This strategy by the British was designed to prevent the North from becoming potential nursery for rebellion against colonial rule. In order to prevent the rebellious attitude of the Muslim North, missionaries were initially prevented from accessing certain areas of the Sokoto Caliphate due to the suitability of the emirate system to the colonial rule and the British disposition further gave the Muslim North a sense of dominance over other groups even after the amalgamation.<sup>75</sup> The failure of indirect rule in the South attested to the complex nature of cultural outlook as well as education provided to the new Christian converts in the South. The colonialists therefore encouraged the missionaries to entrench their evangelical works in the South while the North with its tolerable Islamic religion to colonial rule became the soft spot of the British in the administration of Nigeria. In order to sustain the divisive tendencies in Nigeria in terms of education and religious orientation, the colonial government provided colonial funds to aid mission education which increased literacy level

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<sup>75</sup> E. Uchendu (2004). 'Religion and Nation Building in Nigeria.' *Nigerian Heritage: Journal of National Commission for Museums and Monuments*, Vol. 13, p. 134.

in the South while the North with its huge number of Qur'anic schools did not have a single person with the level of English and educational qualifications to fill the lowest rank of the colonial bureaucracy in 1920.<sup>76</sup>

This was not the situation in the South as most beneficiaries of the western education introduced by the missionaries by the 1920s had become so pronounced in the scheme of things, especially in their respective careers. This group of Nigerians included Edward Wilmot Blyden, Bishop James Johnson, Mojola Agbebi, John Payne Jackson, William Bright Davies, Tejumade Osholake Johnson, etc.<sup>77</sup> The western education received by this group of Nigerians through the Christian missionaries became a tool through which the colonial state in Nigeria used them to contribute their quota to the running of the colonial bureaucracy. The British according to Ayandele, recruited the educated elites as co-religious imperialists in the erection of colonial rule in Nigeria.<sup>78</sup> One can therefore posit that while the colonial regime used religion to perpetuate its dominance of the North through Islam and cultural homogeneity which suited the system of indirect rule in that part of the country, Christianity was used to educate southern Nigerians with the aim of using the beneficiaries as tools of colonial bureaucracy. This by implication created variations in terms of religious orientations of the Nigerian peoples. It is also plausible to state that the usage of those beneficiaries of the western education through the platform of the Christian mission was also to the advantage of the families and communities of these beneficiaries. However, these beneficiaries in their bid to resist subservient positions within the colonial civil service became the vocal voices among Nigerians against colonial domination of the country.

This recalcitrant disposition of the nationalists predominantly from the South further propelled the colonial state in Nigeria to protect the interest of the North. Since the Islamic religion and cultural orientations of the North suited perfectly well, the colonialists' agenda, systematic evolvment of the hegemonic status of the North over South became the paramount objective of the British. For instance, the census figures of 1921 and 1931 revealed that

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<sup>76</sup> K. Shillington (1989). *History of Africa Revised, 2nd Edition* . . . p. 360.

<sup>77</sup> G.O. Olusanya (1980). 'The Nationalist Movement in Nigeria.' In Obaro Ikime (ed.), *Groundwork of Nigerian History*. Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books Nigeria PLC, p. 54.

<sup>78</sup> E.A. Ayandele (1974). *The Educated Elite in the Nigerian Society*. University Lecture Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, p. 61.

the North had 10.26 and 11.43 million of people respectively while the South had 8.37 and 8.49 million respectively in the same period.<sup>79</sup> The figure provided by the colonial regime after the 1931 census vis-à-vis that of 1921, shows that the static nature of the Nigerian population was palpable in the South, while the North witnessed population increase of over one million people within the space of ten years. The systematic entrenchment of the influence of some regions in the country started during this period as did not generate reaction from the South, because census figures were still being interpreted as diabolical exercise by most tribes in the country.<sup>80</sup> This cultural interpretation supplanted political interpretation that would have emanated from the 1931 census figure.

The rationale behind the colonial unbalanced treatment of the regions could not be divorced from the loyalty which North demonstrated through its sociocultural and religious orientations to the colonialists. This further widened the gap of unity among the various groups in the country. When Richard constitution was published after the Second World War in 1946, the predilection of the British towards the North reflected in the structure of the constitution. For instance, the northern House of Assembly consisted of 19 officials and 20 unofficial members, the eastern, 13 officials and 14 unofficials while the West had 14 officials and 15 unofficial members.<sup>81</sup> Between 1952 and 1953 when the population census was conducted, the North had 54.5 percent, while the West, East and Southern Cameroon secured 20.0 percent, 23.0 percent and 2.5 percent, respectively.<sup>82</sup> Abraham Okolo argues that the

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<sup>79</sup> For the details of the politics of population Census by the colonial regime. See A. Okolo, 'Nigeria: Census: Problems and Prospects.' *American Statistician*, Vol. 53 No 4, November, 1999, p. 322 Olusanya, P.O. (1989). 'Population and Development Planning in Nigeria.' In Tekena Tamuno and J.A. Atanda (eds.), *Nigeria Since Independence . . .* p. 229. Olusanya, P.O. (1989). 'Population and Development Planning in Nigeria.' In Tekena Tamuno and J.A. Atanda (eds.), *Nigeria Since Independence . . .* p. 229. J.A. Bamgbose (2009). 'Falsification of Population Census data in a heterogeneous Nigerian State: The Fourth Republic Example.' *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations*.

<sup>80</sup> A.S. Aborisade (2016). 'Population Census and the Question of National Cohesion in Nigeria, 1963-2015.' *Ilorin Journal of History*, p. 47.

<sup>81</sup> G.O. Olusanya (1980). 'Constitutional Development in Nigeria, 1861-1960.' In Obaro Ikime (ed.), *Groundwork of Nigerian History*. Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books Nigeria PLC, p. 525.

<sup>82</sup> A. Ademoyega (1981). *Why We Struck: The Story of the First Nigerian Coup*. Ibadan: Evans Brothers Nigeria Publishers Limited, p. 5.

numerical inferiority of the South was due to cultural and economic interpretation of population enumeration by most tribes of the region, as the people resisted being counted while fear of being taxed, based on the numerical strength of their families, as it happened in 1929, during the Aba women riot, as this created anxiety in the minds of the people of southern Nigeria.

The attitude of most tribes in the South against population enumeration positioned the British in their perpetuation of structural imbalance in the country.<sup>83</sup> This was further strengthened by the monolithic nature of the North, whose flexible attitude toward census enumeration of 1952 was consistent with its socio-cultural and religious structures. The flexible disposition of the North emanated from the fact that the 1952 census was shrouded in controversy. While the census of the North, was taken between May and July 1952, that of the West was taken between December, 1952 and January, 1953, while that of the East took place in May, June and August, 1953, without comprehensive compilation and comparison of figures that emanated from all the regions.<sup>84</sup> It was the bias in the system of administration of the colonial regime through the systematic compensation of the North based on the loyalty it demonstrated to colonial rule via the instrumentalities of its religious and cultural practices that further heated the polity in 1953. During one of the debates at the Federal House of Representatives in Lagos, Anthony Enahoro, an Action Group member moved for the motion of the country's independence in 1956 and the northerners opposed the motion to a point that the crisis almost disintegrated the country even before its independence in 1960.<sup>85</sup> Why was the North against this move?

The answer to this question could be seen in the reward for loyalty which the North enjoyed from the British colonialists who viewed the religious and socio-cultural practices of the North as coterminous with their imperialist agenda in Nigeria. The British therefore laid the foundation of polarisation of various groups in Nigeria through the interpretation of the dynamics of their religions. The North resistance to the call for independence before 1960 therefore had inherent readiness to continue its dominance of the country

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<sup>83</sup> A.S. Aborisade (2016). 'Population Census and the Question of National Cohesion in Nigeria, 1963-2015.' *Ilorin Journal of History*, p. 49.

<sup>84</sup> A. Okolo (1999). 'Nigerian Census: Problems and Prospects.' *The American Statistician*, Vol. 53 No 4, November, p. 322.

<sup>85</sup> G.O. Olusanya (1980). 'Constitutional Development in Nigeria, 1861-1960' . . . pp. 535-536.

under the tutelage of the British. The perceived political and fiscal dominance of the North was further entrenched by the colonial government who vividly brought into Nigerian politics, the importance of population figures as a fundamental parameter of representation and fiscal opportunity during the 1959 general elections in Nigeria<sup>86</sup> shortly before the country's independence in 1960.

### Politics, Economic Management and Religion in Nigeria, 1960–2010

At the attainment of independence in 1960, the configuration of the political landscape of Nigeria was not only determined by ethnic colourations of the nationalists who later emerged as the pioneer leaders of the country but religious consideration was also given by the British who realised that their unbalanced method of administration could lead to implosion if the favoured region of the North was allowed to comprehensively dominate the political terrain at the centre. To this end the choice of the country's Prime Minister, Tafawa Balewa, a Muslim of northern extraction and the country's ceremonial President, Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe a Christian from the South was not an accident but a necessity which the Nigerian nation building demanded. The country's political set up at independence further attests to the fact that religion usually has fundamental impact on the people as well as decision making as this ensures equal distribution of opportunities including human and material resources.<sup>87</sup> One can therefore, contend that the use of religion as a divisive tool by the layers of the foundation of the Nigerian state on the one hand also helped in the proper configuration of its political landscape in its post-independence history on another hand. This supports the view of Emile Durkheim that religion is capable of uniting people through the demonstration of their collective efforts that promotes societal being.<sup>88</sup> As religion brings

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<sup>86</sup> A. Ebigbola (1981). 'Politics and Population Enumeration in Nigeria, 1960–1973.' *Journal of West African Studies*, No. 21, p. 34.

<sup>87</sup> T.V.C. Agunwa (2017). 'Religions and Economic Development in Nation Building,' *International Journal of Religion and Human Relations*, Vol. 9 No. 1, pp. 206–207.

<sup>88</sup> See E. Durkheim (1951). *Elementary Forms of Religious Life* London: London Press. As cited in O.B.C. Nwolise (1988). 'Awolowo and Religion in Nigeria.' In Olosope O. Oyelaran, Toyin Falola, Mokuwugo Okoye and Adewale Thompson (eds.), *Obafemi Awolowo: The End of an Era*. Ile Ife: Obafemi Awolowo University Press, Limited.

positive change and peace to a society, it also has the capacity of disintegrating a society through the setting of people against one another.<sup>89</sup>

It should be noted that religious diversities of the members of the country's political class did not in anyway hinder the attendant fraternisation which the members of these class demonstrated towards each other. Right from the First Republic of 1960-1963, the members of the political class have sustained this fraternisation through careful composition of the country's bureaucracy both at political level and career level. However, the military incursion into the country's politics in January, 1966 almost jeopardised this social understanding demonstrated by the members of the country's ruling class. This explains why the coup and counter-coup of January and July, 1966 were not only given ethnic interpretations, but religious interpretations which snowballed into civil war that almost consumed the nation.

Right from the Second Republic which lasted from 1979-1983 to the end of military rule in the country's history in 1999, the members of the political class have succeeded in responding to the sensitivity of religion by ensuring that the composition of decision making machinery of the country was made up of Nigerians across ethnic divide with diverse religious orientations, especially the two dominant ones, Islam and Christianity. Even the military as an institution right from the regime of Murtala-Obasanjo regime of 1975-1976 up to SanniAbacha regime demonstrated its sensitivity to religion in terms of choice, both the country's leader, deputy and other members of the decision making bodies of the country. In 1986, the country's domestic politics was cloaked with the crisis which emanated from the country's external commitment when the Babangida regime took the country to Organisation of Islamic Countries (OIC) and this ignited sharp reactions from the Christians through Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) as the Christian body accused the regime of clandestine agenda that would transform the country into a full-blown Islamic state as this action further created fissiparous tendencies among Nigerians along religious lines.<sup>90</sup>

Apart from June, 12 1993 Presidential election which had the late Chief M.K.O. Abiola and Babagana King Ibe both Muslims, religious considerations at the point of choosing those that will lead the country has been the tradition

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<sup>89</sup> See O. Otite and W. Ogionwo (1979). *An Introduction to Sociological Studies*. Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books Limited. As cited in in O.B.C. Nwolisie (1988). 'Awolowo and Religion in Nigeria.'

<sup>90</sup> E. Uchendu (2004). 'Religion and Nation Building in Nigeria' . . . p. 138.

of the political elite up to 2010 when the country celebrated its golden jubilee as an independent state. The question is, can the choice of a country's leadership structure always be determined by religious configuration? The answer to this can be situated within two contexts. First, the choice of leadership at any level in a situation of transparency in any society is usually based on merit and quality of service the prospective leader/leaders can offer in the building of that society.

The United States is a clear-cut example of such a society. The question again is, is the United States pluralistic in terms of religion in its outlook? Given the history of the country and migration processes that shaped its history, chunks of the early settlers were Christians of different denominations. American principle of an opened society that is anchored on human rights and freedom is predominantly synonymous with enhancement of democracy which guarantees the rights of the citizenry. Despite the influx of migrants of different races from different parts of the world, religious dichotomy in terms of choice of leadership has not really been a problem in that country. Second, the Nigerian context, given its history since its birth in 1914 shows that the composition of the Nigerian state rested on two pillars of ethnicity and religion.

Therefore the choice of determining leaders in terms of elections and appointments at various levels through religious considerations has really helped in the building of the nation and possible coexistence of its citizenry. This is because among the various groups that make up the country, there are always within each group religious fanatics and opinion moulders among the elite who are always ready to create pandemonium in the country<sup>91</sup> if the selection process of leaders fails the test of their religious equation. One can therefore argue that religious consideration in the country's political terrain has only brought harmonious relationship among the elite not the masses. It is the religious intolerance of the masses of Nigeria that has made the country to be religiously turbulent in terms of governance not lack of cooperation among the elite.

Religious consideration which sustains viable nation building project has only worked in Nigeria at the elitist level, it has not percolated the followership layer and this explains why Nigerian citizens appear intolerable in terms of

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<sup>91</sup> O.B.C. Nwolise (1988). 'Awolowo and Religion in Nigeria.' In Olasope O. Oyelaran, Toyin Falola, Mkwugo Okoye and Adewale Thompson (eds.), *Obafemi Awolowo: The End of an Era*. Ile Ife: Obafemi Awolowo University Press, Limited, p. 848.

political situation that did not favour their religious interest. The members of the ruling, despite their tolerable disposition towards one another, pursue their political interests through the prism of religious platforms which their followers activated on their behalf. Danmole argues that politicians of the First and Second Republic such as Chief Obafemi Awolowo, D.S. Adegbenro, Alhaji Gbadamosi, Alhaji A.W. Elias and Alhaji Lateef Jakande interacted well as members of political class despite the difference in their religious orientations, an interaction which did not evolve from religious orientations, rather, loyalty to one another and personal integrity.<sup>92</sup> The loyalty as postulated by Danmole could be viewed from the quest for the protection of one another's interests within the political class.

Be that as it may, Nigeria at independence had an agrarian economy. Cocoa production, groundnut, rubber, palm oil and palm kernel formed the basis of the country's foreign exchange earnings. The agrarian structure of the economy, however, did not serve as an impediments to the country's First National Development Plan, 1962-1968 which focus on agricultural and industrial development as well as the training of high level and intermediate manpower.<sup>93</sup> This quest for economic development was possible because the agricultural sector contributed 54.7 percent to the country's G.D.P during the 1960s.<sup>94</sup> This assisted greatly in the efficacy of the manufacturing sector which increased from 6.0 to 6.6 percent from 1960 to 1970<sup>95</sup> due to the judicious disbursement of funds used for the implementation of agricultural policies which equally enhanced the implementation of the First National Development Plan.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> See H.O. Danmole (1988). 'Religious Factor in Nigerian Politics: Awolowo and the Muslims, 1957-1983.' In Olasope.O. Oyelaran, Toyin Falola, Mokwugo Okoye and Adewale Thompson (eds.), *Obafemi Awolowo: The End of an Era*. Ile-Ife: Obafemi Awolowo University Press Limited, pp. 889-891.

<sup>93</sup> Sanusi Lamido Sanusi, "Growth, Prospects for the Nigerian Economy." Being a Convocation Lecture Delivered at the Igbinedion University Eight Convocation Ceremony, Okada, Edo State, November, 2010, p. 9.

<sup>94</sup> Sanusi Lamido Sanusi, "Growth, Prospects for the Nigerian Economy" . . . p. 9.

<sup>95</sup> Sanusi Lamido Sanusi, "Growth. Prospects for the Nigerian Economy" . . . p. 17.

<sup>96</sup> Aminu Umaru and Anono Abdulrahman Zubairu, 'An Emperical Analysis of the Contribution of Agriculture and Petroleum Sector to the Growth and Development of the Nigerian Economy from 1960-2010.' *International Journal of Social Science and Education*, Vol. 2 Issue 4, 2012, p. 758.

The federal government in its bid to generate employment opportunities through the First Plan, established National Manpower Board (NMB) in 1962 with huge restrictions on the employment of expatriates except in the area of huge shortage of indigenous labour.<sup>97</sup> During the 1960s, Nigerians, were already manifesting their huge commitment to religion, especially in the area of Christian faith<sup>98</sup> which had its roots in external waves of Christian religious movement of the decades of 1920s and 1930s.<sup>99</sup> One of the reasons why religious waves of the first decade of the country's independence failed to percolate the orientations of Nigerians was because of the relative stability of the Nigerian economy despite its agrarian nature. It could be argued that religious enterprise was hindered in the first decade of the country's independence due to the laudable efforts of the Nigerian government in stabilising the country's economy.

These efforts were enshrined in the Second National Development Plan of the 1970-1974 which promoted expansion of industries as the country was opened to foreign investments that accelerated rapid economic growth.<sup>100</sup> The quest for economic growth and equitable re-distribution of the country's economic resources were given a boost through the enactment of Nigerian Enterprises Promotion Decree of 1972.<sup>101</sup> The decree carried with it the objectives of bridging the gap between the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and Gross National Products (GNP), reduction of the dependence of the country's economy on foreign capital, ownership control and management with the overall strategy of making these foreign investments less exploitative.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Andrew Onwuemele, 'Development Planning and Employment Generations: Achievements, Challenges and Prospects in Nigeria.' *JORIND 11 No. 1*, June, 2013, p. 168.

<sup>98</sup> Rufina, G. Ikeazota, 'Proliferation of Churches and National Development.' *BasseyAndah Journal*, Vol. 6, 2013, p. 207.

<sup>99</sup> J.D.Y. Peel, *Aladura: AS Religious Movement Among the Yoruba*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000, p. 63,

<sup>100</sup> Akinjide Osuntokun, *Nigeria's Foreign Policy in Global Historical Perspectives*. Being an Inaugural Lecture Presentation Delivered at the University of Lagos Lagos: University of Lagos Press, 1998, p. 26.

<sup>101</sup> O. Aboiyade, 'Indigenizing Foreign Enterprises: Some Lessons from the Nigerian Enterprises Promotion Decree.' In O. Teriba and M.O. Kayode (eds.), *Industrial Development in Nigeria, Patterns, Problems and Prospects*. Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1972, p. 379.

<sup>102</sup> O. Aboiyade 'Indigenizing Foreign Enterprises: Some Lessons from the Nigerian Enterprises Promotion Decree' . . . p. 379.

These laudable efforts reveal the unwavering commitment of the Nigerian government towards the country's economic development as well as the empowerment of the citizenry. For instance, the crude oil production capacity of Nigeria which stood at an average of 2.3 million barrels per day in 1974 which positioned the country as the sixth largest producer globally with \$8 billion earning in that year.<sup>103</sup> The country's economic prosperity during this period of the 1970s afforded her the opportunity of assisting other African states without bureaucratic considerations.<sup>104</sup>

By the 1980s, the deposit of the country's economic prosperity had started declining due to the nose-diving of crude oil prices in the international market. The Shagari government, being faced with the realities of dwindling economic fortunes of the country, enacted Economic Stabilisation Act designed to curtail public expenditure.<sup>105</sup> It was in the midst of this economic crisis that proliferation of churches with deep religious orientations of Nigerians across ethnic lines was deeply entrenched due to the economic crises of the 1980s and 1990s that made the citizenry to look up to God rather than the country's leadership to solve their economic quagmire.<sup>106</sup> The period of 1990s further led to the demobilisation of the masses as they were encouraged to neglect the socio-economic challenges of the Nigerian state by focusing on heaven.<sup>107</sup>

By implication, deep commitment of Nigerians to religious orientation further accelerated the gradual abandonment of a viable nation building process by the country's policymakers. On the one hand, the country's leadership was not confronted and this lack of confrontation was consistent with the demobilisation of the citizenry through the Pentecostal prosperity slogan of

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<sup>103</sup> Olajide Aluko, 'Oil at Concessionary Prices for Africa: A Case Study in Nigerian Decision Making,' *African Affairs: Journal of the Royal African Society*, Vol. 75, No. 301, 1976, p. 427.

<sup>104</sup> Ayodele Aborisade, 'A Historical Survey of the Strategic Dimensions in Nigeria-Brazil Relations During the Oil Boom Years,' *Nigerian Journal of International Studies NSIA*, Vol. 41, No. 1, 2016, p. 206.

<sup>105</sup> Adebayo Olukoshi, 'The Political Economy of the Structural Adjustment Programmes.' In Said Adejumo and Abubakar Momoh (eds.), *The Political Economy of Nigeria Under Military Rule: 1984-1993*. Harare: Sapes Books, 1995, p. 140.

<sup>106</sup> Rufina, G. Ikeazota, 'Proliferation of Churches and National Development' . . . p. 210.

<sup>107</sup> Rufina, G. Ikeazota, 'Proliferation of Churches and National Development' . . . p. 211.

the 1990s. On another hand, the citizens were denied their rightful role as watchdog of the nation building project. Many Nigerians started putting their faith in religious solutions from economic crisis to economic well-being rather than seeking solutions from the Nigerian state.<sup>108</sup> This economic bondage has been described by Olufunke Adeboye as the untold hardships, impoverishment and sufferings experienced by the masses in the wake of the Structural Adjustment Programme.<sup>109</sup>

It is plausible to state that deep religious orientations of Nigerians further reduced the pressure that would have been mounted by the citizens on the country's leadership. As the religious frenzy continued unabated, the role of citizenship as an important calculus of the country's nation building equation diminished as emphasis was placed on spiritual solutions to the country's economic problem rather than right leadership. The citizenry were highly incapable of questioning the problem of the country's leadership. This could be viewed from two perspectives. First, the unpleasant economic conditions of the citizenry in the 1980s could not be challenged because the religious orientation had conditioned their minds for economic success outside the state structure. This neglect of the state structure was occasioned by the religious frenzy. Second, the impact of religious orientations demobilised the citizens from engaging the country's leadership for failing in its capacity to revamp the economy. The end of military rule and the subsequent return to democratic transition since 1999 did not change this spiritual orientation of most Nigerians.

As industries were folding up in the 1990s and early 2000s, the warehouses of these industries, cinema halls and night clubs in most parts the country, especially in the South were converted to places of worship by the Pentecostal churches.<sup>110</sup> This conversion was not unconnected with the suffocating economic climate brought by declining national economy that increased poverty and crime rate which in turn affected the patronage of these business outfits<sup>111</sup> with the country's leadership highly incapable of revamping these

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<sup>108</sup> Benjamin C.D. Diara, 'The Phenomenal Growth of Pentecostalism in the Contemporary Nigerian Society: A Challenge to Mainline Churches.' *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, Vol. 5, No. 6, April, 2014, p. 398.

<sup>109</sup> Olufunke Adeboye, Pentecostal Challenges in Africa and Latin America: A Comparative Focus on Nigeria and Brazil . . . p. 144.

<sup>110</sup> Olufunke Adeboye, 'A Church in a Cinema Hall? Pentecostal Appropriation of Public Space in Nigeria.' *Journal of Religion in Africa*, Vol. 42, 2012, p. 160.

<sup>111</sup> Olufunke Adeboye, 'A Church in a Cinema Hall? Pentecostal Appropriation of Public Space in Nigeria' . . . p. 160.

important drivers of the micro sector of the country's economy. By 2006, the country's economy was given a ray of hope when the quest for debt cancellation by the federal government was achieved as this pegged the country's annual GDP growth rate and unemployment rate at 6.51 percent and 11.9 percent respectively.<sup>112</sup>

The consolidation of this achievement was thwarted in 2007 when the federal government under the late President Yar'Adua wanted to devalue the naira by making it stronger against the dollar through the removal of certain digits. The policy proposal to then government as espoused by the then C.B.N governor, Chukwuma Soludo was turned down due to fear from certain quarters, especially the bureau de change traders who were predominantly northern Muslims. Keen observers of the Nigerian economy accused these traders of mounting pressure on the then northern President to jettison the idea. The scenario is a clear-cut case of sacrificing the success of nation building on religious and ethnic alters. By 2010 when the country celebrated its golden jubilee as an independent nation, unemployment rate had skyrocketed to 23.9 percent indicating unemployment had manifested more than double from 2006 to 2010<sup>113</sup> while the citizenry looked up to the celestial for solution rather questioning those steering the affairs of the Nigerian state.

## Conclusion

From the foregoing, it may not be out of place to state that the formation of the Nigerian state through the instruments of amalgamation and indirect rule by the British was anchored upon religion. It was the suitability of the cultural and religious orientations of the people of the North that gave the British clearer picture of extending the indirect to other parts of the country without the proper understanding of the complexities of cultural and religious orientations of other ethnic groups in other parts of the country. The failure of the indirect rule in other parts of the country, therefore, cemented the

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<sup>112</sup> For details of this, see, P.K. Garba (2012). *The Impossibilities of Sound Economic Outcomes without Sound Management and Leadership*. An Inaugural Lecture Delivered at the University of Ibadan Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, p. 32. See also, A.S. Aborisade (2018). 'The Nigerian Foreign Reserves and the Challenges of Development, 1960-2010'. *West Bohemian Historical Review*, Vol. VIII No.1, p. 110.

<sup>113</sup> P.K. Garba (2012). *The Impossibilities of Sound Economic Outcomes without Sound Management and Leadership* . . . p. 32.

relationship of the British with the North to the detriment of the interests of other groups. The question is, why were the British in love with the Muslim North when the British themselves were predominantly Christians?

The answer to the question could be seen in how the British valued their imperialist agenda in Nigeria than their religious believe. The conflicting religious dispositions of both the British and the North ought to create a form of pugnacious relationship in the system of administration in that part of the country by the British. However, both the British and the northern traditional rulers overlooked the contradictory religious blocs and pursued vigorously, their interests. For the northern traditional authorities the special treatment of the North to the detriment of other groups was paramount than their confrontation with the Europeans. The British themselves used the relationship with the North to perpetuate its dominance in order to prevent it from becoming a nursery for anti-colonial slogans as echoed by the beneficiaries of western education brought by the Christian missionaries in the South. It should be noted that despite the divisive tendencies which the education of the Christian Missions sowed in the Nigerian project during colonial rule, it brought about rapid exposure of the educated elite who championed the decolonisation process in Nigeria.

After the country's independence in 1960, the members of the political class adopted the British strategy of sacrificing their religious orientations which sustained the alliance with the North. An alliance that polarised the Nigerian peoples. Members of the country's political class related well among themselves without any form of religious hindrance as this perennially sustained the interests of the members of that class. The members of this class consciously ensured that this fraternisation despite the differences in their religious orientations, did not percolate to the followership layer. Rather, the elite extrapolated the religious differences that would have jeopardised their interests at the leadership level to the followership layer while the members of the political class continue to perpetuate their interests to the detriment of followers within the Nigerian project.