
NIGERIA'S BALANCE SHEET OF DEMOCRACY AND THE NATION-BUILDING TEMPLATE FOR FRAGILE STATES IN AFRICA

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Abstract

This study is principally about the state of affairs in the following fragile states in Africa: Nigeria, Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia and Sudan. The Nigerian state is denoted in the study as having made (in relative terms) some remarkable progress in democratic tendencies, particularly in the area of nation-building. The Fund for Peace's Fragile States' Index was fundamentally used in categorizing these states as fragile states. Being African countries, this study became interested in how these states may derive nation-building benefits from the experiences and comparative accomplishments of the Nigeria state, Nigeria being the most populous state in Africa. The study's general objective therefore is to undertake an examination of Nigeria's balance sheet of democracy and study the nation-building template it presents for fragile states in Africa. The study's design is historical and qualitative. Findings of the study finally suggest that nation-building is a decision which plural states must take if they need to conform to modern democratic orthodoxies and evade the categorization of fragility.

Keywords: Nigeria, Balance Sheet, Democracy, Nation-Building, Fragile States.

1. Introduction

A Historical Overview

The former British colony, Nigeria, became independent in 1960. Shortly after independence, the political structures that hosted the country's new status collapsed. The new nation's political elite were apparently overwhelmed by the challenges of independent governance. They were invariably deficient in public accountability and to a very large degree lacked the true nationalist commitment that was needed to move forward the new country (Olumide & Ekanade, 2011). Nigeria's First Republic, under the leadership of Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa as Prime Minister and Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe as President was marked by widespread corruption. Government officials looted public funds with impunity. Federal Representatives and Ministers flaunted their wealth with reckless abandon. In fact, it appeared as if there were no men of good character in the political leadership of Nigeria's First Republic. Politically, the thinking of the First Republic Nigerian leadership-class (the elite politicians) was based on politics for material gain; making money and living well (Ogbeidi, 2012). The nascent nation's political parties were mere ethnic assemblages (Sklar, 1963; Nnoli, 1978; Amechi, 1985; Olumide & Ekanade, 2011).

The situation described above, among other factors, provided the pretext for a group of young middle-rank army officers to sack the Nigerian First Republic politicians from power, through a coup d'état on 15 January 1966 on the grounds of corruption (Ogbeidi, 2012). The military idealists were later enmeshed in the deeply ethnic character of Nigerian politics at this time; incidentally, this first coup d'état fully appeared as a handiwork of only the Igbo-ethnic elements in the Nigerian army. Subsequently, on 29 July 1966, a counter coup occurred, targeted at the Igbos. By this time, an anti-Igbo hatred had enveloped the entire Northern Nigeria where the peripatetic Igbos resided in large numbers (as many of the leading politicians of the First Republic, killed in the first coup, including the Prime Minister, Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, were from the northern section of the country). Also killed in the first coup was the highly influential Sir Ahmadu Bello (Premier of Nigeria's Northern Region). None of the leading Igbo politicians was killed during the first coup. The Igbo reaction to the pogrom that was visited upon them in Northern Nigeria was the principal influencing factor for the civil war that followed (1967-1970).

Madiebo (1980) has given a valid account of these events. At the end of the civil war, the military remained in government, handed over to civilians to rule the country in 1979, returned to power in 1983 and initiated another attempt to introduce democracy in 1993 but also aborted it. The military-propelled games of musical chairs continued until 1999 from when it seems the military have finally bowed to the imperatives of democracy in Nigeria.

On the New Dawn of Democracy in Nigeria

It is now 16 years, from 1999 to 2015. In addition to the elections conducted by the military to usher in the current phase of democracy in Nigeria, general elections have been conducted in Nigeria, in 2003, 2007; 2011 and in 2015. The Nigerian state is Africa's most populous nation and also the largest oil producing nation in the African continent (Okumagba, 2011). Nigeria in 2014, rebased its GDP from 1990 to 2010, resulting in an 89% increase in the estimated size of the economy. As a result, the country could boast of having the largest economy in Africa, with an estimated nominal GDP of USD 510 billion, surpassing South Africa's USD 352 billion (Barungi, 2014). Nigeria, with 170 million people, has the largest concentration of black people anywhere in the world (Adefuye, 2014). Legend also has it that one in every five black people on earth is a Nigerian (Odunfa, 2006).

Furthermore, the discovery of oil in commercial quantities in Oloibiri, South-South Nigeria in 1956, puts this nation-state among the top ten countries of oil and gas producing nations of the world (National Conference Report, 2014). On the United Nations' international peacekeeping scene; as at 31 March 2015, Nigeria had about 3,000 serving officers in UN peacekeeping operations around the world. Nigeria later became the 6th largest troop contributor to UN peace operations in Africa and the 10th largest in the world (Omenazu, 2015). It is therefore strongly believed that both in internal and external contexts, the Nigerian state is one of Africa's most significant states (Adebanwi & Obadare, 2010). In that case, what has this obviously notable nation-state in African and world affairs made of 16 years of uninterrupted democracy? How has the Nigerian elite fared in the matrixes of issues that have surrounded democracy and nation-building in the period under review?

The general objective of this study therefore is to undertake an examination of Nigeria's balance sheet of democracy and study the nation-building template it presents for fragile states in Africa. The specific objectives are to (i) study the balance sheet of

democracy in Nigeria (ii) examine the nation-building template it presents for fragile states in Africa and (iii) highlights the lessons from the balance sheet and template, for fragile states in Africa.

The study is essentially qualitative in nature. It also has a historical research design which provides the bases for the representation and analyses of past events, establishing the attendant linkages, leading to the obtaining of clearer viewpoints on current issues and imperatives. In looking at the past, the focus was from the post independence era when the Nigerian and African elites came on board the governance scene. The periodization end-point is 2015. The study has in the foregoing regards mainly relied on secondary sources of data obtained from books, electronic sources, newspapers / magazines and journal publications. The manifold sources of the data provided for tests of validity and subsequent revalidation.

Theoretical Framework

The elite theory is the theoretical framework of this study. Hence, an élite is a selected and small group of citizens and/or organizations that controls a large amount of power...Normally the concept of élite is used to analyze the groups that either control or are situated at the top of societies (Vergara, 2013). The term 'elite' was introduced to the vocabulary of the social sciences in the late nineteenth century by Vilfredo Pareto. Pareto, Gaetano Mosca and Robert Michels developed classic elite theories, in opposition to the Marxist belief that a popular proletarian regime would yield democratization. A ruling minority, so the basic theorem goes, will always out-organize large majorities (Korom, 2015).

The elite may further be sub-divided or reclassified into different tendencies: the political, religious, business, academic, media, military elite, etc. This study actually tends towards an examination of the actions and/or inactions of the political elite in the fragile state of Nigeria and in all the other fragile states under study. Political elites, in the viewpoint of López (2013) probably constitute the most researched elite sector, and often in the literature we find the term 'elite' being used as a synonym for 'political elite' (López, 2013). According to Vergara (2013) however, a political élite is a group of people, corporations, political parties and/or any other kind of civil society organization who manages and organizes government and all the manifestations of political power. In this conceptualization therefore, the elite must not always refer to people.

In the application of elite theory to this study, the angle is considered of how an otherwise highly villified Nigerian elites have turned out to present some tendencies that the elite in the other fragile African states are enjoined to emulate. The elites after all, can engender positive tendencies. López (2013) further posits that the concept of 'elites' is based on the notion that every society holds a ruling minority, a group that controls and disputes the most important power sources. Not only do elites dispute power he argues, (reaching different levels of conflict and violence), but new elites also enter the game through different mechanisms of elite recruitment. Thus, the core of elite theory, to López (2013) relies in explaining elite behavior, elite interaction, elite transformation and, ultimately, the connection between those instances and state outcomes. In applying the elite theory to this study therefore, the connection between elite behaviour, elite interaction, elite transformation and certain extant and possible state outcomes shall be explored.

2. Contextualizing the Fragility of States

Fund for Peace (2014) places Nigeria at the 17th position among the most fragile states in the world. But there are also some African countries which have been on the list of Fund for Peace's 10 most fragile states in the previous 10 years, ending 2014. The Fund for Peace's Fragile States Index is an annual ranking of 178 nations based on their levels of stability and the pressures they face. The Index is based on The Fund for Peace's proprietary Conflict Assessment Software Tool (CAST) analytical platform. Based on comprehensive social science methodology, data from three primary sources is triangulated and subjected to critical review to obtain final scores for the Fragile States Index. Millions of documents are analyzed every year, and by applying highly specialized search parameters, scores are apportioned for every country based on twelve key political, social and economic indicators and over 100 sub-indicators that are the result of years of painstaking expert social science research (Fund for Peace, 2014).

Only three countries have been ranked in the top ten every year, of the Index's existence: Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo and Somalia (Fund for Peace, 2014). In other words, within these 10 years, while the other seemingly permanent members of the group of ten, move in and out of the list, Sudan; Democratic Republic of Congo and Somalia have been on the list every year, in the last ten years. In this study, a further detailed presentation of the state of affairs in these three countries shall be undertaken to relate their experiences to the Nigerian experience. Burundi is ranked 21th in the Fund for Peace index for 2014. On the surface of it therefore, Burundi's performance is rated higher than the performance of Nigeria. But the failed coup d'état in this country in the course of this study has attracted the researcher's attention, thereby causing the inclusion of Burundi among the countries under focus. Consequently, Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia, and Sudan and of course Nigeria, will serve as the sample fragile states for this study. Is it truly democracy in any of the fragile states?

3. Fragility of states, Accountability, the Balance Sheet of Democracy, Democracy and

Nation-building: Conceptual Elucidations

Essentially, fragility of states is a consequence of the disdain for accountability by the key actors in the politics and the economy of such states. Invariably, the concept of accountability relates highly with the notion of preparing and rendering an account. We therefore begin to imagine the accompaniment of a balance sheet to the accounts to be rendered. We begin to imagine the possibility of a balance sheet of democracy by democratic nation-states. The typical balance sheet is a book of debit and credit entries. In the political balance sheet (the balance sheet of democracy) there are also deficit and positive entries. We will presently turn attention to the major deficit / debit entries, in Nigeria's balance sheet of democracy, from 1999 to the period of the study in 2015. Before we proceed further however, we posit that democracy stands for a pro-people system of government in which periodic popular elections are conducted and the legitimacy of political leadership derives from the freeness and fairness of the electoral process. Additionally, nation-building in this study refers to the executive trajectories of a decision (not an accord) by national political actors of a given state to guarantee inclusion for all the ethnic

tendencies and disparate viewpoints in the polity. Nation-building is principally a political issue with social and economic connotations. We consider highly germane to this study, this elucidation on the concepts of democracy and nation-building. How then may African states with endemic fragility derive nation-building inspiration from the experiences and accomplishments of an equally fragile but democratic Nigerian state?

4. Major Negative Entries in Nigeria's Balance Sheet of Democracy, 1999 – 2015 A Democracy of Only Physical Edifices, Prebendalism and Corruption

A foremost negative entry of Nigeria's balance sheet in this period is related to the fact that democracy has ostensibly produced more physical edifices than even civilized values. For example, the permanent site of the National Institute for Legislative Studies (NILS), the legislative institute of Nigeria's National Assembly was expected to gulp N52 billion out of which N16 billion had been released. The project was scheduled to be completed by the end of April, 2015 but was being delayed by paucity of funds. It was envisaged that on completion, the edifice would not only serve the National Assembly but also all the parliaments in Nigeria (Houses of Assembly in the thirty-six states of the federation) and beyond (Folasade-Koyi, 2015). However, when such projects are conceived by Nigerian leaders, the preponderant underlying factor is the award of contracts and the attendant kick-backs that surround the ostensive execution of such projects.

Hence what Joseph (1987), seminally characterized as prebendalism in Nigeria, has persisted even into 2015. Prebendalism consequently refers to the political systems where elected officials and government workers feel they have a right to a share of government revenues and use them to benefit their supporters, co-religionists and members of their ethnic group. The term is commonly used to describe the patterns of corruption in Nigeria (Wikipedia, 2015a). Accordingly, with regards to the period of 1999-2009, Ogunidiya (2010) argues that corruption had reached a high crescendo in Nigeria, such that an average Nigerian now possibly associates democracy with corruption.

Ibekwe (2014) highlights that out of 174 countries evaluated for corruption, by Transparency International in its 2014 report, Nigeria ranked 136th alongside Russia, Cameroon, Iran, Kyrgyzstan and Lebanon, as the least transparent. That means the six countries, Nigeria inclusive, are the 15th most corrupt in the world. Nigeria was 14th most corrupt in 2013. Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index (CPI) is the leading indicator of public sector corruption, offering a yearly snapshot of the relative degree of the global corruption problem by ranking countries from all over the world.

In other words, the CPI, which relies on expert opinion worldwide, is a measurement of the perceived levels of global public sector corruption. Transparency International although highlights in the 2014 report that corruption is a problem for all countries. Hence, a poor score by a country is likely a sign of widespread bribery, lack of punishment for corruption and the incidence of public institutions that don't respond to citizens' needs. This is particularly true of Nigeria where several public institutions are cesspools of fraudulent activities, as proven by multiple investigations and reports. Hence, between 2013 and 2014, cases of pension scam, running to multiple billions of naira at federal and state levels were reported. No conviction was recorded. Instead, charges against some of the alleged kingpins were controversially dropped (Ibekwe, 2014).

There exists therefore in Nigeria, a growing consensus that contemporary Nigeria is not making sufficient progress in its fight against corruption and apart from the relatively

successful clean-up of Nigeria's banking sector, which helped propel the emergence of large banking groups with a global reach, and minor but significant reform of the judicial system, reforms relating to combating corruption have amounted to little more than window-dressing and are perceived as such by Nigerians (Enweremadu, 2013).

There was therefore virtually nothing fundamental in the democracy balance sheet of the period, 1999 – 2015 in Nigeria, to convince the citizens that democracy as a system of government could curtail the continuing menace of corruption. Within this period in Nigeria, it has actually been more of attempted physical-projects democracy than democracy for the growing of critical societal values and long term values for sustainable development. Consequently, while various sections of the country were converted into prebendal project-sites for the erection of five-star hotels and conference centers, the Nigerian nation was still largely fed by peasant farmers. Attah (2012) describes peasant farmers as the actual providers of food in Nigeria. Furthermore, according to Kazeem (2008) over 90% of Nigeria's agricultural output comes from peasant farmers who dwell in remote rural areas. Then in these regards, several traders in the urban settings in Nigeria confirmed to this researcher that they sourced the food items they sold in the urban markets, from the peasant farmers in the rural areas. It is further observed that it is largely from these same markets that 'the rich and mighty' (the urban elite) in the country, mainly source their food needs. In other words, the mechanized system of farming is yet to become a useful Nigerian reality.

Democracy Devoid of "Better Life"

What is more on the untoward side of this balance sheet, the average Nigerian expected at the dawn of this new phase of democracy that democracy would come with 'better life.' However, sixteen years after, the much expected 'better life' was turning into an optical illusion. Consequently, sixteen years of democracy did not reverse the trend of migration to other lands by Nigerians, in search of certain services and conditions that citizens take for granted in other countries. For example, the availability of electricity for domestic and industrial utilization in Nigeria is still problematic. Adeoye & Falayi (2015) highlight that in 2014 for instance, what the citizens of Nigeria received was another 365 days of failed promises of the Federal Government, as far as the power sector was concerned. To this effect, by the middle of April 2015, power supply from the national grid again slumped below the 3,000-megawatts mark to 2,988.72MW (Asu 2015). Towards the end of May 2015, electricity generation in Nigeria fell to an all-time-unprecedented low of 1,327m (Premium Times, 2015).

Generation of electricity in Nigeria thus, increasingly becomes an individualized matter done with private generating sets. This is in a country of over 170 million citizens where democracy also begins to relate more with election as end in itself, as opposed to a process of engendering responsibility and accountability in leadership. To many Nigerian citizens in diaspora also, going back home is still out of the question. Nigerian-resident citizens do not also think that their foreign-based compatriots should be anxious to return to their home-country. Why would one who had been used to easy access of electricity power and portable water be encouraged to return to a place where he has to be a mini government by himself, generating electricity, producing portable water, providing personal security guards and constructing the road to his residence (Olawaiye & Azeez, 2013).

Principally speaking, the concept of balance sheet in this study refers to a summary of critical episodes. It is fully underscored in the study that democracy is a process. Therefore, for emerging democracies (fragile states), this process entails immense challenges. The debit side of our balance sheet is accordingly a highlight of these challenges, not a cumulative record of undemocratic events and practices, or a comprehensive record of truncated democratic hopes and aspirations. Let us now turn to the credit side.

5. Highlighting the Positive Developments in the Balance Sheet of Nigerian Democracy

The Elongation of Tenure Debacle and the Subsequent Popular Victory

A particularly important entry on this side of the balance sheet of democracy in Nigeria, during the focal epoch of this study was when former President Olusegun Obasanjo was prevented by Nigeria from elongating his tenure. How did Obasanjo hope to achieve his tenure elongation intention? According to Saliu & Muhammad (2007) agitations for a review of the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria dated back to the beginning of the Fourth Republic. The enthronement of democracy no doubt, gave many Nigerians the opportunity to express their views. Thus, Nigerians were unanimous in their dubbing the 1999 constitution a military contraption that lacked legitimacy due to its non-inclusiveness. However, the review could not be achieved during the first phase of the Fourth Republic (1999-2003). The calls for review however persisted, until the Federal Government of Nigeria under Chief Obasanjo as President, convened a National Political Reform Conference (NPRC) in February 2005 to consider some amendments to the constitution and other political issues facing the country. The NPRC later submitted its report containing about 185 items to the President who immediately turned it over to the National Assembly for further consideration. An amendment of tenure of the President and state governors turned out to be one of the 185 recommendations. But on 16 May 2006, the Senate, by voice vote, rejected the proposed constitutional amendments (Crisis Group, 2007). Obasanjo's tenure extension intention had failed!

Essentially, Obasanjo's third term bid failed following public outcry over what many saw as unconstitutional (Adeoye, 2013). It was indeed one of those rare exoteric occasions when nearly everybody in Nigeria spoke with one voice – the elite and the masses. The only dissenting voices were either too sycophantically attached to Obasanjo's presidency, for their stands to chime with the popular and plausible opinion or they were deliberately into the third term support for deviant pecuniary advantages. Inevitably, the bulk of support for Obasanjo's tenure extension chiefly was from the President's advisers and party chieftains (Saliu & Muhammad, 2007). Generally therefore, nobody had well-argued reasons why Obasanjo may unconstitutionally remain in office. It was indeed describable as the triumph of democracy against the strange ambitions of (reference to Chief Obasanjo's book) one animal called man (Obasanjo, 1998).

An Increasing Level of Leadership Awareness on the Issue of Nation-Building

Additionally on this side of the balance sheet, there appears to be some large level of awareness among Nigerian leaders that national development is predicated upon nation-building. Consequently, these leaders have become sensitive to how public offices are competed for, after zoning the relevant positions to different geo-political regions in the country. Thus, the formal election of President Jonathan in 2011 is the next significant

feature of the credit side of this balance sheet. It was actually a nation-building mechanism that brought Jonathan to the national scene as Vice President. His selection as Vice Presidential Candidate to Umaru Musa Yar'Adua in 2007 was principally because he came from the Ijaw minority ethnic nationality (one of the minority nationalities in Nigeria). The founder members of the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) who became the post-military ruling party in Nigeria in 1999 had agreed that political offices in the country would be rotated among the six geo-political zones in Nigeria.

In 2007 President Yar'Adua accordingly emerged from the north-west zone and Vice President Jonathan, from the Ijaw minority ethnic nationality, of the south-south zone. Subsequently, President Yar'Adua died in office on 5 May 2010. Prior to his death, there was an administrative, political and constitutional logjam bordering on whether Jonathan would remain Vice President while Yar'Adua was incapacitated by sickness in a Saudi hospital. Nigeria's National Assembly subsequently invoked the doctrine of necessity and Jonathan took oath of office as Acting President of Nigeria. An Acting President of Nigeria accordingly emerged from a southern minority ethnic group. It was a product of nation-building understanding.

In the meantime, President Yar'Adua was terminally ill and his demise would mean the swearing in of Jonathan as substantive president, to complete his tenure, translating to the North-West's chance (by extension the chance of Northern Nigeria) to be president, being shared with the Ijaw minorities of the South-West. When Yar'Adua eventually died, Jonathan became President. He completed Yar'Adua's term in office and contested in the presidential election of 2011, won the election and continued in office as president of Nigeria.

Invariably, the arrival of Jonathan on the national scene in Nigeria was informed by nation-building permutations. It was primarily made possible by the zoning orthodoxy which belonged to the realm of nation-building visioning. From his acting presidency, substantive presidency by inheritance, to his presidency by general election, the resilience of Nigeria's democracy continued to be on trial based on the machinations of ethnic and sectional jingoists. But fundamentally, the democratic system survived all of this because the key political actors in Nigeria (the Nigerian political elite) had also taken a firm decision, even if informally, to give nation-building a chance.

Participation of Former Military Dictators in the Democratic Politics of this Period

The next positive item on this side of the balance sheet of democracy in Nigeria is in correlation with the participation of former military men -- former military dictators -- in the democratic politics of this period. This issue will subsequently be amplified when we consider the lessons learnable by fragile African states from the Nigerian democratic tendencies. Thus, former military dictators in Nigeria have been very positively active in the post-military democratic era that commenced in 1999. They usually compete for elective positions and become victorious. They also vie for offices allotted to their geo-political zones and are freely chosen. Among the most notable of these former military authoritarians now turned democrats are former President Olusegun Obasanjo, current President Muhammadu Buhari, David Mark, who completed two terms of four years each, as Senate President in Nigeria and currently elected to the same Senate, former Governor Jonah Jang of Plateau State, former Governor Murtala Nyako of Adamawa State, and several others.

The Convocation of a National Conference by President Jonathan

Another important entry on this side of the balance sheet (with multiple nation-building tracks) was the convocation of a national conference by President Jonathan in March 2014. Actually, the history of Nigeria is interwoven with calls for, and convocations of one form of constitutional or national conference or the other, even under the military. National Conference Report (2014) has given a chronology of these calls and convocations. A national conference (not a constitutional conference) is a formal platform for dialogue by constituent units of a nation, convened by the national government to discuss issues or problems that inhibit national progress or challenge national cohesion (National Conference Report, 2014). National progress and national cohesion are the goals of nation-building. Inaugurating the conference on 17 March 2014, President Jonathan told the delegates that they were free to discuss any issue considered discussable by the conferees, except the possible breaking-up of Nigeria (National Conference Report, 2014). Truly speaking therefore, the summoning of the national conference of 2014 by Jonathan was in the course of nation-building by the Nigerian political elite.

Invariably, a critical aspect of a successful national conference is horse-trading. The outcome of the 2015 general elections in Nigeria, particularly the non-disputation of the results of the presidential election was not unconnected with the horse-trading undercurrents of the 2014 conference. Hence, whereas President Muhammadu Buhari contested the presidential election and emerged victorious under the canopy of the All Progressives Congress (APC), he hails from Katsina State, in the north-west geo-political zone, which was also the late President Umaru Yar'Adua's state of origin. A major plank of the opposition of critical Northern Nigeria to the presidency of Jonathan was that by his becoming president on the demise of President Yar'Adua, the North in its generality and the North-west in specificity had lost the chance of doing at least, one full-tenure of the presidency. Thus, by Buhari's emergence as President, the north regained its lost position and the north-west its lost chance.

As a matter of fact, since the candidature of Chief Obasanjo who subsequently became president in 1999, the outcome of presidential elections in Nigeria has been profoundly predetermined by political power brokers. The electorate only goes to the polls to validate the predetermination. We highlight that after the military government of Ibrahim Babangida annulled the 12 June 1993 presidential election, where Chief M.K. O. Abiola from South-West Nigeria, was about to emerge president, the most divisive issue in the Nigerian political project became the annulment of that election. The South-West (the Yoruba ethnic group, one of the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria) concluded that by the annulment of the election, where one of their own was on his way to becoming president, the entire ethnic group was unfairly treated. Consequently, the Yorubas used their media and international reach, to continuously express strong reservations about the Nigerian dream. The choice of Chief Obasanjo from the South-West by the political power brokers in 1998/1999 was principally to compensate the Yoruba people (see Akowe, 2010; Osuntokun, 2014). It was a nation-building consideration.

Therefore, the constitutional conference of 2014 was a further launch pad for the activities of the power brokers. In 1999 Olusegun Obasanjo was the presidential beneficiary of the work of the group. Their mission was nation-building. Invariably in 2007, Obasanjo

became the kingpin of the power broking group, his erstwhile benefactors, by ensuring that power moved up north. It is usually believed that chief Obasanjo had an understanding with the power brokers from northern Nigeria that at the end of his presidency (they erroneously believed he would do only one term of four years), power would return to Northern Nigeria.

By Obasanjo's apparent unilateral choice of Umaru Yar'Adua for the presidential position in 2007 when his presidency eventually ended; his imposition of Yar'Adua's candidacy on the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) and through suspected electoral fraud, obtaining victory for Yar'Adua, Obasanjo was believed to have delivered on this understanding. The 2007 presidential election which brought Yar'Adua to power was widely believed to have been massively rigged, but Obasanjo incidentally was continuing with a nation-building visioning. Indeed, the remote reason for Obasanjo's combatant attitude towards the Jonathan presidency and his eventual quitting of the PDP was to ensure according to this template, that power went back to the north.

Hence, Obasanjo, a founder member of the PDP, after some sixteen years of the dominance of the political space of Nigeria by the party, during which he was President of the country for eight years, became one of the most influential supporters of the opposition candidate, Muhammadu Buhari. It was all in a nation-building template of Nigeria's power brokers (the otherwise highly maligned Nigerian political elite). Therefore, the emergence of Buhari as president arose from this nation-building template. It was invariably facilitated by the convocation of the national conference, which provided for the Nigerian power brokers, across ethnic and political party divides, an uncommon platform for horse-trading.

6. Lessons for the Fragile States in Africa: Background to the Lessons on the Coup in Burundi

In the course of this study, there was an unsuccessful attempt to topple the government of President, Pierre Nkurunziza in Burundi. The coup attempt came after weeks of street protests against Nkurunziza's efforts to stay in power by standing in elections for a third term in office (Odula, 2015). The protests began on 25 April after the ruling party nominated Nkurunziza to run for re-election in a vote due in May 2015. His opponents argued the move was a clear violation of the constitution, which limited a president to two terms in office. The unrest provoked fears of a return to the violence that engulfed the country during the civil war, which pitched ethnic Tutsis and Hutus against one another, and left around 300,000 people dead. Nkurunziza, a former rebel leader from the Hutu majority, defied international pressure to withdraw from the election (Higgins 2015). Several ethnic and racial groups live in Burundi. Hutu (or Bantu) the most dominant ethnic group makes up about 85% of the population. The Tutsis (Hamitic) make up about 14% of the total population. The Twas (Pygmy) make up about 1% of the population (Africa & the World 2015a).

Burundi's first democratically elected president was assassinated in October 1993 after only 100 days in office, triggering widespread ethnic violence between Hutu and Tutsi factions. More than 200,000 Burundians perished during the conflict that spanned almost a dozen years. (Higgins 2015 puts the figure at around 300,000 people). Hundreds of thousands of Burundians were internally displaced or became refugees in neighboring countries. Just like in most other African countries today, poor leadership and corruption continues to tear Burundi apart. Burundi has a total population of about 10.4 million people (Africa & the World 2015a).

There was also growing concern that the conflict between the opposition and the ruling *Conseil national pour la defense de la democratie-Forces pour la defense de la democratie* (CNDD-FDD) party of President Pierre Nkurunziza had left the Arusha power-sharing deal, signed in August 2000, in tatters. Because Burundi's political history had been marked by tension between Hutus and Tutsis, the Arusha Accord provided mechanisms to ensure the delicate ethnic power balance did not spill over into conflict. Yet, indications were that this fragile peace was now under threat. The proposed constitutional changes – which would also, controversially, provide for a third term for Nkurunziza – were rejected by Parliament in March 2015. However, the leader of the ruling party, following the vote, insisted that Nkurunziza was still its presidential candidate (Louw-Vaudran, 2015). A constitutional court subsequently ruled that Nkurunziza could run because his first term – for which he was picked by parliament rather than elected by popular vote – did not count (Higgins, 2015).

The Democratic Republic of Congo

Democratic Republic of Congo is a war-torn Central African country. It is the third largest country in Africa by total land area. The country has a total land area of about 2,344,858sqkm and a population of about 78 million people making it the fourth most populous country in Africa today. The country is blessed with abundance of natural resources such as gold, petroleum, diamonds, coal, timber, tin, manganese, uranium, copper, cobalt, tantalum, zinc, silver, and hydro-power. However, despite the abundance of both natural and human resources, it remains one of the poorest countries in the world today with at least 50% of its population living below the poverty line. Although the country has seen some great improvements these past couple of years, it continues to live with the fear of war and monsters (Africa & the World 2015b).

Democratic Republic of Congo suffered and continues to suffer in the hands of barbaric dictators (barbaric political elites) and crazy policy makers. Barbaric dictators such as Mobutu Sese Seko, Laurent Kabila, etc, who ruled for decades helped demonically cripple the country, destroying several innocent lives and properties. Just like in many other African countries, corruption level is at all-time high in this state. Corruption and poor governance continues to tear her apart (Africa & the World 2015b). Thus, the absence of peace and stability has been the greatest challenge facing the Democratic Republic of Congo. Despite the official end of a huge conflict in 2003, the country has continued to be regularly listed among the site of world's most humanitarian crises (Ubaku, Anyikwa & Emeh. 2013). Let us also consider this relevant account of the Congolese conundrum:

A vast country with immense economic resources, the Democratic Republic of Congo has been at the centre of what some observers call "Africa's world war". This has left the place in the grip of a humanitarian crisis. The five-year conflict pitted government forces, supported by Angola, Namibia and Zimbabwe, against rebels backed by Uganda and Rwanda. Despite a peace deal and the formation of a transitional government in 2003, people in the east of the country remain in fear of continuing death, rape or displacement by marauding militias and the army. The war claimed an up to six million lives, either as a direct result

of fighting or because of disease and malnutrition. It has been called possibly the worst emergency in Africa in recent decades. The war had an economic as well as a political side. Fighting was fuelled by the country's vast mineral wealth, with all sides taking advantage of the anarchy to plunder natural resources, and some small militias fight on (BBC News 2015a).

The Guardian (2015) further reports as follows:

The current Democratic Republic of Congo's president, Joseph Kabila. Kabila, now 43, first came to power in January 2001 when Kinshasa politicians rushed to make the young soldier head of state after the assassination of his father, President Laurent-Desire Kabila. His opponents believe that Kabila wants to prolong his mandate by making the presidential and parliamentary elections scheduled for 2016, contingent on a new electoral roll, after a census across the vast mineral-rich country set to begin this year. The government has acknowledged that the census could delay elections due at the end of 2016, but regional analysts and diplomats estimate the process could take up to three years. Hence, in January of 2015, hundreds of young people confronted police in the capital of the Democratic Republic of Congo, Kinshasa, after deadly protests over a draft law that would enable President Joseph Kabila to extend his stay in power. Opposition parties have called for mass demonstrations against the new electoral bill being debated in the Senate. In an apparent attempt to keep a lid on the protests, the Congolese authorities shut down the internet in the capital Kinshasa. The unrest is the latest upheaval to rock the troubled central African country, which has been plagued by multiple wars and weakened by ineffectual governance for decades.

The War-Torn Somalia

Africa & the World (2015c) succinctly describe Somalia as a war-torn country. The Somali Republic has a population of about 10.1 million people. Somalis (the most dominant ethnic group) make up about 85% of the total population. Bantus and other non-Somalis (including about 30,000 Arabs) make up the remaining 15% of the total population (Africa & the World, 2015c). Comprised of a former British protectorate and an Italian colony, Somalia was created in 1960 when the two territories merged. Since then its development has been slow. Relations with neighbours have been soured by its territorial claims on Somali-inhabited areas of Ethiopia, Kenya and Djibouti. Thousands of Somalis have been displaced by ongoing conflicts (BBC News 2015b). Because there is no central government to maintain law and order in Somalia today, lawlessness, robbery, piracy, etc. are very rampant and Somalia remains one of the poorest and most violent countries in the world (Africa & the World, 2015c). Furthermore, narrates BBC News (2015b):

Somalia was without a formal parliament for more than two decades after the overthrow of President Siad Barre in 1991. Years of anarchy followed the downfall of President Barre, and it was not until 2012, when a new internationally-backed government was installed, that the country began to enjoy a measure of stability once more. The decades of fighting between rival warlords meant that the country was ill-equipped to deal with natural disasters such as drought, and around half a million people died in the Somali famines of 1992 and 2010-12. In 1991 President Barre was overthrown by opposing clans. But they failed to agree on a replacement and plunged the country into lawlessness and clan warfare. In 2000 clan elders and other senior figures appointed Abdulkassim Salat Hassan president at a conference in Djibouti. A transitional government was set up, with the aim of reconciling warring militias. But as its mandate drew to a close, the administration had made little progress in uniting the country (BBC News, 2015b).

In 2004, after protracted talks in Kenya, the main warlords and politicians signed a deal to set up a new parliament, which later appointed a president. The fledgling administration, the 14th attempt to establish a government since 1991, faced a formidable task in its efforts to bring reconciliation to a country divided into clanish fiefdoms. Its authority was further compromised in 2006 by the rise of Islamists who gained control of much of the south, including the capital, after their militias kicked out the warlords who had ruled the roost for 15 years. With the backing of Ethiopian troops, forces loyal to the interim administration seized control from the Islamists at the end of 2006. Islamist insurgents - including the Al-Shabab group, which later declared allegiance to al-Qaeda and in 2012 announced its merger with the global Islamist terrorist group - fought back against the government and Ethiopian forces, regaining control of most of southern Somalia. In 2011, the plight of the Somali people was exacerbated by the worst drought in six decades, which left millions of people on the verge of starvation and caused tens of thousands to flee to Kenya and Ethiopia in search of food. After the collapse of the Siad Barre regime in 1991, the north-west part of Somalia unilaterally declared itself the independent Republic of Somaliland. The territory, whose independence is not recognised by international bodies, has enjoyed relative stability (BBC News, 2015b).

By mid-2012, the insurgents had lost most of the territory that they had seized. In 2011–2012, a political process providing benchmarks for the establishment of permanent democratic institutions was launched. Within this administrative framework a new provisional constitution was passed in August 2012, which reformed Somalia as a federation. Following the end of the Transitional Federal Government's interim mandate the same month, the Federal Government of Somalia, the first permanent central government in the country since the start of the civil war, was formed. On 10 September 2012, parliament elected Hassan Sheikh Mohamud as the new President of Somalia. President Mohamud later appointed Abdi Farah Shirdon as the new Prime Minister on 6 October 2012, who was succeeded in office by Abdiweli Sheikh Ahmed on 21 December 2013. On 17 December 2014, former Premier Omar Abdirashid Ali Sharmarke was reappointed Prime Minister

(Wikipedia 2015b). Al-Shabab however, remains an active terrorist in Somalia and its neighbourhoods (see Pflanz 2015).

The Case of Sudan

In Sudan, we take our illustration from Kushkush (2015) who has reported as follows:

In April 2015, President Omar Hassan al-Bashir of Sudan, the country's longtime leader, was declared re-elected, winning 94 percent of the vote in balloting that was boycotted by opposition groups and marred by low turnout and public apathy. Fifteen largely unknown candidates ran for the presidency against Mr. Bashir, Sudan's leader for the last 25 years, and the only sitting head of state under indictment for genocide and war crimes by the International Criminal Court. Western governments had criticized Mr. Bashir's administration for holding the elections at this time. The United States, Britain and Norway said in a joint statement that the Sudanese government had failed to create a free, fair and conducive elections environment. Restrictions on political rights and freedoms, counter to the rights enshrined in the Sudanese Constitution, the lack of a credible national dialogue and the continuation of armed conflict in Sudan's peripheries are among the reasons for the reported low participation and very low voter turnout, the statement said.

The outcome of these elections cannot be considered a credible expression of the will of the Sudanese people, the statement added. Mr. Bashir has repeatedly belittled his indictment in 2009 by the I.C.C. in connection with the Sudan government's deadly repression of an insurgency in the Darfur region, and the stigma of that indictment has not been an electoral issue. But it has affected Mr. Bashir's ability to travel outside the country for fear of arrest, forcing him to alter or cancel plans, sometimes at the last minute. Mr. Bashir called last year for a national dialogue to address the country's political divisions and problems, but talks with the opposition have not yet produced any agreement (Kushkush 2015).

7. The Lessons

And so weak and failing states (fragile states) as identified above, pose a challenge to the international community. In today's world, with its highly globalized economy, systems and interlaced security, pressures on one fragile state can have serious repercussions not only for that state and its people, but also for its neighbours and other states halfway across the globe (Fund for Peace, 2014). Many African states are classifiable as fragile states, using the Fund for Peace parameters. And we have in this study used Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia and Sudan as samples of such fragile states. These are countries that have in the last ten years of global indexing by Fund for Peace, featured prominently in the top ten brackets. Invariably, this is a top ten performance in an unbecoming dimension. The political scorecards of these countries which reflect on every other issue tell tales of deprivation and degradation and display stories of elite gangsterism. They also tell stories of the replacement of hope with heinousness. Then where are the remaining political elite? According to Korom (2015), contrary to the classics, the social sciences since World War II have mostly treated

elites and democracy as reconcilable. For the African fragile states therefore and indeed for fragile states everywhere, the elites and democracy must become and remain reconcilable for the critically desired stability to become engendered in such troubled states.

Nation-Building as a Decision

The very first lesson that the other fragile African states may learn from the Nigerian progress in democracy therefore, is that nation-building is a decision. It is not merely an experimental question in which different designs are freely weighed and discarded, until fortuitously, the winning formula emerges. It is not a decision that is taken at the conference table, even when conferences are embedded in the critical mechanisms for the maturation of this decision. The African fragile states and others have to realize that nation-building has never been forcefully accomplished. Consequently, it is not also achievable on the battle field. Yet, it is a necessary condition for orthodox development in pluralized societies. Where we have attempted to prove that there is a growing tendency in the Nigerian state towards nation-building tendencies, it was not the civil war of 1967- 1970 in Nigeria that is responsible for this new national inclination. We accordingly opine that nation-building is a decision that simultaneously metamorphoses in the psyche of the leaders (the elite) and the led. It is not a decision that is taken by all the citizens at a time. It is more of a decision that when gradually arrived at by the different citizens, it begins to permeate the political setting and invariably the other strata of society.

On New Military-Democrats

Furthermore, we earlier hinted that there is a lesson for the military men in active politics in these other fragile states, whose intransigencies lead to the escalation and protraction of internecine crises in the fragile political systems. These mendacious military men usually claim to be fighting for the masses, especially their own ethnic make-up of the masses nomenclature. The lesson for weak African states from the Nigerian illustration is that after all, military men (after military service) may stand for elective positions in democratic settings, win the elections and proceed to represent in government, the masses in generic terms or their own viewpoints of the masses terminology. The Nigerian experience has also shown in the case of Muhammadu Buhari, that when a retired army general is into elective contests, he may continue in the race until victory comes his way. It is indeed considered more glorious to obtain political power by this means than through warfare. President Muhammadu Buhari for instance (General Muhammadu Buhari of the Nigerian Army) contested in 2003, 2007 and 2011 for the presidential position in Nigeria. It was in his fourth attempt that he succeeded as elected President.

Accommodation of Minority Interests

Invariably, the Nigerian balance sheet discloses that in plural states with dominant ethnic components, a member of any of the minority entities could become president and when he is in office the country is not destroyed because the president emerged from the minority section of the composite nationalities. It is not likely that in these fragile states, members of major ethnic groups are more cognitively and physically endowed with leadership attributes. The Jonathan presidency in Nigeria is illustrative of this reality. We make this point in the

context of nation-building. It is not being posited that the Jonathan administration in Nigeria was of a stellar class in statecraft and political sagacity.

Which of the fragile states that we have sampled in this study is ready to freely give a member of the minority tribe a leadership chance in the country? The other time, it was the United States of America that provided a free and fair political environment that enabled a black American, Barack Obama to emerge as president. In Nigeria, a member of the Ijaw minority ethnic group has also recently served as president. War-torn fragile states in Africa where ethnicity constitute impediments to national progress can take clues from these recent realities.

Prior to the Nigerian general elections in 2015, Bourne (2015:56) poignantly opined that forecasting Nigerian politics was a foolish pursuit, adding that although experienced observers worried that 'Nigeria' was still not secure, it was worth emphasizing the increasing bonds that pulled the country together. Hence, these centripetal Nigerian considerations largely gave rise to the relatively peaceful post-election situation in the country, thereby leading to the formal handover of power to President Muhammadu Buhari by former President Jonathan, who was defeated by Buhari in the presidential election. Some relevant questions at this point are as follows: Are there no bonds that pull people together in the other fragile African states? Are there only centrifugal forces in these other states? What is the purpose of political leadership that eternally fans the embers of centrifugal tendencies in these states?

The Role of National Parliaments and Sundry Nation-Buildings

When President Obasanjo attempted to prolong his stay in office, the Nigerian parliament played a decisive role in truncating his unconstitutional posturing. In the case of Burundi for instance, where President Nkurunziza was also attempting to unconstitutionally elongate his tenure, the veto of the Burundian parliament against the president's unconstitutional dreams was simply ignored. It is also to the credit of Nigerian citizens that they were preponderantly against the tenure extension attempts of their president. We noted that those who sheered the president on, were merely being mischievous, being aware that the gambit was bound to fail. It also behoves the citizens of the sampled fragile states in this study to be part of the nation-building decisions of their states, by spiritedly rejecting the tenure extension maneuvers of their incumbent presidents.

We have also specifically noted that the National Conference of 2014 in Nigeria was a nation-building mechanism with multi-dimensional trajectories. It was not summoned for the continuation of political bickering by other means. Earlier in Nigerian history there had been attempts at the holding of national conferences which were stalemated and consequently adjourned sine die. These other fragile African states which had held unfruitful national conferences can therefore learn from the Nigerian experience that national conferences are not merely held once in the history of a nation-state, particularly the state that operates on the horizon of fragility.

8. Conclusion

Therefore, in Nigeria, Burundi, Congo Democratic Republic, Somalia and Sudan, the historical experiences bear immense similarities. The historical similarities in these experiences range from the incidence of leadership failure (elite failure), government failure;

recourse to ethnic and sectional nationalism, love for warfare by an entire generation, leadership's attraction (attraction of the political elite) to violence-prone political tendencies and definite lack of regards for the value of human life by the same elite. Thus, these variables have led to the scenario of states in endless transitions in Africa. They also paint the picture of political classes (political elites) enamoured by the illogic of violence. But in the Nigerian state, there appears to be a discernible gravitation towards a nation-building decision.

In the section on the positive side of the balance sheet of democracy, 1999 to 2015 in this country, we have attempted to highlight the features of the nation-building orthodoxy. It is indeed, a template of nation-building possibilities for the other fragile states in Africa. Therefore, while Nigeria's balance sheet of democracy, 1999-2015 truly indicates that there are still critical governance issues in this country, the balance sheet also shows that the country has remarkably made some democratic progress, particularly in the area of nation-building. This balance sheet definitely reveals a decision (not an agreement) by Nigerian political leaders for their country to remain a united nation. And so, in the post-military period, 1999- 2015, the credit side of Nigeria's balance sheet of democracy contains a nation-building template worthy of adoption by the fragile states in Africa, which are invariably plagued by nation-building challenges.

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