

NIGERIAN STATE: RECONSTRUCTING THE DRIVE TOWARDS NATIONHOOD

DIKE, ALEXANDER IFUNANYA

Department of Political Science
Igbinedion University, Okada, Edo State, Nigeria
dike.alexander-leo@iuokada.edu.ng

ABSTRACT

This paper projects reconstruction of nationalism in the Nigerian state. Literature works were preoccupied with model of nationalism that preserves ethnic sentiment at the expense of true nationalistic posture in a multi ethnic society like Nigeria. Despite the pseudo nationalism over past decades or century in the post-colonial dispensation, Nigeria is entangled with ethnic distrust capable to detail national unity. Against this backdrop, the paper is design to identify model of nationalism capable to bridge gap in the lacuna of national unity. The paper is a review of historical records and archives which provide materials for discussion. It is evident in the literature that nationalism in Nigeria is ethnic constructed which found strength of unification among ethnic peoples. Dominant version of nationalistic construction by pan African apologies fell in the sentiment of ethnic bias and priority. This doctrine or nationhood only suited ethnic ego against national unity. Whereas there was suitable ground upon which nationalism can be reconstructed which suited collectivistic posture of nationalism and spirit of nationhood. This derived from Negritude philosophical disposition of nationalism that upholds civic nationalism against ethnic nationalism. Nationhood of Nigeria flourished by spirit of civic commitment which reproduce sense of loyalty to state. The paper derived model suitable to promote nationhood on the reconstruction of Negritude or otherwise national socialism. This provides leeway for robust national unity.

Keywords: national unity, socialism, ethnic loyalty, civic loyalty, nationhood.

1. Introduction

Nigeria is a multiplicity of ethnic groups which consisted of people with different origins. The peoples of Nigeria are classified by ethnic affiliation and languages which are the quickest means of identification (Kanu, 2013). Prior to amalgamation of the protectorates, men lived independently in distinct geographic location, shared distinct culture and languages with preserved sets of cultures and ways of life (Obiorah, 2013). Men usually converged in domain of traditional rules and governments. The centralized governments for many ethnic domains developed large span of empires, kingdoms and sovereignty which made it possible to carve geographic boundaries (Ome, 2014). People were governed according to established norms and values that applied in distinctive domains. Indeed Madubuko (2008) argued that the precolonial era was concatenation of cluster of ethnic peoples who derived cultural consumption from domains which they were resident and such peoples fed on norms which distinguished them in loyalty to government. There were pointers to the truth that the Nigerian peoples were polarization of cultures, geographic and self-sufficient derived governments upon which indigenes were classified or grouped. Thus, Nigeria is a geopolitical setting preoccupied by indigenes who shared distinctive culture, values and statehood. Many writers who preoccupied themselves with the historical writings of Nigeria discovered a

common ground which emphasized diversity and independent statehood (Kanu, 2013; Madubuko, 2008). This characteristic lies in the psychology of peoples who were affiliated with different ethnic division, loyal to statehood in the geographic domains and inculcate from one generation to another in the precolonial, colonial and post-colonial epoch (Geertz, 2000). Interestingly, the transition of Nigeria from colonial to post-colonial state was consolidation of ethnic diversity in the face of suspicions among ethnic peoples brought together under amalgamation of the protectorates. Moore, (2017) posited that colonial rule was forced statehood which hindered cohesive ethnic statehood and regurgitation of chronic suspicions among ethnic peoples. Indeed, colonial government was forced statehood emplaced to meet avaricious and voracious desire of Western economic expansion. Many writers have argued that colonialism broke ethnic strength for self sufficiency, displaced ethnic domains and imposed forced loyalty (Khalidi, 1997; Newman, 2009; Norman, 2019). Unfortunately, the imposition of colonial rules triggered merger of ethnic inequality, enforced mixed loyalty and lacked coherent unity (Madubuko, 2008). This was the prototype statehood established by colonialism. Since 1914 which ushered amalgamation statehood, ethnic peoples were locked in perpetual suspicions and mixed loyalty to Nigerian state (Kanu, 2014). The post-colonial era was supposed to mark a return to independent regional government, this period was however aborted by military incursions. The evaporation of regional government complicated ideal statehood of Nigeria. Unfortunately, Nigeria has been locked in slide of inter-ethnic conflicts and perpetual suspicion in the statehood. The history of Nigeria covering colonial and post-colonial era is bedeviled with conflict of attrition and ethnic wars. This situation is an offshoot of lack commitment and loyalty to Nigeria statehood.

The creation of Nigeria state was to translate ethnic loyalty to state loyalty. This also means peoples of ethnic origins translate to nationhood in the Nigeria state. Nationhood is absolute loyalty to territorial sovereignty (Verdery, 2016). Unfortunately, the essence of nationhood in the Nigeria state is a subject of debate which triggered intellectual notions and bundle of think tank to offer immediate solution (Kanu, 2013; Madubuko, 2008). Loyalty of citizens to Nigeria state suffered some setbacks many decades now and there is lingering crisis of ethnic loyalty as against statehood. This paper is preoccupied by intellectual notion which seek to develop model of scientific approach to nationhood in the Nigeria state.

2. Scope and Objective of this work

This paper relies extensively on scholarly literature, including research-based evidence and reviews, to develop a model approach for reconstructing nationhood in the Nigerian state. Nationhood, as conceptualized in this study, refers to an ideal sovereign state where citizens coexist with unanimous and homogeneous loyalty to the survival of the state. Drawing on historical materials, journals, abstracts and archival sources, this article analyzes existing data to generate new insights and contribute to the search for innovative perspectives on nation-building.

3. Clarification of Terms

A clear understanding of key concepts is essential for contextualizing the discourse on reconstructing nationhood in Nigeria. This section clarifies the terms '*nation, nationalism, and nationhood*', explaining their definitions, interrelationships, and relevance to the study.

3.1 Nation

The English word 'nation' originates from the Latin term *natio*, which is derived from *natus*, meaning 'born'. In Latin, *natio* refers to a group of people united by common ancestry, birth, or origin. It was historically used to describe communities sharing a common lineage, language, or cultural heritage. Over time, the concept evolved to encompass a broader political and social identity, often linked to a defined territory and governance. In modern usage, a nation signifies a collective of people bound by shared history, traditions and a sense of belonging, sometimes aligned with statehood but not necessarily confined to political boundaries (Online Etymology Dictionary).

The story of humanity, right from antiquity, has in many ways been the story of an increasing contact among people. Therefore, the ability of forming groups is an essential feature of man. It could also be conceived as a necessary consequence of man as a social and rational animal (Obiorah, 2013). Grosby (2005) and Beiner, R. (2013) affirmed that throughout history, humans have formed groups of various kinds. One of such groups is a nation. Obiorah (2013) argued, right from the antiquity, instances abound of the existence of nations. This is evident in the scripture, the writing of Herodotus, the early Chinese writings, and even in the works of Plato and Aristotle.

Thus for Breuilly (2006), the nation is a named human population occupying an historic territory and sharing common myths and memories, a public culture, and common laws and customs for all members. According to Whelan (2013), a nation is an entity; community; substantial and enduring collectivities. Nation is not merely limited to the psychological entities. It has real and actual existence. Most times, nations are autonomous, in this case, nation-state. Viewing the concept in-line with the development of nationalism and nationalistic tendencies, Renan (1939) and Verdery (2016) pointed that nation can be perceived as a soul, a spiritual principle, the outcome of profound complications of history; a spiritual family and not a group determined by the shape of the earth. Some writers submitted that nation is a conglomerate of individuals, who share a common past and have derived a strong bond, with an agreement to stay together and be governed by mutual consent in future (Newman, 2009; Norman, 1999). At this point, in as much as this work will not deny this earlier definition from the French Scholar, yet it must make it clear just as Karolewski (2011) did, that nation can be generally conceived of as large-scale political communities, frequently with a specific cultural background. The sizes notwithstanding, Brubacker (1993) and Moore (2017) exposed that the nation-state was seen as simultaneously too small and too large: too small to serve as an effective unit of coordination in an internationalized world; too large and remote to be a plausible and legitimate unit of identification.

3.2 Nationalism

One of the major debates among theorists of nationalism concerns the claims about the modernity or otherwise of nations and nationalism. The discourse of nationalism is distinctively modern (Breuilly, 2006). Anderson (1983) argues that nations are 'imagined communities' that emerged through modern print capitalism and socio-political transformations. Similarly, Gellner (1983) contends that nationalism is intrinsically linked to industrial society and did not exist in pre-modern times. Wimmer (2018) also emphasizes that nation-states and national identities developed through political processes associated with modernity. According to Freedman (2018), "historians of nationalism agree to differ in their

estimates of how much of it (and what sorts of it) already existed in the Atlantic world of 1785". They are at one in recognizing that world by 1815 was full of it, and that although each national variety had of course its strong characteristics, those varieties had enough in common for it to constitute the most momentous phenomenon of modern history. According to Kohn (2025), nationalism is a modern movement. Throughout history people have been attached to their native soil, to the traditions of their parents, and to established territorial authorities, but it was not until the end of the 18th century that nationalism began to be a generally recognized sentiment molding public and private life and one of the great, if not the greatest, single determining factors of modern history.

Many scholars have struggled to define nationalism in a way that encompasses and makes sense of all the different situations in which it is employed. In general, it is an ideology in which the concept of the nation or nationhood is the most important category by which humans define themselves (McClinton, 2010). For Kohn (2025), nationalism is an ideology based on the premise that the individual's loyalty and devotion to the nation-state surpass other individual or group interests. For Breuilly (2006), nationalism is a political movement for the attainment and maintenance of autonomy, unity and identity on behalf of a population, some of whose members deem it to constitute an actual or potential 'nation'.

Brubacker (1993) and Moore (2017) pointed that nationalism is not engendered by nation. Owing to the definition given by Kohn (2025), one could say that nationalism is produced and induced by political fields of particular kinds. This could be seen as a psychological concept. The above idea notwithstanding, Calhoun (1993) and Verdery (2016) wrote that those who argued for the priority of nation over nationalism seldom dispute its distinctiveness or centrality in the modern states. According to Calhoun (1993), nationalism has become the preeminent discursive form for modern claims to political autonomy and self-determination. It was linked to the concept of nation-state in the notorious formulations of Woodrow Wilson and the League of Nations (Dike, 2014).

A critical look at the trend of this discourse reveals a fact, that a discussion which started with an aim to unravel the concept nationalism, suddenly brought in the concrete idea of a nation. This goes a long to disclose how intricately intertwined these concepts are. Brubacker (1993) and Beiner (2013) have argued that nationalism presupposes the existence of nation, and expresses the striving for autonomy and independence. Nations are conceived as collective individuals, capable of coherent and purposeful collective action. Nationalism is a drama in which nations are the key actors. Moving further, Brubacker and Beiner wrote, most discussions of nationhood are discussions of nations, for the understanding of nation as real entities continues to inform the study of nationhood and nationalism.

In the writings of Kohn (2010) and Beiner (2013), distinctions were made between the two main types of nationalism. The first termed ethnic nationalism, while the second is called civic nationalism. In line with this, some writers wrote that nationalism may also be distinguished according to criteria of membership in a nation, in this case, may be civic or ethnic (Jaskuloski, 2010). In the former, membership is identified with citizenship and it is open to everyone who can declare loyalty to a shared set of political practices and values. The latter input that, nationality cannot be changed because it is not a matter of individual choice but of biology or

culture. Ethnic nationality evaporates psychology of nationalism due to biological affinity which preserves racial or ethnic discrimination.

3.3 Nationhood

Nationhood is a struggle of being a nation; a large group of people united by some form of civic or ethnic identity (Beiner, 2013; Grosby, 2005). It is the fact of achieving national independence or autonomy. This includes the struggle to sustain the ties that bind the people together. While a nation is principally the group of people, nationalism is the feeling of unity amongst this people, and by extension fosters nationhood which is essentially seen as the struggle to maintain this unity. Some scholars argued, the achievement of the nationhood requires a great deal, for the very important element of nationhood is the desire to continue being part of the nation; since the nation is formed out of the consent of the people.

The possibility of nationhood requires the existence of both nation and nationalism. Remove the feeling of unity (nationalism) among people, nationhood, the daily affirmation of co-existence under one umbrella will suffer a blow. Yet, when people do not struggle to maintain their unity, they are bound to disengage. Therefore, nationhood ensures the sustenance and continuous existence of both nation and nationalism as well. Projecting ideological dimension of nationhood, some evidences are derived.

4. Nationalism in Africa

In discussing nationalism in Africa, we shall adopt a historical approach that traces its evolution from pre-colonial times to the post-independence era. First, we will examine the nationalistic tendencies found among indigenous African societies, where shared ethnic identities, common languages, and cultural cohesion fostered a sense of unity and collective identity. Next, we will explore the impact of colonialism, which, despite its oppressive structures, played a paradoxical role in shaping African nationalism by uniting diverse groups against foreign domination. The rise of nationalist movements in the 20th century, fueled by political awareness, economic exploitation, and global decolonization trends, marked a turning point in Africa's struggle for self-rule. Finally, we will discuss the early forms of nationhood in Africa, analyzing how newly independent states attempted to forge national identities amidst ethnic diversity and colonial legacies, shaping the trajectory of modern African nations.

4.1 The Pre-colonial Africa

According to anthropological insight, the first human appeared in Africa millions of years ago. Africa is seen by many as the cradle of the human race (Geertz, 2000). Although there are homogenous histories from many scholars which described or imagined life during the prehistoric times due to lack of written records. Notwithstanding, most scholars agreed that by about 200,000 BC, modern humans have begun to appear in Africa (Geertz, 2000). Before 200 BC, humans lived a pre-civilized life. Men lived in caves. They gathered plants for food. At a stage, they learned to hunt animals. These activities aimed at survival and cooperation. For some experts, this led them to develop language. Obiorah (2013) and Geertz (2000) pointed that life in the pre-civilized stage was marked by a desire for survival when man was faced with numerous questions and problems.

The pre-colonial Africa was marked by a large diversity of ethnicities, cultures and languages. Kingdoms fought for extensions and power (Kanu, 2013). Yet the conflicts during the period were mild. Conflicts were not as sophisticated as they appeared today. Notwithstanding the diversity found therein, extensive trading networks developed among these heterogeneous societies and northwards across the Sahara, and to the empires of the West. This is a sign of unity amongst diversity and perhaps a partial proof of the primitive nationalism. Evidence in the prehistories overlapping the prior occupation of colonialism attested to spirit of nation which was formed in heterogenous kingdoms and drive to nationalism. Such drive depicts nationhood.

4.2 The Colonial Experience and the Rise of Africa Nationalism

Africa is the second largest and most populous continent after Asia. It is surrounded by the Mediterranean Sea to the North and the Atlantic Ocean to the West (Geertz, 2000). It straddles the equator and encompasses numerous climate areas; hosting a large diversity of ethnicities, cultures and languages. Africa varies greatly with regard to environments, economics, historical ties and government systems. Colonized in the nineteenth century by some European countries, most present states in Africa originate from a process of decolonization in the twentieth century.

According to Kanu (2013), during the 19th century, the scramble for territories by European powers took a new turn as they began to make significant advances to tropical Africa. By 1913, European powers had divided the African continent into a patchwork that showed little or no regard for ethnic and linguistic boundaries. The human and natural resources of Africa were exploited, independent African communities lost their political liberty, and Africa suffered a crisis of 'self-confidence', creating a lasting sense of inferiority and subjugation that builds a barrier to growth and innovation (Ogunyemi, 2010). In the face of exploitative and ideological devaluation of the black race, emerged an interesting package to the development of African political ideology.

It is no doubt therefore that what is considered as African nationalism was loosely inspired by nationalist ideas from Europe. Some thinkers held that the steps towards nationhood began during the colonial era in the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries (Madubuko, 2008; Ome, 2014). During the period, it was seen as an umbrella term which refers to a group of political ideologies, bearing towards national self-determination and the realization of nation-states (Baogang, 2012). However, it was never a single movement. Nationalistic tendencies among Africans vary in the degrees of their radicalism. According to Nwoke (2006), many Africans began the search for an ideological project of self-affirmation and assertive cultural nationalism. Among these were Nnamdi Azikiwe, the pilot of Nigerian independence; Kwame Nkrumah, a radical nationalist and a proponent of Pan-Africanism; Obafemi Awolowo, a socialist oriented nationalist; Julius Nyerere, the father of ujamaa socialism; and most importantly Leopold Senghor, appraised as an apostle of negritude. The colonial African nationalists recognized the spirit of unity or otherwise nationhood which was whipped to neutralize and melt down colonial nationalism. It is evident that African nationalism was driven by spirit of precolonial nationhood. Prior to African occupation by Europeans, every autonomous kingdom entrenched value of indigenous nationalism notwithstanding barrage of conflicts that preoccupied human existence. Interestingly, version of nationalism and

nationhood varied from one kingdom to another. Perhaps this translated as major turning point in the doctrines promoted by African philosophers.

4.3 The Early Form of Nationhood in Africa

It is worth stressing that African nationalism, like nationalism elsewhere in the world, is not new; it is as old as ancient times. In Africa, contrary to a common view in Western scholarship of Africa, African nationalism predates colonialism. In the annals of African history, one finds coherent organized African communities with a very strong sense of identity, prepared to defend their territorial and cultural integrity against invaders. African nationalism is a subjective feeling of kinship or affinity shared by people of African descent (Geertz, 2000). It is a feeling based on shared cultural norms, traditional institutions, racial heritage, and a common historical experience. One enduring historical experience shared by nearly all Africans was colonial oppression (Ome, 2014).

It is observed that in as much as the colonial experience was common to all Africans, and there was an increasing clamour for liberation, the idea of nationhood, ab-initio, were different. The result culminates not to just a single African state, but in the realization of multiple nation-states created along ethnic lines. While the nationalists acknowledged the need for unity against the colonial powers, due to differences in their conception of political allegiance, they never aimed at a lasting united identity which is worthy to be attributed to the black race. Based on this reason, it seems difficult to ascertain if what really happened was not just a mere struggle for European decolonization rather than the struggle for African nationhood. It was quite difficult for the Africans to distinguish between ethnic and national identities especially before Leopold Senghor.

Tam David West, cited in Obiorah (2013), quoting from John Paden's classic, "*Ahmadu Bello, Sarduna of Sokoto*", in his address in the year 2002 Ganji Annual Conference at Kaduna, titled "Nigeria: The State of the Nation", recounted a short but profound dialogue between Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe and Alhaji Sir. Ahmadu Bello which took place in the mid-1960s:

ZIK: "Let us forget our differences..."

AHMADU BELLO: "No, let us understand our differences. I am a Muslim and a Northerner. You are a Christian, an Easterner (Southerner). By understanding our differences, we can build in our country".

The point of emphasis from above dialogue lies in the fact that some political elites at the point of decolonization did not have agenda for unity and the construction of one African identity. The interest for decolonization was for self-rule. But to take the analysis from a different angle, if what prevailed then, the sole struggle for autonomy and self-rule, could be classified under certain guise of some sort of nationalistic tendency, then it could be said that African nationalism and nationhood, just as witnessed in Europe, took an ethnic and cultural outlook at that era; and this could be rightly called a period of ethnic or cultural nationhood in Africa. It must be noted, at this juncture, that just as in Europe, Africa nationhood is an outcome of a profound complications of history. Group sentiments that emerged in Eastern Europe following the collapse of communism are clearly manifestations of nationalism, not unlike what one would have seen in Africa on the eve of the European scramble for the continent. Similarly, when the Soviet Union collapsed, its former republics split off, some of them facing

internal conflicts as various groups sought to retreat into their linguistic or cultural enclaves (Anderson, 2013). What binds all these groups is a common heritage, based on religion, language, and historical experience. The historical experience of living under foreign hegemony or being governed by political parties thought to be manipulated by an outside power has been a potent driving force behind national secessionist attempts in Eastern Europe as well as in modern Africa. After colonial rule had been firmly established, Africans continued to exhibit many forms of disaffection and resistance (Kanu, 2013). Because Africa had been sliced into different colonies, as the resistance coalesced, organizations formed to protest various elements of colonial rule were often based on the territory under one colonial power (such as France, Britain or Germany). Since it was virtually impossible for Africans to organize on a country-wide basis, regional or ethnic organizations became the most practical option (Archard, 1995).

At this point, we must establish the link between historical antecedents of nationhood in Europe and that of Africa - both of them began from an ethnic perspective. For just as ethnicity appeared as the primary issues in the realignment of European identity, so nationhood in Africa was first manifested along ethnic lines. In Kenya, the indigenous people lent their support to anti-colonial ideas of Jomo Kenyatta, which saw him rise to prominence and eventually to the leadership of that promising country. According to Obiorah (2013), in Nigeria, though the advent of the British colonial mongers made the people to lose their sense of fraternity, their sense of innocence and values of just and cooperative societies, but suffering together under the colonialism system, imbued with various form of injustices and exploitation, the people decided to cooperate and to work hard for their independence. There we saw men like Azikiwe, Awolowo and Ahmadu Bello working together for a common purpose. In Ghana, Nwoko (2006) and Ogunyemi (2010) opined that Nkrumah's liberation movement aims at three spheres: political freedom, in terms independent government; democratic freedom, in terms of a democracy whose sovereignty is vested in the masses; and social reconstruction which includes freedom from poverty and economic exploitation.

A critical survey on the points above reveals not a movement aimed at a United Africa with one identity and consciousness. Rather, it was a mere struggle for autonomy which along ethnic lines could as well be considered as ethnic nationhood. Yet a turning point came when Leopold Senghor came up with his idea of Negritude, an ideological debate that seeks to realize a unified African identity and consciousness. With his mastery and command of European languages, he became a significant interpreter of African culture to the European world (Sogolo, 2000). His idea of Negritude was not particular, not bounded to just an ethnic group, but the spirit of the Blacks as a whole.

Therefore, in Senghor, we saw a movement from Ethnic nationhood in Africa to a search for a new form of nationhood which is general or perhaps civic, a drive towards African citizenship. There is desire not just to see Senegal, Ghana, Nigeria and so on, as individual nation-states, but to realize "the state of Africa", the coming together of men not just because of any ethnic ties, but because they possess the 'the African spirit' which is in itself a form of identity. This new struggle for a united Africa was not explicit, and thus latent, in the views of the majority of the first generation of Africa leaders, such as Nnamdi Azikiwe of Nigeria, Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya, Kenneth

Kaunda of Zambia, Obafemi Awolowo of Nigeria, and Hastings Kamuzu Banda of Malawi. Leopold Senghor termed it “Negritude”.

5. Leopold Senghor’s Negritude

The question of identity has been at the heart of African thought for the greater part of the last century. Senghor is cast as the product and occasionally the victim of his French intellectual training, constantly striving through countless essays to erect Negritude into a coherent philosophy of culture. It is therefore necessary to examine Senghor's writings on the metaphysical and romantic explorations of the “black soul” and the quest for an authentic black identity, or the struggle for meaning says Murphy (2011), remains a struggle for identity. The concept of Negritude emerged as the expression of a revolt against the historical situation of French colonialism and racism. It was a product of the encounter of three black students, Aime Cesaire, Leon Damas and Leopold Senghor, in Paris, in the late 1920s. Being colonial subjects, they were seen as uncivilized; and thus naturally in need of education and guidance from Europe (Murphy, 2011). This idea Senghor in particular refused to accept. For him, the European education was not building any Christianity or civilization in his soul, Just like J. S. Mbiti, he held firmly that Africans are notoriously religious. This is an expression of black pride, a consciousness of one's culture and an affirmation of a distinct identity that was in sharp contrast with the Europeans. At that early stage, these young intellectuals are gradually provoking attention of scholars towards Africa and raising the importance of a return to Africa values -which stems from their common origin. It is providential that among the three, Paalee (2017) wrote that Senghor became a powerful voice of post war black cultural pride and self-determination. A leading proponent of Negritude, a literary movement based on the repudiation of Western imperialism and the reclamation of Pan-African heritage, Senghor was instrumental in the cultivation of postcolonial aesthetics and black racial consciousness. His profound writings celebrate the cultural legacy of Africa while attempting to reconcile his affinity for European civilization with the devastating effects of its colonial policies. Right from beginning, Senghor was often accused of being a racist and negritude was declared to be a form of racism (Paalee, 2017; Senghor, 1964). Superficially, there are some similarities with some Africanist strains of Pan-Africanism. However, the African uniqueness that Senghor was claiming was cultural, philosophical or ontological, not racial. In response to this in his article ‘Negritude: A humanism of the twentieth century’, Senghor answers the charge of racism and went further to provide a definition for that concept. He puts it beautifully thus:

‘Negritude is neither racialism nor self-negation. Yet it is not just affirmation; it is rooting oneself in oneself, and self-confirmation: confirmation of one’s being. It is nothing more or less than what some English-speaking Africans have called the African personality.’

In the writings of Mills (2015) one might discover that, Senghor, by developing the notion more closely, the creators of the term, such as him, had made it a weapon for liberation and a contribution to humanism in the twentieth century. Thus, for Senghor, African understanding of who they are and what they are involves this much more holistic view of the universe. Consequently, existence must be perceived to be much more than physical, material life. Senghor claims that Negritude is the embodiment of African cosmological approaches; these African approaches, he argues, are inherently holistic and integrative. They do not make artificial divisions between the material and spiritual worlds but see them as a continuous

whole. Even things that the West view as inanimate-stones, streams -or totally material-trees, shrubs: herbs and lower animals-also embody elements of the 'spiritual' or supernatural. For instance, African religion and African medicine try to use these supernatural or 'spiritual' elements. This was taken as the contribution that negritude and Africa can make in the search for a new humanism for the twentieth century.

There is no doubt Senghor's negritude follows from his view on socialism which he espoused in his book titled *On African Socialism*. In this book, Senghor tries to defend the idea that Africans have their own version of socialism which is distinct from the scientific socialism of Karl Marx and Friederich Engels whose ideas are so acclaimed in the western world. According to Paalee (2017) Senghor developed an idea of socialism which revolves around the collectivist character of traditional Africa, its humanist character and the egalitarianism which characterized the social segment of traditional Africa. Senghor (1964) wrote:

"Negro African society is collectivist, or more exactly, communal because it is rather a communion of souls rather than an aggregate of individuals. Africa had already realised socialism before the coming of the Europeans. But we must renew it by helping to regain its spiritual dimension" (p.34). With his (Senghor's) acknowledgement of the vital connection between the material and the spiritual world, an idea which stems from the general view on African metaphysics that saw everything as having both material and spiritual implications, he holds apology for that view that acclaims the material world as the only existent. Consequently, Senghor (1964) went further to reject Marx's materialism, but he accepted Marx's rejection of the capitalist mode of production.

In line with the above, Paalee (2017) affirmed that "On African socialism", Senghor argues that prior to the European advent on African soil whose mission it was to colonize and civilize "the savage tribes," Africa had already devised an ideology called socialism. Hence, African socialism predates the coming of the Europeans. The above assertion reminds us of Julius Nyerere's view that the African is by nature socialist, and so socialism is an attitude of the African, he does not need to be taught in order to comprehend its tenets. The implication of these two related views implies that a logical conclusion can be drawn that the African does not need to be taught socialism, because it is his very nature to live with and die by it. In brief, it is his genetic trait. For Sogolo (1999), the collectivist aspect of African socialism, Senghor is of the view that African socialism is humanist in form since it aims at the material welfare and well-being of man, the improvement of production for the satisfaction of all people as well as the equitable distribution of resources. Senghor dismissed the Marxian socialism. For him, it is atheistic in content. It does not capture the African spiritual values. Senghor was very critical of Marxism because he felt that its principles could only be applied to the Europe of the nineteenth century and do not reflect the reality and experience of African people.

Seeking to distinguish African socialism from Marxian socialism, Senghor (1964) indicates:

'Our socialism cannot be exactly Marx and Engels which was elaborated about a hundred years ago according to the scientific methods and circumstances of the nineteenth century and Western Europe..... Our socialism then would be elaborated not the dependence but in the autonomy of our thought and it will choose the most scientific, up-to-date and above all the most efficient methods and institutions and techniques of the western world and here. But in the final

analysis, they will be efficient only if adapted to the African situation... to our geography, culture and psychology’.

The above extract notwithstanding, Sologolo, (2000) pinpointed that unlike Nyerere who advocates a complete ideological separation from the West, Senghor advocates that, certain positive elements of the West such as scientific development, educational advancement and technological ideas can be borrowed and adapted to suit African conditions. “Rejecting the notion of European supremacy and the forced assimilation of Western culture among colonized Africans, Senghor and other negritude writers, mainly French-speaking African and Caribbean writers, sought to inspire renewed pride in the rich history and cultural tradition of Africa”.

Therefore, Leopold Senghor’s Negritude owes its genesis to his ideas on socialism. According to Ogunyemi (2013), Negritude underscores the love for everything African whether the thing is ‘ugly’ or ‘beautiful’. It is seen as the awareness, defense and development of African cultural values. Negritude emphasizes and underscores “self- consciousness” and the elevation of African traditions, cultures, and norms in Africa. It is the simple recognition of the fact of being black and the acceptance of this fact, of our destiny as black people, of our history, and our culture. Negritude therefore celebrates the cultural, historical, religious and racial pride of the Africans.

According to Mgwebi (2008), the Black consciousness of the mid-sixties put more emphasis on the word “Blackness”. Blackness according to them did not note the pigmentation of one’s skin but it was an attitude, a state of mind and that body who identifies himself with the Black man’s struggle is black. Blackness is synonymous to being oppressed. The Black Consciousness concept borrowed much from Negritude. The Negritude notion played a vital role in the pre-independence political struggles in Africa. Thus, for him, Negritude established set of norms drawn up and motivated by white society but the creation of a new type of society embodying new values”.

For the masses therefore, Negritude did not bring anything new - since what it demands are already innate. These are core African values which have been distorted by the colonial presence. All it calls for was an emotional renaissance. Therefore, Negritude was emotional to the masses and intellectual to more sophisticated Africans. It was a struggle and it keeps alive and sustains the African spirit in a historical fight. Thus, its influence is in the mind and felt in the culture. Hence, Negritude was a reality and it had an impact on African Nationalism. It affected people’s lives through-out the whole of Africa and brought to light the unique soul of the African man and the collective spirit of the black race.

It is important to note that though as an ideology, Negritude was earlier concerned with the fight against the growing racial discrimination and the injustices meted on the black race, but after independence, its racial reaction lost its appeal as new programmes had to be coined out in order to meet the post-independence challenges which primarily is the desire and demand for nation building. Through the toils of the earlier African nationalists, and in particular Leopold Senghor, an apostle of negritude, the spirit of brotherhood among Africans at home and in Diaspora were gradually rekindled. Thus, there was a gradual movement from the reconstruction of black identity to the realization of African nationhood.

6. Nigerian State: A Reconstruction of Nationhood

In the like of negritude philosophy, there is ideological leadership which can be promoted and constructed. Negritude is an Africanism polemics which seeks to advance spirit of pan Africanism. The methodology for a united Africa is lucid in Senghor's writings, a conscious approach which bridged gap of ethnic sentiment or regionalism. The intellectual sentiment for Senghor was premonition to blur line of divisive pretention which not enhance ethnic nationalism, but also a recipe for colonial domination. Negritude was hybrid for recalibration of African socialism. It was intellectual strength to realign proper African socialism and extrapolation of European infiltration of socialism with ideal African socialism. Nigeria state in the colonial and post-colonial era was entangled with European model of socialism which infiltrated pattern of governance (Kanu, 2013; Obiora, 2013). Evidently, the pre-colonial era was marked by many kingdoms and apparent coherent nationhood. Socialism dominated kingdoms of the pre-era, and there was coherent pattern which thrived collectivist relations. Nigeria has been entity of kingdoms spread across many geographic domains and predated colonial established protectorates. Nigerian socialism that predated colonial occupation was collective and entrenched spiritual bonds which bound natives together without suspicion (Obiora, 2013). Interestingly, there is process of transition in the breed of Nigerian socialism. This transition was engendered by colonial recalibration of social relations. Nigerian Nationalists movement were entangled in the trap of ethnic nationalism. Indeed, across north, west and east, nationalists were entangled in the intellectual notion of ethnic division.

Although these nationalists displayed nationalistic movement which appeared to nip collectivism and freedom for all in the multi ethnic Nigeria, it was merely crystalized ethnic movement at the expense of Nigeria state. Evidently, the notion Nigeria was nurtured and fed on ethnic intellectualism. There was creation of hysteria and ambivalent imagination Nigeria, rather than architectural nationalism of a united people. Perhaps, the problem during the period was ethnic expansionism which precluded civic expansionism. Whereas ethnic expansions streamlined collective socialism in multi ethnic state, civic expansion consolidates socialism and nationalistic appearance. Unfortunately, Nigeria state is entangled in the version of ethnic expansionism.

7. Conclusion

The ideological Negritude is postulation of African nationalism which seeks to entrench collectivistic socialism and national drive. Negritude is a model of nationalism which offers passage to true nation state. Nigeria is a multi ethnic drive which is entangled in the heat of ethnic suspicion. Evidently, the socio-political history of the country is mixed nationalistic loyalty. There is creation and entrenchment of ethnic culture which superseded civil cultural nationalism. Insightfully, Senghor's negritude was moment of passage which creates social milieu of nationhood. There is demarcation between ethnic nationalism and civil nationalism. Negritude upholds spiritual nationalism which preserves spirit of nationhood. The model of civic nationalism is underestimated and perhaps blurred in the graph of nationalistic movement. Whereas the fore nationalists were beclouded by euphoria of nationalistic movement which exclusively preserved ethnic priority; the innovation of negritude overlaps reconstruction of new nationalism which extend beyond ethnic sentiment. This is found today in the political sphere which magnify ethnic sentiment at the expense of true nationalistic posture. The model canvass in this paper is Negritude of holistic nationhood which extends beyond ethnic nationalism in a multi ethnic state.

References

- Anderson, B. (1983). *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. Verso.
- Anderson, B. (2013). *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. Verso.
- Archard, D. (1995). Myths, lies and historical truth: A defence of nationalism. *Political Studies*, 43(3), 491-509.
- Baogang, H. (2012). Referenda as a solution to the national-identity/boundary question: An empirical critique of the theoretical literature. *Alternatives*, 27(1), 1-18.
- Beiner, R. (2013). Review of Moore, M., *The ethics of nationalism*. *Ethics*, 123(2), 357-361.
- Breuilly, J. (2006). How modern are nations and nationalism? Retrieved from http://portal.uam.es/portal/page?_pageid=35,49194&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL
- Brubaker, R. (1993). *Citizenship and nationhood in France and Germany*. Harvard University Press.
- Calhoun, C. (1993). Nationalism and ethnicity. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 19(1), 211-239.
- De-Shalit, A. (2016). National self-determination: Political not cultural. *Political Studies*, 44(5), 865-880.
- Dike, I. (2014). [No title provided].
- Freedon, M. (2018). Is nationalism a distinct ideology? *Political Studies*, 46(4), 748-765.
- Geertz, C. (2000). *Available light: Anthropological reflections on philosophical topics*. Princeton University Press.
- Gellner, E. (1983). *Nations and nationalism*. Blackwell.
- Grosby, S. (2005). *Nationalism: A very short introduction*. Oxford University Press.
- Harper, D. (n.d.). Nation. In *Online Etymology Dictionary*. Retrieved from <https://www.etymonline.com/word/nation>
- Jaskulowski, K. (2010). *Western (civic) versus Eastern (ethnic) nationalism: The origins and critique of the dichotomy*. Warsaw: [Publisher not specified].
- Kanu, I. A. (2013). Nkrumah and the quest for African unity. *American International Journal of Contemporary Research*, 3(6), 12-24.
- Khalidi, R. (1997). *Palestinian identity: The construction of modern national consciousness*. Columbia University Press.
- Kohn, H. (2025, February 13). Nationalism. *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Retrieved from <https://www.britannica.com/topic/nationalism>
- Madubuko, C. C. (2008). *Nigeria: A nation in dilemma*. His Glory Publications.
- Mills, W. G. (2015). *Negritude*. Retrieved from <https://www.google.com/book>
- Moore, M. (2017). On national self-determination. *Political Studies*, 45(5), 921-937.
- Murphy, D. (2011). *The Negritude moment: Explorations in Francophone African and Caribbean literature and thought*. Africa World Press.
- Mwegbi, S. (2007). *The Black Consciousness Movement in South Africa: A product of the entire Black world*. Freedom Park Trust.
- Newman, D. (Ed.). (2009). *Boundaries, territory and postmodernity*. Frank Cass.
- Norman, W. (2019). Theorizing nationalism (normatively). In Beiner, R. (Ed.). [Book title not provided].
- Nwoko, I. N. (2006). *Basic world political theories*. Claverianum Press.
- Obiorah, P. (2013). *Exploring Renan's idea of a nation and nation-building: Its implication for Nigeria*. Project submitted to the Department of Philosophy and Social Sciences, Spiritan University, Ejisu, Ghana.

- Ogunyemi, C. B. (2010). *Historical perspectives to Harlem and Negritude movements in African nationalism*. Babalola University Press.
- Ome, E. M. (2014). Negritude: Leopold Sedar Senghor's search for African heritage and identity. *Sophia: An African Journal of Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 15(1), 65-78.
- Paalee, F. N. (2017). *An examination of the political philosophy of Leopold Sedar Senghor, an African independence leader*. Ijessr Press.
- Renan, E. (1939). *Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?* (A. Zimmen, Ed.). In *Modern political doctrines*. Oxford University Press.
- Senghor, L. S. (1964). *On African socialism*. Presence Africaine.
- Senghor, L. S. (1975). What is Negritude? In G. C. M. Mutiso & S. W. Rohio (Eds.), *Readings in African political thought* (pp. 23-35). Heinemann.
- Sogolo, A. (2000). *African philosophical thought*. Ibadan University Press.
- Sucharov, M. (2019). Regional identity and the sovereignty principle: Explaining Israeli-Palestinian peacemaking. In D. Newman (Ed.), *[Book title not provided]*.
- Verdery, K. (2016). Whither "nation" and "nationalism"? In G. Balakrishnan (Ed.), *Mapping the nation* (pp. 145-167). Verso.
- Whelan, F. (2013). Prologue: Democratic theory and the boundary problem. In J. R. Pennock & R. W. Chapman (Eds.), *Nomos XXV: Liberal democracy* (pp. 1-15). New York University Press.
- Wimmer, A. (2018). *Nation-building: Why some countries come together while others fall apart*. Princeton University Press.