Cultural Renaissance and the Quest for Peace and Development in Nigeria

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Abstract

The phenomenon of elusive peace and its implications for socioeconomic development and political stability have remained a subject of scholarly interest in Nigeria's post-colonial discourse. There have been diverging and converging opinions over the variables responsible for this, and the prospects for recovery. This paper seeks to contribute to the scholarly process of filling the subsisting gap in the extant body of literature by re-interrogating the role of culture in Nigeria's quest for sustainable peace and development. Employing qualitative method of data collection, and adopting thematic approach for content analysis, findings reveal that peace and development have remained elusive in the country, despite available human and material resource endowments, because the valued components of its cultural heritage have not been systematically articulated and integrated into the mainstream of political ideology and socioeconomic philosophy. This paper argues that launching a renaissance of Nigeria's cultural heritage is indispensable to maximizing its socioeconomic and political potential for peace and development within the context of its heterogeneous composition. Drawing lessons from plural societies elsewhere, the paper argues that the prospects for sustainable peace and development could remain a mirage at the expense of the valuable insights inherent in its cultural diversity. Therefore, the paper recommends a synergy between indigenous cultural values and external influences as the basis of policy framework for sustainable peace and development in Nigeria in the 21st century.

Keywords: Cultural Renaissance; Peace and Development; Nigeria; external influences.

Introduction

After a centenary of existence as a political entity, and over six decades of independence, Nigeria has not evolved a coherent development compass despite its abundant human and material resource endowments. Hence, like some other countries in sub-Saharan Africa, the country has not been able to catch up with emerging economies of the contemporary world. Given this developmental dilemma, Nigeria has yet to compete evenly with most emerging economies of the Western Hemisphere, despite its potential endowments for attaining an enviable height within the international political order. A number of variables responsible for this have been identified and discussed in diverse literature with penetrating insight: colonialism, inconsistent policy frameworks, corruption and bad governance, constitutional crisis and incongruous structural crisis, political instability, and protracted internal conflicts (Aboyade, 1976; Nwankwo, 1987; Ekeh and Osaghae, 1989; Onimode, 2000; Akeju et al., 2003; Oni et al., 2004).

Moreover, extant literature has dissected the cultural dimension of developmental paradigms in Nigeria (Ekeh, 1989; Awe, 1989; Falola, 2001; Olomola, 2014).Despite the subsisting discourses on the strategic role of culture in societal development and national integration, successive governments have not maximised the synergy between research and development by translating scholarly discoveries into the mainstream of policy formulation and implementation. Therefore, the lacuna in development paradigm is that the alienation of culture from the frameworks of national development has been responsible for Nigeria's failure to ensure sustainable development as envisioned by past heroes of nation-building. The ultimate concern of this analysis is to reimage the centrality of culture in the development process within the context of the prevailing realities in contemporary Nigerian society. Systematic intellectual engagement on the cultural renaissance at this stage of Nigeria's national life is all the more imperative considering the fact that the role of culture in attaining enviable levels of development in other climes has been widely acknowledged in the literature(Jinadu, 1982; Huntington, 1996; Agbu, 2002; Utomi, 2002).

What is the essence of culture in Nigeria's quest for charting a home-grown path towards sustainable peace and development in an age of globalisation, and information technology? How can various elements of Nigeria's cultural diversity be incorporated into the mainstream of socioeconomic development and national integration? Responses to these intellectual enquiries constitute the defining thrust of this study. As the study will show, it would be grossly misleading to presume that policymakers can build sustainable developmental paradigms on any template that is exclusively alien to Nigeria's historical and cultural realities. Contrary to subsisting sentiments that consider non-Western culture and history as impediments to modernization, social change, and development, this paper unequivocally appraises the inextricable role of indigenous culture in the nation-building process in any given society. Against that background, the paper submits that Nigeria can transform into an egalitarian, politically stable and economically virile society envisioned by its past heroes if its development paradigms are sensitive to and inspired by the cultural heritage and historical antecedent of the people.

There is no gainsaying the fact that culture is the bedrock of society, and it is the fabric with which elements of social order are woven together. As Oguntomisin has posited, culture is all-pervading in the life of individuals and societies, and societies which have constructed their modes of living together socially, and have organized their public life and institutions in

consonance with the social realities and values of their culture, tend to be stable (2007, p. 15). Among the most hotly debated issues in emerging economies including India and the Asian Tigers, is the multi-faceted ways in which their cultures have shaped their social philosophy and influenced their development paradigms.

Thus, this study argues that Nigeria's quest for a stable polity and vibrant economy in the 21st century is basically dependent upon the country's ability to manipulate and explore its cultural diversity for positive social change. Both in abstract and concrete terms, Nigeria's cultural heritage is Nigerian identity, and if Nigerians are to develop as a people of common destiny, they must identify with and take pride in their identity. Cultural renaissance is capable of instilling values and virtues of discipline, honesty, trust and patriotism in the people, thereby influencing their social, economic, and political interactions.

With lessons drawn from selected progressive economies in other plural societies, this study contends that Nigeria's quest for prosperous and industrialized society must be rooted in the valued components of the country's cultural diversity. Since history has confirmed that development and national integration do not come by happenstance, it behoves policymakers to harness the tangible and intangible elements of Nigeria's culture towards evolving a united egalitarian society. Thus, this paper seeks to sensitize policymakers on the need to design national political ideology and socioeconomic philosophy based on Nigeria's cultural heritage within the context of its heterogeneous composition and cultural diversity. The scope of this study is not to cover all ramifications of Nigeria's cultural plurality as it relates to development and national integration. Therefore, a few examples are randomly drawn from among selected ethnic groups across the country and used as tools of analysis.

This paper takes cognizance of the essence of interaction with other cultures for ensuring sustainable development, especially in this era in which globalization has compressed the world into a global village. Hence, it posits that despite the significant role of culture in development, no nation can experience development by relying exclusively on its cultural legacies. Therefore, this paper carefully avoids over-romanticizing Nigeria's cultural heritage in the course of ensuring sustainable development and propagates advocacy for a synthetic development paradigm designed from combined elements from both Nigeria's cultural heritage and subsisting instruments of development from external extractions.

Conceptual Clarifications

Cultural Renaissance

The phenomenon of cultural renaissance cannot be properly clarified without proper understanding of culture itself. Hence, an intellectual construct of the concept of culture is germane to this study as much as cultural renaissance itself.

Culture is a dynamic and complex phenomenon which has been exposed to heated and controversial debates by scholars and analysts. Despite its complex and fluid nature, culture is generally perceived as the total way of life of a people in a given society. Indeed, most definitions of the phenomenon have been largely explained from this popular construct. Either in the primitive age or in modern times, culture encompasses that complex whole which includes shared ideas, knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society among other differences (Ogunniyi, 1989, cited in E.B. Tylor, 1871). Ralph Linton seems to have embraced this enduring worldview of culture when he

argues that "the culture of a society is the way of life of its members, the collection of ideas and habits which they learn, share and transmit from generation to generation" (Haralambos & Holborn, 2004, p. 790). In a somewhat related sense, UNESCO (2002) defines culture as:

> The set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of a society or a social group, encompassing, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs (Isola, 2010, p. 28).

Perhaps it is in this context that Ekeh (1989, p. 2) notes, inter alia, that culture analyzes and interprets the institutions, values, norms, ideas, and ethos of society, as well as the attitudes and behaviours of its individuals, that survive the passage of time, in diachronic direction. On his own part, Yakubu, cited in Babawale, (2007, p. 8) suggests that:

> . . . for human beings to build houses, cultivate farms, construct bridges, dams or electricity-generating plants, provide qualitative formal education, manage successful businesses or organizations, control popular diseases, prevent or cure sickness and diseases, ensure social trust, good governance, law and order, etc, they need an established albeit critically receptive body of ideas and beliefs, designs, techniques and methodologies, rules and regulations, i.e. a culture.

The above definitions indicate that humans are cultural beings, as everything about them from the cradle to the grave is basically organized around the order of culture. Thus, Haralambos and Holborn (2004, p. 801) submit that:

> Individuals are born into particular cultures and these tend to shape the way in which they see the world—their maps of meaning. However, these maps of meaning and their associated cultures change as history unfolds and as members of social groups actively create new cultures at will. Cultures always relate to experiences and sets of material circumstances and are always partly shaped by pre-existing cultures.

In that regard, culture is thought of as a set of blueprints for action, as it provides a people with the guideposts for all of life's activities. Suffice it to say, therefore, that the political order of a people, their craftsmanship, their communications system, their conflict management strategies, their family life, their economic activities, and their environmental management designs, among other factors, are all products of their cultural heritage. Huntington (2002, p. 41) convincingly evaluates the symbiosis between culture and civilization thus:

> Civilization and culture refer to the overall way of life of a people, and a civilization is a culture writ large. They both involve the value, norms, institutions, and modes of thinking to which successive generations in a given society have attached primary importance.

On a general note, cultures everywhere are fluid, complex and adaptive to change and continuity in time perspective, and exert domineering influence on the sharers both, either tangible or intangible. The tangible components of cultural heritage may be seen and touched, and include carvings, statues, paintings, monuments, sites and landscapes; while the intangible elements, which can be felt, practiced and experienced, include languages, oral traditions, literature, customs, dance, legends, rituals, festivals and various skills which constitute that what gives cultural identity to a people (UNESCO, 2002; cited in Isola, 2010, p. 29).

Isola explores the symbiosis between tangible and intangible elements of culture by stressing that:

... it is the intangible aspects of culture that sustain the tangible aspects because it is the intangible through stories, folktales, proverbs, idioms, taboos, and poetry, that teaches those valuable ideas as dignity, hope, sense of duty, hard work, faithfulness, accountability, transparency, honour, and other human qualities (Isola, 2010, p. 29).

It is pertinent to note, however, that one major way of determining differences among cultures across the globe is the extent to which a particular group of people have manipulated their cultural values towards the development of their respective societies.

The foregoing seeks to provide a leeway to a proper understanding of cultural renaissance, particularly within the context of this study. Cultural renaissance refers to awakened consciousness towards the appreciation of a people's cultural heritage and indigenization of knowledge systems for national development, socioeconomic transformation and national integration. Cultural renaissance triggers critical reflections on the beauty of a people's cultural values with a view to relating effectively with indigenous arts, philosophy, languages and history. The essence of cultural renaissance as articulated by Oloruntimehin (2007) is quite revealing:

(i)   To be a movement in the direction of rediscovery of knowledge, ideas and institutions;

(ii)   To lead to a rediscovery of self-identities shorn of the denigrating images of a past characterized by oppression and denials by others who had either enslaved or colonized our peoples, establishing in the process alien rule and institutions over our continent and over our people in the Diaspora;

(iii)   To find expression in new directions to rebuild our societies and states, and their related institutions on the basis of continued contributions to the knowledge of ourselves, our relations with the rest of the world, as well as of our needs for one another, as Africans within Africa and as Africans in other continents; and

(iv)   Based on levels of achievement on goals listed in (i) to (iii) above, to lead to the emergence of leadership elites in our various communities and nation states who would be committed to new forms of social order that would project distinctive core African identities and values upon the international community. In other words, that our knowledge of our heritage as Africans would have been brought to bear upon the manner of arranging our lines, our societies and states away from the paradigms, structures and values of inherited from colonial states and their institutions.

A critical analysis of the foregoing suggests that retreat to source which cultural renaissance implies is not a mere attempt to take stock of the past. Rather, it is a purpose-driven inquiry or interrogation into the values and ideals inherent in African cultural heritage and historical past with a view to designing alternative frameworks and methodologies for addressing Africa's contemporary challenges without necessarily disclaiming the essence of orthodox initiatives. No society can record achievements politically, socioeconomically or otherwise without constructive interaction with veritable elements of its cultural heritage and belief systems. If Nigeria is to set its development compass aright and contribute significantly to human civilization, the role of culture cannot be underestimated. This is so because a common assumption by many societies is that when a people embrace their cultural heritage and

ideological worldview, it will influence their development agenda on the basis of increasing indigenous knowledge systems.

It is interesting to note that while Africans attach negligible importance to various enviable aspects of Africa's cultural heritage, traditional practices and belief systems, they are being embraced by other peoples in Europe, the Americas, Asia and the Caribbean and infused into the pedestal of their development agenda. For instance, certain belief systems associated with Yoruba culture are being embraced by other peoples in Cuba, Brazil, Haiti, Jamaica, Mexico, Colombia, Venezuela and the United States. Besides, African arts and crafts are being fast embraced in various parts of the Western world for entertainment and economic purposes. Apparently, great leaders who have transformed their societies have not taken the role of culture for granted. With specific reference to Nigeria, the challenge is that policymakers should design national political ideology and socioeconomic philosophy based on the country's cultural diversity within the context of its heterogeneous composition.

Development

Development has remained a nebulous phenomenon, often used interchangeably with related terms such as progress, growth, improvement and reduction in inequality. Nevertheless, certain distinguishing characteristics explain the distinct nature of development both in theoretical and practical terms. World Development Report (WDR) (1992) sees development as improving the well-being of people as it tends to raise their living standards and improve equality of opportunity across all strata of the population within a given political society.

Early ideas about development were hugely influenced by the modernization orthodoxy. He notes that stage of theory depicts societies as passing through distinct phases—primitive stage, pre-takeoff, take off, drive to maturity, and the stage of high mass consumption to development—which was one of the remotest attempts to explain development within the context of modernization (Akokpari, 2009). The central argument of modernization theory is that the transition from one stage to another was facilitated by free trade, which constitutes a veritable path to growth and development.

The orthodox line of exploration specifically conceived development in economic terms, using conventional measures of economic activities such as GDP, GNP, inflation, and balance of payments as indicators of social welfare (World Bank Report, 1992; Akokpari, 2009). This orthodox perception of development has continued to influence the thinking of development institutions, including the World Bank and other regional socioeconomic institutions. Thus, in its 1991 "World Development Report" the World Bank submits that "the industrial countries of today grew prosperous through trade. Hence, no efforts should be spared to ensure that developing countries can follow that same path to development."

There is, however, an emerging paradigm shift in the perception of development to the effect that it should not be measured merely from economic terms but from a holistic problem-solving perspective, as it is said to imply creative responses to social, political and economic affairs, including ecological and human security concerns. Thus, Babawale (2007, p. 14) argues that development must involve two basic processes: first improving and refining that which is already in existence and adapting it to contemporary requirements; and second, finding solutions to the new problems or new forms of solutions to old problems. Put succinctly, sustainable development requires the present generations to take account of the full range of physical, human

and natural capital that will determine their welfare and their bequests to their successors (WDR, 1992, p. 34).

It is within this all-encompassing thinking about development that sustainable peace could be construed as it explains improved quality of life for the people without undue discrimination. In other words, peace is derived in an atmosphere of sustainable development and human security. The argument here is that experiencing sustainable development by any society will remain a mirage if the developmental process is defined at the expense of cultural realities of the people.

With specific emphasis on Nigeria, the present study advocates a paradigm shift by dissuading policymakers from embracing Western initiatives for development at the expense of Nigeria's cultural diversity. For development to be sustainable, the survival of the coming generations must not be compromised as the present generation adopts surviving strategies. Suffice it to say that if today's development initiatives are alien to Nigeria's cultural heritage, the identity and sense of belonging of future generations are hanging in the balance. Hence, for the peace of future generations to be ensured in the context of sustainable development, there is need for deliberate development policy actions that will be situated within the realities of Nigeria's historical antecedent and cultural heritage.

Culture and Development: Establishing the Nexus

The phenomenon of development is not what a people experience by happenstance. Rather, it is a dynamic process, which can only be accomplished through total commitment and determination by the people concerned. This study has revealed that culture determines the way people act, the manner in which they relate to others and even the way they perceive the events happening around them. Therefore, any meaningful development roadmap cannot emanate in isolation from the cultural context of a people. In practical terms, this suggests that, in order that Nigeria would emerge in the 21stcentury as a dynamic, productive and competitive economy, policymakers must take cognizance of the strategic role of culture in their development policy actions. Proper understanding and appreciation of a people's values, norms, accepted practices, and traditional institutions constitute the basis on which development foundations could be erected. Biobaku stresses the danger that alienating from culture has on national development when he says that:

> Unless we have discovered our roots and are rooted in the lores and mores of our people, we are in danger of a false modernisation in which we might gain this world only to lose our souls as Nigerians (Akinjogbin, 1998, p. 1).

Likewise, Ade Ajayi corroborates this in a more convincing way when he argues that:

> Our planners need to abandon the imported model of modernisation. They need to educate themselves in the reality of our society in the past and how it evolved from the past. They need a healthy understanding of our history and our traditional culture so that they can be part of the dialogue between the past and the future and confront the past in our present rather than continuing to waste effort in trying to run away from it. . . . To be effective, development must be grounded consciously in our cultural heritage (Ajayi, 2000, p. xxvii).

Indeed, Akinjogbin (1998) clearly attributes the failure of Nigeria to accomplish sustainable development in its first 25 years of Nigeria's post-colonial epoch to the insensitivity of successive governments to the essence of culture in development:

> . . . it has become clear that in the last 25 years, we have failed both to modernise and to gain our souls precisely because we have not paid sufficient attention to our past but have constantly looked outside for solutions to our economic and political problems. Events have shown that other people's solutions are not necessarily efficacious in the treatment of our indigenous problems. A greater awareness of our past and the application of our historically tested solutions to our problems may lead us to real progress (1998, p. 1).

What the foregoing suggests is that socioeconomic development and political transformation of monumental value cannot be sustained in any given society that insulates its development paradigms from its cultural and historical legacies. It is therefore imperative for Nigerian leaders to steer the course of cultural renaissance by looking inward and extracting the valued and veritable aspects of Nigerian culture into the mainstream of Nigeria's political ideology and socioeconomic framework.

In his *Black Man's Dilemma*, Oyebola (2002) argues that if man actually originated from Africa as archaeology claims, then prevailing realities across the continent have negated such claims:

> In terms of invention, discovery or better means of production and the conquest of harsh climatic and physical conditions . . . the black man has made no remarkable progress. It has been particularly noticeable that since the Industrial Revolution Europe and America have remained the world's centres of progress. The Chinese had for centuries made significant contributions to civilization. And in terms of effective and rapid adaptation of modern science and technology to production techniques, the Chinese and Japanese have made, and are still making important contributions to modern civilization and progress (Oyebola, 2002, pp. 12-13).

The point here is that Africa is not getting along in development terms because its people are not relating well with their history and culture. The leeway for development in the Western world and emerging economies in Asia and the Caribbean is firmly rooted in the philosophical thought and ideological worldview of their respective societies. Nigeria has been grossly engulfed in development dilemma after a hundred years of amalgamation because policymakers seem to have paid little attention to the essence of its culture as a viable ideological compass for sustainable development rooted in its cultural diversity. There is the need for policymakers and other stakeholders to:

> go back to the drawing board and re-enact a roadmap for development board and worthy polity inherently engrafted on the culture and traditions of the Nigerian peoples within the context of her complex historical antecedent and heterogeneous backgrounds in rational interaction with the dynamics of globalization and on the underlying principles of the 21stcentury'stechnological and scientific discoveries (Babawale, 2007).

This simply suggests that neglect of cultural heritage and traditional practices have remained major obstacles to development and national integration. Nigeria has experienced continued institutional failure and socioeconomic retrogression in its effort at building a virile and dynamic political economy because it has not taken maximum advantage of the cultural underpinnings of its development process. By extension, sustainable peace and security have

remained elusive in the country because Nigeria has yet to experiment the hypothesis that cultural complexity may play a positive role in national integration. Thus, ethnic fragmentation has intensified internal conflict with the devastating consequences on the quest for development rather than drawing strength from the matrix of cultural diversity.

Nigeria's Cultural Diversity in the Context of National Development

As indicated earlier, the scope of this study is not to cover all ramifications of Nigeria's cultural plurality in view of the implications for development and national integration. On that note, examples used as tools of analysis are drawn from among selected ethnic groups across the country. The whole idea is to demonstrate the riches of Nigeria's cultural diversity as expressed in its heterogeneous complexity, which has great potential for development, self-reliance and egalitarianism.

Among the Yoruba of southwest Nigeria, the philosophy of *Omoluabi* encapsulates good character, mutual trust, tolerance, selfless service to humanity, loyalty to traditions, honesty in public and private dealings, dignity of labor, self-respect, courage, equity and self-discipline. This consciousness can be infused into Nigeria's value system to inculcate virtues of human dignity and selfless service in the citizenry. *Omoluabi* philosophy will enable the leaders to recognize that being public figures does not make them super humans and so they need to serve the people through the medium of the offices they occupy.

Moreover, among the Igbo, justice is considered the web of society. Using the complex and dynamic sub-structure of the spider's web, the belief of the Igbo is that the network of societal linkages is constituted primarily by individual Igbo persons, who as members of the community function in different capacities in the corporate interests of all. The idea is that a spider's web is a complicated network of these points. Despite the seeming independence of these points, they are yet so linked to each other that one is not unilaterally relevant for the spider and for itself unless they are knitted together. Indeed, any disturbance of one point is a disturbance to the entire web. What this simply suggests in Igbo cultural heritage is that an individual is not an island, and at the same time, the society cannot exist at the expense of individual members of that society (Otakpo, 2009).

This laudable cultural value of Igbo extraction can impact positively on Nigeria's national life in that the development of society could be construed from the contribution made by individuals in the collective interests of all and sundry within which context social justice could prevail. In a similar vein, the public space concept in most Igbo communities is construed as a forum for debate about how and what is good for the collective members of society. The public space is a traditional republican system, an Igbo court of wisdom where all well-informed citizens converge to evaluate alternative problem-solving initiatives and reach considered compromise about basic political, moral, and judicial concerns. In this court, the Igbo examine issues of public interest critically and arrive at a collective decision for the common good of society. Ideals of good governance and participatory democracy can be drawn from this Igbo political and judicial philosophy.

Also, the traditional Hausa philosophy of humanity presupposes submission to the will of God and caring for others in the society. The Hausas share the worldview of a good and respected man as one who is religious (*mai adini mai Immani*); respectful towards others (*mutunci da ladabi*); and is helpful, cheerful and generous (*mai kirki, mai mutunci mai fara`a*) (Abdullahi, 1986). A man of high principle in society is so considered when they possess these

attributes. This simply suggests that when a people of common destiny put God first and are inclined towards good neighborliness, commitment and mutual respect, they have the tendency to develop and progress. If these values and ideals are infused into Nigeria's political ideology and social philosophy, they would form the basis for national integration within the context of collective responsibility. This implies that Nigeria's cultural diversity is enviably rich and full of inspiration and vitality, so much that its imperatives for Nigeria's political, social and economic growth and development cannot be over-emphasised (Babawale, 2007).

Apart from their specific polarities, the cultural elements of various ethnic groups across the country have areas of similarities that express a common sense of historical background and cultural identity. For instance, various ethnic groups in the country have handed down to their successive generations the values of industry, creativity, art and craft, music, agricultural practices, and trade and commerce for self-satisfaction and societal development. If the government, which has the constitutional responsibility to formulate policies relating to governance and management of human and material resources, can look inward and incorporate these values into Nigeria's national life, the development process would have proper footing. Incorporating traditional value systems and indigenous craftsmanship into the country's educational curriculum for instance will infuse in the youth a sense of pride in their historical past and offer them the spirit and culture of entrepreneurship and service to humanity.

Appreciating Nigeria's historical past and cultural heritage will go a long way in invalidating the misleading and distorted Eurocentric prejudice systematized and institutionalized by armchair anthropologists and historians of Western extraction to the effect that Nigerians in particular and Africans in general are a people without history and culture, and without a sense of purpose and industry. These agents of imperialist ideology have criticized and condemned Africans as being lazy, lacking in motivation and energy or drive, or as having a laissez-faire attitude towards life in general (Abdullahi, 1986). This misleading and fallacious distortion which was a product of colonialism aimed at ensuring that Nigerians lose a sense of pride and confidence in their own culture and history (Babawala, 2007). In other words, colonialism has deceived Africans to develop a repugnant inclination against anything indigenous and identify with anything Western as though it is superior by all standards: Western science and machines, Western language and literature, the Western system of the nation-state and its ideology, Western tastes and patterns of consumption, and so on (Afigbo, 2006). This explains Nigeria's attempt to mimic Western orientation, ideology and social practices without carefully considering the implications for Nigeria's socio-cultural topography. Consequent upon that, there have been far-reaching prejudices against everything traditional, thereby resulting in a serious development dilemma in the country.

The telling point, therefore, is that to build national unity based on shared values and consensus within which context development could be experienced, culture has a significant role to play. To accomplish this task, governments, researchers and other stakeholders must pull resources together and beam a searchlight aggressively into the histories of Nigeria's many nationalities with a view to designing a synthetic national culture with which all constituent units will commonly identify (Afigbo, 2006). It must be appreciated that meaningful progress can only be made in the future when people share the values and legacies which their past has bequeathed to them. And Africa's past was full of values and potentials to be proud of. Kwanme Nkrumah puts this in proper perspective when moving the motion for Ghana's independence on July10, 1953, and says:

In the very early days of the Christian era, long before England had assumed any importance, long even before her people had united into a nation, our ancestors had attained a great empire . . . . There was trade in copper, gold and textile fabrics, and jewels and weapons of gold and silver. Thus, may we take pride in our past, not out of romanticism, but as an inspiration for the future. It is right and proper that we should know about our past. For just as the future moves from the present, so the present has emerged from the past. Nor need we be ashamed of our past. There was much in it of glory. What our ancestors achieved in the context of their contemporary societies gives us confidence that we can create, out of their past, a glorious future, not in terms of war and military pomp, but in terms of social progress and of peace (Debroy, 2001, pp. 189-190).

What could be deduced from the forgoing is that African cultural heritage is not inferior to other cultures elsewhere, and that as other nations built successful and prosperous societies from the legacies of their past, so do Africans possess a past that has a stake in their present quest for development in the interest of the generations yet unborn. Indeed, emerging realities about Africa's development challenges are pointing to the need for stakeholders to look inward and depend less on external initiatives. It is apt to note that prevailing security and socioeconomic challenges that have compelled many Nigerians to embark on forced migration to other climes as well as Nigeria's struggle to gain a pride of place in the international political economy are all indices of a development deficit. The fact, therefore, remains that the pragmatic remedy to this dilemma is finding actionable response to the country's development problems, which requires adopting tangible and intangible elements of its cultural diversity. Countries of the world with success stories have tread this path—be it in the Americas, Europe or Asia. No nation can shy away from its past in its aspiration for national development and integration.

Agbu (2002) inextricably relates the Japanese enviable level of development, which Japan had accomplished within the period of 50 years, to the country's keen identity with its history and culture. He stresses that the role of culture as both a social instrument and economic motivator cannot be discountenanced in the Japanese worldview. He goes further by noting that the same vigor and fervor which drives the average Japanese person to be achievement-oriented and successful could be found replicated in the passion with which Japanese history, artefacts and monuments were preserved and observed. Though Japan is basically poor in natural resources and ill-provided with land suitable for urbanization or agriculture, the maximization of the valuable aspects inherent in its rich cultural heritage and historical past have contributed immensely to the transformation of that country into a dynamic industrial society (Agbu, 2002). Discipline is so ingrained in the psyche of the Japanese that there is an unwritten rule about code of conduct such as shunning bribery and corruption in public and private life. Moreover, as part of proactive policy framework on the trajectories of culture and development, the Japanese government infuses Japanese culture into the educational curriculum, using indigenous language as a vehicle. This drives development in Japanese society because the adoption of indigenous language as vehicle of learning influenced better understanding of science and technology within the spectrum of Japanese sociocultural reality. All these are evidence of respect for cultural heritage which have translated to impacting positively on the economy and acted as a good foundation for technological progress.

The stark reality is that Nigeria's quest for translating potential prosperity into reality in the 21st century is dependent upon its ability to fix domestic challenges and join the team of productive economies. In accomplishing this laudable national aspiration, Nigeria's

policymakers may have to borrow a leaf from Japan by formulating development-inclined education policy that recognizes the primacy of culture with indigenous languages as vehicle of learning delivery. A country is the architect of its own destiny. Nobody from another man's land will come and build Nigeria for Nigerians, and engaging them in the process of nation-building in this perspective entails relating with the culture and history of Nigeria.

There are many areas of Nigeria's traditional life that can be infused into modernity and civilization through research and technological innovation. African traditional medical services can provide superb alternative health delivery and health insurance schemes. For instance, the *ajesara,* and *ajidewe* native health insurance initiatives among the Yoruba can be scientifically researched and infused into Nigeria's domestic health scheme. In the security sector, the o*kigbe* and *afeeri* inherent in Yoruba indigenous protective initiatives can be infused into national security measures as an alternative to orthodox models for the security agents. Moreover, *ofe*, *arinnako* and *egbe*, which are elements of native intelligence for transport, can be revolutionized into an alternative transportation system. What needs to be done is to conduct research in these areas and relate them with orthodox science and technological advances in the context of modernity and civilization and embark on producing them in commercial quantities for public consumption. If research is conducted in these areas, and they are found to be problem-solving without involving diabolical practices that could be injurious to public safety and social cohesion, they will definitely complement orthodox developmental initiatives. Despite dissenting views by antagonists of indigenous medical practices, there is no gainsaying the fact that the health sector has much to gain from harmonious synergy between traditional and orthodox medical practices. The role of the African intellectual elite in accomplishing this giant stride is carefully articulated by Afigbo when he submits that what is needed is the:

> rehabilitation of academic institutions within the black African world and the empowerment of black Africa's intellectual elite from within so that they can outgrow the apron strings of their Western and Eastern counterparts. With this, our intellectual elite should become their own masters and achieve the freedom to think their own thoughts, construct their own paradigms starting from indigenous African values and draw up and pursue research projects that are relevant to African needs (Afigbo, 2006, p. 546).

Educated African elites of the colonial era were sensitive to the Eurocentric disposition of the British imperialists against African culture and the potential dangers it posed to national development, which gave rise to nationalist feelings in both political and cultural dimensions by Africans at home and in the diaspora (Awe, 1989). Awe observes that African nationalists who resided in Lagos between 1890 and 1914, including Edward W. Blyden and John Payne Jackson, motivated educated African elite not to emulate other races but to seek the regeneration of their own by studying their own culture and highlighting its contributions to human development. Similarly, in 1925, the West African Students' Union (WASU) led by Ladipo Solanke was set up to act as a center for "Information and Research for African History and Culture" with a view to debunking Western distortions about African epistemology and cosmology (Awe, 1989).Karl Marx's submission in this regard is worth noting when he says "men make their own history but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past" (Ajayi, 1998, p. 32; Abubakar, 2003, p. 86).

Culture Mix in the Context of National Development: Lessons from other Climes

Despite the inexhaustible values of the cultural heritage of a given society in national development, the imperatives of relating with other cultures cannot be underestimated, especially in this era of globalization in which the whole world has been compressed into a global village. Additionally, since fluidity and dynamism constitute major characteristics of culture, this study avoids over-romanticizing with Nigeria's cultural heritage in its quest for sustainable development. Thus, there is the need for a synthetic development paradigm comprising elements from both Nigeria's cultural heritage and subsisting external initiatives.

In his opening speech during the Festival of Arts and Civilization in 1977, General Olusegun Obasanjo aptly explores the nexus between indigenous models and external initiatives in the process of national development when he contends that "to succeed, Africans must restore the link between culture, creativity and mastery of modern technology and industrialism" (Oyebola, 2002, p. xx). What could be deduced from the foregoing is that even though Africans have to interact with elements of African culture in search of workable models for a vibrant economy, it must not be at the expense of external ideals. This is because such intermingling if maximally utilized will result in "synthetic culture" that will serve as a template for sustainable development.

The Western civilization that has continued to play a dominant role in modern political and socioeconomic spheres has been a product of myriad contributions from within and outside the Western world. This sense of reasoning is well captured by Ali Mazrui thus:

> We know that western culture . . . has been good for economic performance within the western world. But we still do not know if western culture is good for economic performance outside the west. On the contrary, some Asian examples outside the Indian Ocean seem to demonstrate that the best approach is a combination of western technique with indigenous culture (Afigbo, 2006, p. 542).

The alphabet first reached the Phoenicians from the Semitic communities at the periphery of the Sinai Peninsula, travelled from them to the Greeks and Romans, and then spread through the westernmost part of Europe. Gunpowder, silk and the compass were the legacies of the Chinese. Maize, tobacco, the potato, quinine and vanilla were from American Indians, while steal was invented in India (Oyebola , 2002).

The point is that various stages and trends of development experienced by various societies across the globe were not a prerogative of any single human culture. Rather, they were synthetic products of different histories and cultures in time perspective. A critical examination of Japan's modernization shows a fusion of elements of Japanese culture with scientific and technological orientation of other peoples, particularly from the Western hemisphere (Agbu, 2002, p. 6).

America, which is the world's largest economy, did not develop without intermingling with other people's cultures. For instance, America's symbol of identity—the melting pot— suggests that the multitude of whites from various European nations and elsewhere fused together within America and produced a new people and a new civilization (Zanden, 1966, p. 302).Zangwill (1959) cited in Zanden (1966, pp. 302-303) declares that:

> America is God's crucible, the great melting pot where all the races of Europe are melting and reforming! . . . Germans and Frenchmen, Irishmen and English, Jews and

Russians, into the crucible with you all! God is making the American! The real American
. . . will be the fusion of all races . . . .

The lesson here is that the "melting pot" theory viewed the United States as evolving a
new way of life through a fusion of cultures, a model of civilization and development in which
differences are manipulated to form strength, and in which public schools, patriotic societies, and
business organizations, among others, turned their attention to "Americanizing" the immigrants.

The Italian people *(Italiani)* are also a people that share a common Italian culture within
which context Italian civilization developed. Within Italy, Italians are defined by citizenship,
regardless of ancestry or country of residence. Italians have taken advantage of their diverse
backgrounds to form *Risorgimento*—a national ideology that defines their common national
identity for political stability and socioeconomic advancement.

The lesson for Nigeria here is that Nigerians should take advantage of their cultural
diversity and develop a national identity that could be integrated with initiatives from other parts
of the world to build a nation wherein all its citizens will develop a sense of pride, and where
peace and justice shall reign.

Conclusion

This study has explored the centrality of culture in the cause of nationhood. The core
argument is that if Nigeria has to get it right in the 21st century and have a pride of place among
the comity of nations, its people must look inward and maximally exploit the values and ideals
inherent in their cultural heritage towards social transformation and integrated development.
Integration of Nigeria's pluralist cultural values into the mainstream of the development process
has become imperative in order to infuse commitment, integrity, patriotism and a high sense of
loyalty into the center of national development and integration.

Given the alarming rate of underperformance in Nigeria's post-colonial life, it has been
argued that the country has not experienced accelerated growth and development within the
context of the four pillars on which development is measured, namely, economic, social
environmental and political. Hence talking about Nigeria's descent into decay or decline at some
point, argues Osaghae (2002), cannot be totally admitted. In other words, any reference to
"Nigeria's glorious past" is used to refer to the vast potentials for development and stability
which have not been maximally exploited and explored, rather than actual development and
stability. When dealing with intricate elements of societal development, culture must be
considered and accorded its rightful position.

In both human and material terms, Nigeria is a resource-endowed country. Nevertheless,
it has remained at the lowest rung of the development ladder because it has continued to rely
upon Western models at the expense of domestic ideas. If culture is considered as that
phenomenon which defines a people's way of life, its elements must be extracted, embraced,
observed and fused into the mainstream of a country's national development. It is worrisome that
there has been so much ambivalence and hostility, with the attendant neglect, to culture in the
ordering of the development initiatives in Nigeria and almost all the rest of Africa.

By all standards Nigeria cannot be insulated from its cultural heritage and expect giant
strides in any aspect of societal development. A Yoruba dictum says that "*Ile laa ti n k'eso
r'ode*," which literally means that "charity begins at home." Hence, there is the need for
policymakers in collaboration with stakeholders in the knowledge industry to lead the crusade

for the promotion of the African culture and value system. One major way to reawaken Nigeria's cultural heritage is through the promotion of Nigeria's indigenous languages. A people's culture cannot be sustained at the expense of their indigenous languages because languages are the most popular medium of preserving and transmitting cultural heritage, traditional practices and values systems. Unlike their colonial counterparts, post-colonial elite in Nigeria have directly or indirectly connived with the Western community to facilitate the extinction of indigenous languages across the country through excessive romanticism with foreign languages, and by deliberately alienating their offspring from their respective mother tongues. Whereas Ali Mazrui has warned that no country has ascended to the level of a first-rank economic power by excessive dependence on foreign languages. He argues further that Japan rose to dazzling industrial heights by "scientificating" the Japanese language and making it the medium of Japan's industrialization (Isola, 2010, p. 32). There is the need for the political class and policymakers to design policy frameworks towards the evolution of national language within the context of Nigeria's cultural diversity.

Another way by which the crusade for cultural renaissance could be propagated is by embracing African values including communalism, unity of purpose, hard work, non-violence, mutual respect and tolerance. The present cannot have meaning nor assume a pride of place in modern civilization if it is insulated from its past. Hence, Africa's past histories and cultural values must be coherently organized and fused into ideals of other societies with a view to evolving a social engineering that could be sensitive to economic and political reawakening.

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