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Pursuing nation building within multi-partisan fragmentation: the case of Ghana

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ABSTRACT

Ghana has earned many accolades for multi-partisan democracy in sub-Saharan Africa. This political system has also produced many social and economic benefits for the citizenry. However, political parties are also a vehicle for the promotion of ethnic fragmentation that perils nation building. This article explores how partisan politics in Ghana is undermining nation building. I propose a three-pronged approach to working towards nation building amidst the fragmentation of adversarial multi-partism.

KEYWORDS

Africa; nation building;
Ghana; multi-party politics;
ethnocentrism

Introduction

Many African countries became independent in the second half of the twentieth century. The geographical boundaries and the ethnic compositions of these countries had been drawn up by the colonizers and, for practical historical reasons, were ratified by the newly born African states. In the early years after independence, African countries like Ghana opted for single party democracies. This was followed by the spread of military coup d'états in the 1970s and early 1980s. In recent years, multi-partisan democracy has become the more common form of government in Africa. Unlike one party rule or military dictatorship, multi-party democracy generally offers more individual and collective liberties. Unlike the European tradition in which political parties were traditionally divided along ideological lines, in Africa, the divisions tend towards ethnic and religious affiliations. Given the young age of post-colonial African states and the diverse ethno-religious backgrounds of the populations of African countries, partisan divisions often become an obstacle to internal national cohesion. In this context, one may ask, an African country, Ghana, pursue nation building within a context of social and cultural fragmentation exacerbated by multi-partisan politics? The question is loaded with presuppositions that require factual justification before any normative reasoning can be applied. These assumptions can be formulated as further questions: can a nation be built? Is it true that there is social and cultural fragmentation? If so, is it true that multi-partism contributes to this fragmentation? In the first part of this paper, I explain why it cannot be taken for granted that African countries are nation-states (sections II and III). This is followed by a description of the multi-partisan political activity in Ghana (section IV). The second part

(section V) traces a roadmap for nation building as a three-pronged solution to the main question.

Terminology and conceptual analysis

There are common terms employed in political discourse whose connotations are often vague if not decidedly ambiguous, at least for philosophical purposes. The essentially contestable character of these terms calls for an initial clarification. Since we shall be employing a number of these, I will begin with some stipulative definitions. The terms are: country; state; nation; ethnicity; tribe. Each of these, aside the meanings that can be pinned down in a definition, are nuanced with ideologies which I shall try to point out especially with reference to the African context.

State and country

A state is a legal entity which, according to the Montevideo convention of 1933, should possess: a permanent population; a defined territory; a government; and the capacity to enter into relations with other states. The key element in the definition of a state is sovereignty: 'complete self-sufficiency in the frames of a certain territory, that is its supremacy in the domestic policy and independence in the foreign one' (Grinin, 2008). As Cudworth, Timothy, and McGovern (2007) put it, a state: 'is a compulsory political organization with a centralized government that maintains a monopoly of the legitimate use of force within a certain geographical territory'. These definitions of a state as a legal entity make no reference to any historical or cultural bonds among the population. The word 'country' on the other hand, derives from the vulgar Latin, *contrata*, referring to a (land) lying opposite. In common usage it is synonymous to a state even though there are some smaller political units that are also referred to as country. Somaliland, for example, can be called a country but not a state. Or, the UK is often said to made up of four countries: England; Scotland; Wales; and Northern Ireland. A country is a region of land defined by geographical features or political boundaries that can be occupied by a nation or a group of nations. For our purposes we shall use the word country interchangeably with state even though country does not require sovereignty as a state does.

Ethnicity

The term ethnic group or ethnicity is rooted in the Greek *ethnos*. According to Liddell and Scott (1994), the Greek connotation of the word would be 'a number of people living together, company, body of men; nation, people; class of men, caste, tribe'. The Encyclopaedia Britannica (2018) defines an ethnicity as 'a social group or category of the population that, in a larger society, is set apart and bound together by common ties of race, language, nationality, or culture'. David Miller (1989) qualifies these definitions by insisting that ethnicity requires a belief in a common descent, leading to historically given identity. Max Weber (1978, p. 389) also makes similar claims. In essence, an ethnic group is a named social category of people based on perceptions of shared social experience or one's ancestors' experiences. Members of the ethnic group see themselves as sharing cultural traditions and history that distinguish them from other groups. Ethnic group identity has a

strong psychological or emotional component that divides the people of the world into opposing categories of 'us' and 'them'. In contrast to social stratification, which divides and unifies people along a series of horizontal axes on the basis of socioeconomic factors, ethnic identities divide and unify people along a series of vertical axes. Thus, ethnic groups, at least theoretically, cut across socioeconomic class differences, drawing members from all strata of the population (People & Bailey, 2011).

The challenge with the perception of ethnicity which underlines common ancestry is that, due to historical intermingling of peoples, the claim by members of an ethnic group to a common ancestry is more often based on myth rather than fact. In recent times, DNA studies have revealed shocking information to many people about what they believed was their ancestral heritage. Nevertheless, even though ethnicity can sometimes be grounded on weak biological and historical foundations, it is upheld by myths, traditions, language, culture, and beliefs that create a feeling of belonging to an exclusive group, a sense of identity, and a solidarity within the group that is not shared in the same way with others who do not belong to the same group.

Tribes are often considered to be sub-set of ethnic groups. For example, the Akan ethnic group of Ghana is made up of various tribes such as the Fanti, Ashanti, Akyem among others. In African political discourse, the term tribe is also often loaded with negative connotations and tribalism is perceived as a negative value. For example, the famous Ivorian Reggae musician, Alpha Blondy, decries tribalism in his song *Wari Banan*, warning that '*Mutipartisme c'est pas tribalism*'.

Nationhood

According to Black's Law dictionary, a nation is:

A people, or aggregation of men, existing in the form of an organized jural society, usually inhabiting a distinct portion of the earth, speaking the same language, using the same customs, possessing historic continuity, and distinguished from other like groups by their racial origin and characteristics, and generally, but not necessarily, living under the same government and sovereignty. (Campbell, Nolan, & Connolly, 1990)

Nationhood requires a common culture, but does not necessarily entail neither sovereignty nor a central government as a state does. Nations can exist within states. For example, the second article of the Spanish Constitution of 1978 recognizes Spain as a nation of nationalities.¹ Broadly speaking, a nation is a group of people who share the same culture or, an ethnocultural community of people who have a sense of belonging together (Gyekye, 1997). A nation is ethnocultural when ethnicity and nationhood coincide, in that case we have a 'group or community of people who not only share a common culture, language, history and possibly a territory but believe they hail from a common ancestral background and are therefore closely related by kinship ties' (Gyekye, 1997). Some nations are not ethnocultural. The people of Mexico, for example, do not have a common ancestral background. Nationhood can coincide with ethnicity, but not necessarily. The Mole-Dagbani nation of Northern Ghana is made up various ethnic groups that include Mamprusi, Dagomba, Nanumba, Kusasi, among others.

Neither do all nations correspond to sovereign states. The Kurdish nation has no corresponding state since Kurds are divided between Turkey, Iraq and Syria. The same could be said of the Jewish people before the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948. The Ewe people have all the characteristics of a nation, yet there is no Ewe State. In fact, the Ewes belong to at least two different states: Ghana and Togo.

Statehood and nationhood

In everyday language, the words ‘state’ and ‘nation’ are often used interchangeably. The UN is the:

‘United Nations’ yet its members are sovereign states. As we have seen, the two terms are however not coterminous. Statehood is an abstract construct of law and politics. With the exception of a few *sui generis* states, for example the Sovereign Order of Malta or the Vatican State, all others have the four characteristics mentioned above: population; territory; government; and sovereignty.

Many modern post-colonial African states are multinational: multilingual, multicultural, multiethnic. They are, in the words of Gyekye (1997), ‘a heterogenous ethnic and cultural conglomerate with a concentration of sovereign power at the centre’ (p. 82). Yet most of these call themselves or are referred to as nations. It is often assumed that gaining independence from colonial rule and becoming a sovereign state automatically confers the status of nation-state. The Ghanaian Anthem, for example, begins with: ‘God bless our homeland Ghana, and make our **nation** great and strong’.

If we apply Black’s definition of a nation to Ghana, we will see that there is room to question whether she is indeed a nation. As can be seen from the table below, Ghana would fully fulfil only 2 of the 6 characteristics of a nation.

Six Characteristics of a Nation			
No.	Characteristic	Ghana	Notes
1	A jural society, that is, one governed by the rule of law	Yes	A Constitutional Republic
2	Inhabiting a distinct portion of the earth	Yes	A defined territory
3	Speaking the same language	No	Ghanaians speak different ethnic languages. The <i>lingua franca</i> , English, is the colonizer’s and not everyone speaks it.
4	Using the same customs	No	The customs of Ghanaians vary quite a lot according to the ethnic origins. For example, Akan communal customs and marriage laws are quite different from Frafra matrimonial practices.
5	Possessing historic continuity	No	Historical continuity can be traced back to independence and just before. Hence, less than 100 years. Ethnic identities are much older.
6	Distinguished from other groups by their racial origin	No	In fact, some Ghanaians are more racially related to Togolese and Burkinabes than to other Ghanaians, as is the case of the Ewes and the Kassenas.

It is no wonder, therefore, that Peter Skalnik (1992) of the University of Prague, even though with contestable analysis, came to the conclusion that:

A well-functioning and stable nation state in Africa and elsewhere in non-Western conditions may, as the Ghanaian case clearly illustrates, remain to a large extent the wishful thinking of local politicians and some Western ‘well-wishers’ for a long time yet. (pp. 66–72)

From colony to nation-state

The historical fact undergirding the existence of many African states in their demographic, geographical and ethnic composition is colonialization and the interests of former colonial powers. Without the intervention of British and French colonizers, it is unlikely that the Sisala people of Ghana's Upper West Region and the Adangbe of the Greater Accra Region, whose historical cultural leanings are far apart, would ever have come together in a single state. African states are by and large colonial impositions. Apart from a few exceptions, mainly among the educated and privileged classes, large parts of colonial populations, especially in rural areas, were mostly subjects and not citizens of the colonial state.

A strong nationalistic spirit initially accompanied the emergence of the independent Ghanaian state under the leadership of Kwame Nkrumah. However, in less than two decades, this drive lost momentum as described by Kwame Ninsin:

From the mid-1970s, when the crisis of the state and economy gathered momentum and the nation's relevance became increasingly dubious, millions of Ghanaian citizens responded by withdrawing from the formal authority of the state and from the formal economy into a myriad of informal and other survival activities. (2012, p. 1131)

The withdrawal and disaffection towards the state weakens commitment to fighting internal problems such as diversion of public resources towards personal, tribal, and religious interests. Furthermore, it impedes good governance understood as a sharing of power in the building of a national community. For example, in times of elections, citizens misuse the power given to them to choose the better persons as leaders of state affairs by selecting candidates, not mainly on political competence, but often on the basis of gifts received in money and in kind, family relations, ethnic and tribal allegiance, religious affiliation. The influence of these factors reduces the possibility of ensuring that the most capable persons are installed in leadership positions.

Kwame Nkrumah was keenly aware of the need to build a nation, Ghana, out of the various ethnicities of the Gold Coast. In trying to build a national communal culture and polity out of the different ethnic groups, he opted for a one-party national political system believing this to be closer to the traditional African models of governance. In *Conscientism* (1970), Nkrumah writes:

It is necessary for positive action to be backed by a mass party, and qualitatively to improve this mass (comprised of different lineages/clans, etc) so that by education and an increase in its degree of consciousness, its aptitude for positive action can be heightened. (p.100)

Nkrumah's choice of a one-party political system has come under heavy criticism by many, especially Kwasi Wiredu (1996) because it silences diversity of opinions and justifies forms of dictatorship (pp. 187-188).

The underlying point, however, is that the need to build a nation of the peoples of Ghana was perceived from the early days after independence. It may even be asserted that efforts put into this task in those early years contributed to the fact that Ghana has so far not yet experienced the type of violent ethnic conflicts that have become part of the history and actuality of many African nations. Nevertheless, the task of welding the various ethnocultural realities into a people who share a value system, a culture, and

show solidarity towards each other irrespective of their ethnic origins is still far from complete in Ghana.

The goal of nation building is neither a sum of ethnicities nor a suppression of ethnicities. The nation state is other than the simple sum of the parts. It is a Gestaltic reality. It is an emergent reality of its own with an existence that is independent of its constituent nationalities. From this viewpoint, it is not just a normative concentration of power at the centre that is devoid of an empirical content. The nation state at any historic moment is also a descriptive concept. But it is not a static concept. It is a reality in constant evolution that is able to harness energies of its members towards shared goals and capable of motivating and prescribing normative standards for right and wrong behaviour in the public sphere. The idea of nation building I am proposing here is not 'nationalism' as an ideological movement that pivots its members against all others who do not belong to the nation. This would be a dangerous deviation of nation building that can lead to conflicts as witnessed in the Balkans or in South Sudan.

Multi-Partysm in Ghana

Ghana, since gaining independence in 1957 and becoming a republic in 1960, has experienced various systems of political rule: one party state; military rule; multi-partisan politics. With the establishment of the fourth republic in January 1993, Ghana adopted partisan democracy and is often hailed as a model for Africa: peaceful elections and transition of power from one ruling party to the other. Even when election results are contested, as was the case in 2012-2013, the rule of law prevailed, and the country did not descend into widespread violence as has been witnessed in other SSA countries like Kenya or Cote D'Ivoire.

This apparent political stability has won Ghana a place in the international community and has attracted foreign investments needed to booster economic growth. Indeed, in 2011, Ghana's economy was the fastest growing in the world, arriving at well over 14% (Ghana Statistical Service, 2011). The number of people in Ghana living below the poverty line diminished from over 40% to the mid-20s during the fourth republic. Life expectancy increased during this period from 58 to over 62 years (World Bank Data, Ghana).

Notwithstanding the many achievements of multi-partysm in Ghana, I would like to highlight how this political system is and can be a source of fragmentation that hinders the process of national cohesion that is a requisite to Ghana becoming a nation. I am of the opinion that a good number of the enduring challenges facing the country will be better tackled if there were a greater identification with a national cause capable of bridging the partisan, ethnic and religious divisions in the country. The absence of a firm commitment towards nation building, in my opinion, is one of the reasons why there is a great deal of tolerance towards non-performing public institutions, widespread corruption, waste of limited national resources and ethnic and political favouritism in the distribution of resources.

The very composition of the country, as was pointed out, is based on a colonial imposed unity. The movement towards independence, with its goal to free the people from a common adversary, that is British Colonial rule, served to forge a solidarity among the various peoples of the then colony. This national spirit was further consolidated by the

Pan-African ideals of Kwame Nkrumah who worked tirelessly towards creating a greater unity among the various peoples of Africa. Even though he did not succeed in transforming these ideals into the creation of the OAU in 1964, the vision of Africa as the united continent of black peoples remained. Nevertheless, the theoretical basis of this union of the 'negro' peoples is not in itself without difficulties.

In brief, the project created with enthusiasm by Nkrumah to build a united people of Africa remained uncompleted, if not abandoned, in Ghana for a long period after the 1966 coup d'état in which he was overthrown. An exception was the 7 principle National Redemption Charter promulgated by Head of State Ignatius Kuti Acheampong in the 1970s. At the same time, it must be pointed out that Ghana, unlike Nigeria, Cote D'Ivoire, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi and many other African countries, has never disintegrated into civil wars. The various ethnic and religious groups have been able to co-exist peacefully. Yet the non-belligerent coexistence cannot be assumed to be a strong cohesion towards a common national project. In fact, prejudices and discrimination are still perceived in the running of affairs in Ghana. A 2007 *Afrobarometer* survey on ethnic identity and national citizenship revealed that 37% of Ghanaians preferred their ethnic identity as compared to 25% who valued more their national identity. The study also revealed that,

There is a strong perception in Ghana that public institutions are dominated by persons from the ethnic group of the President. During the Jerry Rawlings era (1983-2000), there were accusations that the strategic positions in the state were held by the Ewe in the Volta Region. Since the 2000 presidential election and the 2004 re-election of John Kufuor, an Akan, there have been allegations about the 'Akanization' of Ghanaian politics. (Ukiwo, 2012, p. 1148)

Multi-partysan politics, as Wiredu points out, is by nature adversarial as opposed to the Akan consensual form of governance (Wiredu, 1996, pp. 183–190). In the consensual form of governance, decision making is a process of deliberation where convergence is the ideal. In an adversarial form, it is the majority that counts, even though minorities have rights, their views are at best tolerated. The adversarial nature of partisan politics becomes even more acute when it is practiced under strong majoritarian bi-partisanship. Phrases like 'Winner takes all' or 'It's our turn to chop' are all too common in Ghanaian politics.

One result of this, in the case of Ghana, is the impoverishment of moral discourse. Discourse on key issues that require a united stance as a people easily gets dragged into bipartisan political confrontations. A few examples will suffice to illustrate this point. In a recent uproar and indignation of citizens regarding the large number of persons serving the presidency of the republic, 998 presidential staff to be precise, the reply of the ruling party was to demonstrate that previous presidents belonging to the opposition party also had large numbers of presidential staffers. The accusation of the minority was to assert that they had a slightly inferior number (over 600) when they were running the presidential house. However, the real question regarding a just number of people needed to assist the president in running his offices, irrespective of his party origins, has yet to be answered. Even more recently, in an exposé by investigative journalists Anas A. Aremeyaw of Tiger Eye, the principal accused, the president of the Ghana Football Association, in a statement offered to the Criminal Investigations Department of the Ghana Police Forces, asserted that the persons from who he was demanding a dubious

sponsorship of 8 million US dollars claimed to have given a similar amount to the opposition which was incumbent in the 2016 national elections. Some members of the ruling party have gone a long way to prove that the journalist in question, Anas Aremeyaw, is also corrupt and has received bribes from the opposition. In this way, the moral debate regarding corruption, fell into the domain of fallacious arguments of changing the subject: *argumenta ad hominem* and genetic fallacies. As a result, precious occasions for addressing national issues in a more constructive climate descend into litigations without being tackled at root level.

Apart from the adversarialism that impoverishes the quality of political debate, multi-partysm in Ghana and in some African countries, -Kenya, South Sudan, Nigeria- relies on ethnic divisions. The political scene of Ghana today is such that the two leading political parties have their core supporters divided along ethnocultural lines, with few exceptions: Eastern and Ashanti regions, Akans, are dominantly NPP (New Patriotic Party); Volta and the Northern Regions are dominantly NDC (National Democratic Congress).

This may seem normal for every multi-partisan disposition. The main difference, however, is that whereas in older democracies the divisions tend to be along class and ideology, which are socially mobile categories, where ethnicity plays an important role, the divisions are static. Political parties play into the ethnic divisions to canvass for votes. Even though parties are quick to point out that they stand against ethnocentrism, there are statements from their leaders that show the contrary. John Dramani Mahama (NDC), Laura, Upper West, November 2016: 'I pity Northerners who are calling for change', adding that he felt sad for the New Patriotic Party's vice-presidential candidate, Dr Mahamudu Bawumia – a fellow northerner – because the NPP will only 'use you and dump you'.

In 2011, there was a by-election in Atiwa in the Eastern Region, which turned violent. At a gathering with supporters of the party later, the then NPP's flag bearer, Nana Addo-Dankwa Akufo Addo, now president of the Republic, said that the violence that had occurred in Atiwa was a precursor to what would happen in the 2012 elections. When addressing the party supporters, he said, 'they [the NDC] think we Akans [with reference to the NPP] are cowards ...' These manifestations of tribal and ethnocentric sentiments are not just limited to party leaders. Traditional leaders and chiefs also come out to endorse political parties and their leaders even though they are prohibited from doing so by the Constitution of the Republic (Article 276 (1)).

The major monotheistic religions offer another avenue for multi-partisan politics to feed into those factors that impede social cohesion in the country. Ghana, like many other SSA countries, records over 90% of the population who hold religious beliefs (Index Mundi, Ghana Religions, 2018). Ghana enjoys a relatively calm relationship between the faithful of the various religions. Nevertheless, it is also true that religious leaders influence the opinions of the faithful on matters not only spiritual, but also on earthly choices. The endorsement of any political party or politician by a religious group sways the votes of members of that faith. Hence, it is no wonder that political parties bend over their backs to curry the favour of religious leaders and groups. The political candidates of the various parties use church pulpits as platforms; they recur to pastors to give them special blessings to win their political campaigns; they use religious symbols like white doves landing on the heads of presidential candidates to signify divine choices; and, pastors offer prophecies regarding who will win the next elections. Innocuous as these

events might seem, they are also sources of alienation towards other citizens who do not share the religious beliefs of the endorsing faith group. What is more, politicians are morally obliged to grant favours to those religious leaders whose support enabled them to get elected into office. This in turn leads to a lack of transparency and favouritisms.

A roadmap for nation building

The question I would like to address in the second part of this paper is how Ghana can embark on a project of nation building within the current system of bi-partisanship. My approach is not that of a political scientist, hence I will not offer a detailed prescriptive exercise. Nation building is a slow and complex process that requires a conscious multileveled approach. It is not a one-time project that can be completed, attained and concluded. Like many human and social relationships, it needs to be cultivated to grow. Any achievements made in nation building can retrocede in time if divisive elements, albeit latent, are allowed to thrive. In the case of Ghana, Kwame Ninsin, warns: 'At the rate at which tribal entities are being strengthened and public processes are being tribalized, the country may get to a point where conflicting loyalties based on tribes will emerge' (Ninsin, 2012, p. 1133–1134).

Political hamartia

Before presenting my views on nation building, it is worth pointing out what nation building is not.

Economic concerns have become the dominant topic in political discourse in many parts of the world. In Ghana, this is often translated as national development or modernization. This discourse, however, is not coterminous with nation building: the provision of roads, health care, education, electricity, water and other services is only an aspect of nation building. As Kwame Gyekye puts it:

national development is clearly a dimension or an aspect of nation building or, perhaps better, a step towards nation building, but only a step, because it is possible for a nation-state to be developed and yet fall short of the ideals of nationhood. (Gyekye, 1997, pp. 84–85)

Indeed, there are countries that are economically better positioned than Ghana and yet are still struggling with the task of building a nation. An example is Italy, which became a state in 1870 and belongs to the G7 community of rich nations. Despite this economic condition, there are still strong divisions between the North and the South of the country, and the idea of secession has not disappeared altogether from the minds of many supporters of the *Lega Nord* party.

In this light, some projects Ghanaian initiatives that have been called nation building projects can at best be described as cases of political *hamartia*, if we draw on the Greek etymology which sees *hamartia* as an archer missing target when shooting an arrow.. An example is the current project launched by the Government of Ghana called the Nation Builders Corps (NABCO). The goals of the project as stated on the official website are:

The Nation Builders Corps (NABCO) programme is a government initiative to address graduate unemployment to solve social problems. The focus of the initiative will be solving public

service delivery in health, education, agriculture, technology, governance and drive revenue mobilization and collection.

The objectives of the programme are to:

Provide temporary employment to unemployed graduates
 Improve skills and employability for transition from programme to permanent employment
 Improve public service delivery
 Improve on government revenue mobilization
 To provide needed infrastructure to improve access to basic public services

Under the programme, graduates will be trained, equipped with the necessary work tools and deployed around the country to engage in the following programmes:

Educate Ghana
 Heal Ghana
 Feed Ghana
 Revenue Ghana
 Digitize Ghana
 Civic Ghana
 Enterprise Ghana.

The project, as presented, is an attempt to provide temporary opportunities for the high number of unemployed and unemployable youth in the country by training, engaging, and deploying young persons in areas that will contribute to national development. Laudable as this may seem, there is no indication of exactly how persons and communities benefiting from this initiative will become more nation conscious. There is no indication of a basic training programme common to all the seven areas that will promote national values, a sense of national identity, a knowledge of the history, experience, achievements, and challenges in building a nation. It is either assumed that university graduates already possess this knowledge and share these values, which is debatable, or that the experience of working in the fields identified will become an automatic training ground for national cohesion.

Compare this to the corps created by Kwame Nkrumah called the Young Pioneer Movement officially launched in 1961 (Tetteh, 1999), (Frehiwot, 2015). The 12-point code of discipline of the Young Pioneers was:

1. Love of country
2. Discipline and obedience
3. Honesty and morality
4. Punctuality
5. Protection of state property
6. Reliability and secrecy
7. Comradeship and forbearance
8. Love of work
9. Field craft

10. Unaffectedness
11. Selflessness
12. Striving to faultlessness

Even though the Young Pioneers Movement grew into becoming an instrument of partisan propaganda and it was alleged that children were being taught by the Movement to eavesdrop on their parent's conversations to see whether or not they were criticizing the President, and some Church leaders described the movement as a group of 'godless youth', it is fair to say that as far as nation building is concerned the Young Pioneers Movement, on paper, was better aimed than the current NABCO. Perhaps, if the Young Pioneers movement were less partisan, and less centred on the personality cult of Nkrumah, it would have achieved even more.

Not only logos but also mythos

The first of the three-pronged principles towards nation building that I would like to put forward is called promoting the *mythos*. At the root of many cultural and national identities, we find a myth, a story, whose scientific or historical truth is often unprecise. The ancient Roman nation and empire was built around the story of two brothers Remus and Romulus, the Israeli nation was built around the story of the Exodus. Closer to home, the Ashanti nation's identity is built around the story of Osei Tutu, Okomfo Anokye, the Golden stool and the sword. All these stories point to some common origin and foundational experience. These various civilizations and nations thrived for centuries, cultivated, interpreted and re-interpreted these myths. Yet the very truth, rational *logos*, of these stories cannot be proven.

Among the ancient Greeks, *logos* was considered as the rational, pragmatic and scientific thought that enabled men and women to function in this world. Unlike *mythos*, *logos* must relate exactly to facts and correspond to external reality. *Logos* is practical and logical. However, *logos* cannot answer questions about the ultimate value of human life. *Mythos* was not concerned with practical matters, but with meaning; a backdrop or framework that gave a purpose and a motivation. The *mythos* of a society provided people with a context that made sense of their day to day lives. It was also rooted in what we would call the 'unconscious' mind.

The modern era, driven by rationalism and positivism, has relegated *mythos* to the sphere of the primitive and unscientific. Rationalism is exemplified in Hegel's (1821) 'What is rational is real; And what is real is rational'. Therefore anything which cannot be rationally explained away is not real. Positivism combined with evolutionism according to Comte's 'law of three stages', sees theological and supernatural explanations of phenomena as a primitive stage in human development. Comte argued that the human mind, individual human beings, all knowledge, and world history develop through three successive stages. The theological stage is dominated by a search for the essential nature of things, and people come to believe that all phenomena are created and influenced by gods and supernatural forces. Monotheism is the ultimate belief of the theological stage. The metaphysical stage is a transitional stage in which mysterious, abstract forces replace supernatural forces as the powers that explain the workings of the world.

The positivist stage is the last and highest stage in Comte's work. In this stage, people search for invariant laws that govern all the phenomena of the world.

This vision has led *mythos* into disrepute by subjecting it to the severe analysis of *logos*. However, as Karen Armstrong (2009) states:

A myth was never intended as an accurate account of a historical event; it was something that had in some sense happened once but that also happens all the time. But a myth would not be effective if people simply 'believed' in it. It was essentially a programme of action. (pp. xi-xii)

Modern Ghana, born out of British colonialization could benefit from a *mythos*. The Gold Coast was not intended to be a nation as such. The very name Gold Coast is evident. Gold is a metal and Coast is a geographical location. The people seem to be missing. And perhaps they were not a priority to the colonizers, except perhaps as slaves. The new name Ghana seems to come from a historical misunderstanding. However, the name Ghana evokes the ancient medieval sahel empire that is believed to have been destroyed by the Almoravids in 1076. What is known about the ancient empire of Ghana, its rulers, capitals, political systems, dominant culture, is not enough to build a new myth. Aware of this, Nkrumah tried to build other symbols into the identity of the new Ghana, such as the Blackstar of Africa, the land of freedom that was conquered by the bloodshed of our fathers. Nkrumah also championed the ideal of Pan-Africanism. Even though the theoretical foundations of his pan-Africanism closely linked to the idea of the black race have been challenged (Appiah, 1993), the combination of these ideals of Africanism of a successful ancient kingdom, of independence, freedom, and justice, provide a good enough foundation for a *mythos* of Ghana as a bright star of leadership, peace, unity, and success on the African continent.

Ironically, Nkrumah's legacy and Ghana's leadership are still better perceived in neighbouring sub Saharan African countries than it is within the country. Many young Ghanaians are not even familiar with these stories and myths and few initiatives are in place to bolster this awareness. If Ghana is to become a nation-state, it will be necessary not only to retell these stories, but to transform them into symbols, motivations and even rituals on national occasions to keep them alive in the 'unconscious' mind of each citizen. Ghana could consider the possibility of having institutions that embody and promote national identity such as an independent ceremonial presidency that is outside and above partisan divisions.

Principle of subsidiarity

If the first principle seems to be a top to bottom approach, or seems to favour totalitarianism or collectivism, the principle of subsidiarity is to some extent bottom to top approach. The principle states that matters ought to be handled by the smallest, lowest or least centralized competent authority. It means reinforcing intermediate bodies within the political setting: these bodies are families, ethnic groups, associations of civil society.

Successive governments in Ghana have pledged to implement policies of decentralization. In practice, however, the central government still maintains a great deal of control especially through economic and budgetary strings. The President of the Republic names local government administrators hence, they feel more accountable to him and to their partisan political affiliation than to their communities. The members of the

governing boards of State agencies and government owned corporations are named by the president. Traditional leaders have no official place in the organization of government even though they wield a lot of power. There is an overbearing presence of central government in all aspects of governance and since governments are elected according to bi-partisan politics, many aspects of public life are influenced by partisan divisions. (Asante & Debrah, 2015).

The principle of subsidiarity involves devolving decision making to the local communities in specific areas. The central government becomes as *subsidium* that comes in only when the local or intermediate bodies are not able to perform the required tasks. In multi-ethnic nation state, this principle would create room for co-responsibility and allow for the practice of other forms of decision making such as the consensual democratic model proposed by Kwasi Wiredu which is more akin to traditional modes of thinking. These intermediate bodies do not and will not necessarily run along national partisan lines and hence will create a space whereby public activities can be carried out without partisanship. Indeed, the minority ethnic groups that occupy different geographical locations in the country will have the opportunity to express themselves according to their traditions without the risk of being overrun by larger ethnic groups. A key area in this sense is the reinforcement of local government to take charge of sanitation, health-care, primary education, cultural and heritage promotion. It would also require central government to embark upon a more intense dialogue with local stakeholders before embarking upon nationwide projects, that are often ill-adapted to specific localities. For example, the recent NDC government built modern school buildings in areas where they are not needed and where there is no adequate accommodation for teachers. The current NPP government has promised to build a dam for every village when dams are already present in almost every village in the driest region, the Upper East. If central government had applied the principle of subsidiarity, the local communities would have been in a position to choose how best to use the allocated resources. In the application of the principle of subsidiarity,

a community of a higher order should not interfere in the internal life of a community of a lower order, depriving the latter of its functions, but rather should support it in case of need and help to coordinate its activity with the activities of the rest of society, always with a view to the common good. (John Paul, *Centesimus Annus*, 1991)

The application of the principle of subsidiarity if coupled with the promotion of national identity and cohesion as described in the promotion of *mythos*, would go a long way to allow the various ethnic identities to thrive within a larger framework of national unity. This is different to other proposals of nation building that aim at suppressing ethnicities.

Promotion of soft values

Last but not the least, Ghana's nation building requires a soft power approach. The sense of belonging to and being proud of a national identity is developed through the ability to attract and to **co-opt rather than coercion** (hard power) or the use of force or giving money as a way of persuasion. A powerful instrument in this area is the promotion of the humanities and the arts. In a society that is oriented towards technological and economic achievements, the intangible value of the arts is often overlooked. However, it is the

study of these disciplines that fosters the background for building a culture and promoting shared values. Music, drama, art, philosophy, archeology, linguistics all contribute to building a thriving cultural environment. Nkrumah was aware of this and perhaps his was the only and the last government to invest heavily in promoting the arts. Later governments have tended to promote the arts with a commercial view, hence the promotion of heritage and culture is skewed towards tourism.

Values such as integrity, solidarity, fraternity, charity, cooperation that contribute to building a warm and open community are necessary for nation building. They are a strong counter balance to the alienation and social fragmentation that arise from the adversarial nature and ethnic tendencies of partisan politics. The promotion of these values will require revisiting the educational curricula of schools and greater investment in the arts.

Note

1. Artículo 2: La Constitución se fundamenta en la indisoluble unidad de la Nación española, patria común e indivisible de todos los españoles, y reconoce y garantiza el derecho a la autonomía de las nacionalidades y regiones que la integran y la solidaridad entre todas ellas.

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