



Patriotism

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Edited by:
Festus A. Adesanoye

PATRIOTISM

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The Patriot and the Nationalist in an Emergent Democracy

Dele Layiwola

*To the memory of Jacob Festus Ade-Ajayi and Francis
Abiola Irele.*

I. Preamble: Definitions and Tendencies

Most of the dictionaries consulted for this lecture aver that a patriot is one who loves his/her country and, at least by implication, would seek to serve her to the best of his ability. But one or two dictionaries, for example the *20th Century Chambers*, equally suggest that in exhibiting this virtue, one might serve the fatherland 'injudiciously'! This piece of editorialization in the definition of the term as provided by *Chambers*, namely that one could be "injudiciously" patriotic, appears, at first blush, rather gratuitous and uncalled-for. How could such a great and desirable virtue as patriotism be subjectable to being unwisely applied? On further reflection, however, and as we intend to show in the course of this presentation, Chamber's definition, including the seeming editorialization, is perfectly justifiable. This is because, neither the concept 'patriotism' itself nor the mode or method of applying it, is foolproof, inviolable. The mode or method of exhibiting patriotism is not always inexceptionable, neither is the concept itself. It is not a fact once and for all given. It is

therefore no wonder that the concept, in not being always inviolate, might be hijacked and abused. This must be the explanation for the oft-quoted quip of Samuel Johnson's: 'Patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel!' The same *Chambers Dictionary* defines the nationalist as 'one who favours or strives after the unity, independence, interests or domination of a nation: a member of a political party specially so called...an advocate of nationalization' (p. 842). Now, from the definitions of the two terms, patriotism and nationalism, both the patriot and the nationalist are devoted to their fatherland and serve her with exemplary passion. Can one therefore say that these two phenomena are same – the two faces of a coin – only sharing similar undertaking? In simple practical or empirical terms, could one be a patriot and a nationalist at one and the same time? These are legitimate questions the answers to which we shall be devoting considerable attention in the course of this essay.

At this juncture, we consider it important to make the point that with regard to methodology, this paper will adopt a comparative approach to the study of the phenomena of *patriotism* and *nationalism*. This is for two reasons. First, the two concepts are often expounded in a language that is as foreign as it is famously or notoriously international. And second: both concepts are so widespread and pervasive in the sociological application of most human communities that they cannot be studied in the confines and isolation of particular, individual communities. They are better explored in the context of a cluster of communities around the world to enhance footage and credibility. Hence the histories as well as the "geography" of the concepts are desirable across

cultures. The reach and the references of this essay will therefore include both the broadly classical and the relatively modern application of the concepts across various countries and civilizations.

The eminent historian, J.F. Ade Ajayi, in discussing the nature of nationalism in Nigeria, attempts a distinction between the patriot and the nationalist thus:

I tried to make a distinction between protest movements of patriots seeking to protect the traditional polities against colonial invaders, and the nationalist movement seeking a new order, a new nation able to compete on an equal basis with the nations of Europe; and that while the nationalists later drew inspiration from the heroic efforts of the patriots who fought to preserve their self-government and self-esteem during the anti-colonial struggles, the roots of nationalism went back to the nineteenth century, to the work of the missionaries in producing an educated elite even before the colonial conquest; that this educated elite looked to European nationalism for their inspiration and were initially willing to collaborate with the colonial conquerors in the mistaken belief that colonial rule would facilitate the birth of the new nation. The argument that Kosoko and Jaja of Opobo were patriots but not nationalists while Bishop Crowther and James Johnson, in spite of their collaboration with missionaries and colonial

rulers, were nationalists, provoked much controversy (1990: 13).

From the long quotation I have just cited, the controversy of what the preoccupation of what both social and cultural concepts stand for will probably remain contentious for a long while. From Ajayi's illustration, for example, we could further ask whether both classes, in the effort to achieve their goals, worked at cross purposes within the same polity. One could even hazard further intellectual possibilities on whether these nomenclatures anticipated the future of postcolonial nation states when the terms were coined in the lexicon of the imperial language of the colonial conquerors. After all, the act of linguistic naming is as arbitrary as the colonial adventure itself. Ajayi's attempt, in explicating the definitions of these cultural terms, further brought out the very fundamental historical difference between European and African nationalism. It is true that African nationalists were inspired by 19th century European nationalists but whilst the latter sought to settle people of related languages and cultures into respective nation states, the former were battling to coerce persons of different languages and diverse traditions and cultures to live within one nation state (Ajayi, 1990:14; Wallerstein, 1960). In this regard, our history and culture, rather than serving as bulwarks of strength, have provided the platforms for battles, disagreements and endless disputations. Ajayi's contention is that the elite have been in charge of nationalism and the nationalist movements in Africa. They had looked up to the elite in European nationalist movements who depended on their history and culture in mobilizing the citizenry. But because our history and

culture must perforce highlight the local peculiarities and group identities of the ethnic groups, this was bound to serve ethnic rather than national ends. African and Nigerian nationalists thereby fell into an intractable dilemma. I must be quick to say that religion, not faith, has subsequently joined ethnicity in complicating the national and the nationalist question.

In a 1968 essay by Ali Mazrui which he entitled "The Patriot as an Artist", he also engaged the dilemma that Ade Ajayi emphasized. He therefore found a dodgy way of defining the two terms. To quote him:

For our purposes in this paper we need not sharply distinguish between patriotism and nationalism. But one way of distinguishing the two is to regard nationalism as a more defensive and less secure form of patriotism. Nationalism might then be classified as a special kind of patriotism (1968: 14).

We all know that nationalism, or 'extreme patriotism', as I like to identify it, is sometimes a reactive factor, a response to a stimulus – it may be psychological, emotional, philosophical, cultural, political or sociological. Its distinction from patriotism must, therefore, not be taken for granted. It is not difficult to agree with Ali Mazrui that nationalist assertion is sometimes a reaction to national humiliation to which a nation had been previously subjected. It is, for example, well known that one of Africa's highest indices of humiliation, in spite of her ancestry and trade with the rest of the world, is how it has

been unable to develop an established system or order of alphabets peculiar to her for the recording of her own history prior to the 20th century. The other factors would include slavery and the scourge of colonialism in the course of her historical and political evolution. There has always been a profound unease and perplexity about our place and status in the context and hierarchy of the wider world.

For our national elite, therefore, there consequently arose the additional imperative of safeguarding their African identity in the context of a new nation based on cosmopolitan European values on which our social, political, legal and cultural institutions are now being fashioned. This was, for instance, a major concern of the Negritude movement, of Pan Africanism, and the focus of such literary works as Camara Laye's *The African Child* (1953), *The Radiance of the King* (1954), Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958), Wole Soyinka's *Dance of the Forests* (1960), *The Lion and the Jewel* (1963), Cheikh Hamidou Kane's *Ambiguous Adventure* (1963) and a host of others. It is also worth noting that the landmark effusions of these contemplative literary works have in turn generated their philosophical counterparts in such works as Alexis Kagame's *La Philosophie bantu-rwandaise de l'etre* (1956, 1976), Cheikh Anta Diop's *The Cultural Unity of Black Africa* (1959), Paulin Hountondji's *Sur la "philosophie africaine": critique de l'ethnophilosophie*, later translated as *African Philosophy: Myth and Reality* (1976, 1996), Kwame Gyekye's *An Essay on African Philosophical Thought: The Akan Conceptual Scheme* (1987), *African Cultural Values: An Introduction* (1996).

Sometimes the philosophical texts are critical repartees and bristling exchanges across epistemological and ideological frontiers but they have helped to establish the kind of healthy intellectual dialogues necessary for the development of a postcolonial academy and its attendant theory of knowledge production. Taken together, they constitute a tradition and a corpus which have helped in the understanding of the depth and the crises of consciousness that had plagued the African elite in colonialism and its aftermath. It is in fact now clearer that the real crisis was not the loss of geographical territories and human dignity alone; it has been compounded by the loss of authentic tongues, voices and critical consciousness. In particular, the consciousness of self-worth, self-apprehension and self-esteem in our private and public lives. In essence, we have suffered the attenuation of a collective identity, the loss of a moral public order complete with the collaterals of philosophical and material heritage. Indeed, our country, Nigeria, has a deep-seated problem of a public moral order. For this failure to be remedied we must rise up to our intellectual responsibility in the re-engineering of the knowledge and education industry and its rearguard intellectual arsenal as enshrined in our institutions, academies and research apparatus. This, hopefully, will in no distant future re-establish the intellectual and ethical foundations of our society prior to the inception of slavery and colonialism.

It is true that the identity crisis that the nationalist elite have suffered continues to percolate the entire gamut of society, even if a few may have successfully resolved that crisis in their personal lives. In resolving the conflict between our

indigenous values and the foreign values that modernity has foisted on us, we must take confident, definitive and bold steps. This, in my view, will involve four things:

- i. There must be a process of genuine mental decolonization which will dispel the inferiority complex deeply ingrained in our psyche.
- ii. There must be a transformational process of cultural education and re-orientation so that the teaching of our indigenous languages, traditional African medicine (TAM), our flora, fauna and ecosphere take pre-eminence in our value and material formations.
- iii. We must imbibe a Pan-Africanist orientation which believes in the integral transformation of our public and institutional moral order.
- iv. We must now passionately invest in our formal and informal educational and research institutions without which we can not hope to survive in the modern world.

Without these four parameters in place, no nation in Africa (and, indeed, in other emergent democracies of the world) could expect to take any significant developmental strides, no matter her demographic or geographical value. Whatever resources or endowments she has will be appropriated by one or the other of the more developed nations. This is a key determinant of the crisis of cultural identity that continues to plague us.

It is worth noting at this point that the different crises of nationalism and the nation-state in our country Nigeria (and in much of Africa) always manifest as conflicts, disputations and fratricidal wars, sometimes over scarce or sometimes abundant material resources. While these crises continue to enjoy wide media attention, they are in actual fact virulent symptoms of profound elite decadence and identity deficiency. A different version of the kind of ferment that led to our first and only civil war had a recent resurgence in our national life and our rather fragile democracy. This is the form of our elite gladiators giving mutual ultimatums and threatening to dismember the nation over our heads. One side claimed ownership of Nigeria's entire landscape while the other set claimed ownership of the entire resources under the same landscape. They are at daggers drawn. Each side had set the date of our national independence from colonial rule for the dismemberment of the nation. So where are the rest of us to go - the sea or the desert? These are identity peddlers, irredentists of the postcolonial state, victims of severe national identity crisis. This is how David Laitin represents this embattled group:

Usually, people's identities change with the level of aggregation: within their community, they may identify themselves on the basis of socio-economic backgrounds; within their country, outside of their community, they may identify themselves with a brand of politics; and outside of their country, they may identify themselves with their nation. All societies – perhaps especially today – have cultural entrepreneurs who offer new identity categories

(racial, sexual and regional), hoping to find “buyers”. If their product sells, these entrepreneurs become leaders of newly formed ethnic, cultural, religious, or other forms of identity groups (Laitin, 1998: 23).

David Laitin’s commodification of the intangible here reminds one of a conceptual parable from an 1892 play by W.B. Yeats, *The Countess Cathleen*, where people’s souls are canvassed to buyers for pecuniary gains in the prevailing condition of famine and threat to human survival. It is clear from the definitions of Samuel Johnson, Jacob Ade-Ajayi, David Laitin as well as the *20th Century Chambers Dictionary* that a patriot or a nationalist could serve his/her fatherland irresponsibly and, in so doing, lapse into recidivism, merely seeking to reclaim territories and fight battles beyond legitimate boundaries. Unless the postcolonial identity crisis is resolved, there is bound to be a recurrence of the throwback atavism of elites caught between the ideals of patriotism and the injudicious or irresponsible use of nationalism within their nation states. In a very controversial experimental novel, *The Trial of Christopher Okigbo*, Ali Mazrui has attempted to put Christopher Okigbo on trial for sacrificing the role of an artist and poet for that of a soldier and combatant on the Biafran war front. This is how Ali Mazrui presents his charges:

In the novel, I put Okigbo, a Nigerian poet, on trial on two charges. The first charge was the more obvious political one – that he had subordinated the ideal of Nigeria to the vision

of Biafra. The second charge was that Okigbo had decided that he was an Ibo [*sic*] first and an artist second (1971: xiv).

Ali Mazrui's position is that Okigbo had betrayed his art and his patriotism for his nationalistic vision. Mazrui, in our view, rightly conceives of the true artist and humanist as truly larger than life and an inspirational motivator and creator of enduring values. Is it right to put aside the calling of the poet and patriot and carry the gun for a cause in which one passionately believes? Can the principles of patriotism be sacrificed on the altar of nationalism? Was Christopher Okigbo justified to go to war after his warning of an impending war had not been heeded? If Okigbo had survived the war, the debate might have taken a different dimension since he would then be around to answer the charges by himself. I doubt that any of us is qualified to be his advocate since we have no access to what his thinking on the matter was. As it turns out, however, 'the death of Okigbo was a fusion of the personal and the social, the private and the public, the poetic and the political' (1971: x; Cf. Soyinka, 2006; Osofisan, 2011: 207). A satisfactory resolution of this controversy has remained elusive to date. It is most likely that Ali Mazrui himself did not believe that the strength of his argumentation was enough to settle the matter once and for all .

One other dimension of the matter is worth exploring, and this we shall do by returning to Samuel Johnson (1709–84), the English poet, essayist, moralist and lexicographer. In his essay, "The Patriot", which he addressed to the electors of

Great Britain in 1774, he provided a dictionary definition of the term, among other expositions:

A patriot is he whose public conduct is regulated by one single motive, the love of his country; who, as an agent in parliament, has for himself, neither hope nor fear, neither kindness nor resentment, but refers everything to the common interest.

Samuel Johnson presents all kinds of scenarios illustrating that in the event of war and rivalry between Britain and France, a patriot must show objectivity irrespective of the side to which he/she belongs. He regards patriotism as a great and inviolable virtue of the highest kind even as he grants a caveat that suggests that even this quality is subject to ideological variance and foibles. He succinctly observes that “A patriot is necessarily and invariably a lover of the people. But even this mark may sometimes deceive us.” He then proceeds in a somewhat bathetic tone as follows:

No man can reasonably be thought a lover of his country, for roasting an ox, or burning a boot, or attending the meeting at Mile-end, or registering his name in the lumber troop. He may, among the drunkards, be a hearty fellow, and among sober handicraftsmen, a freespoken gentleman; but he must have some better distinction before he is a patriot.

In Johnson’s presentation, the rabble rouser or the rancorous trade unionist is to be excluded from the list of

patriots. He upholds a patriot as the purveyor of a high moral order and integrity, as he shows in the following lines:

If the candidate of patriotism endeavours to infuse right opinions into the higher ranks, and by their influence, to regulate the lower; if he consorts chiefly with the wise, the temperate, the regular, and the virtuous, his love of the people may be rational and honest. But if his first or principal application be to the indigent, who are always inflammable; to the weak, who are naturally suspicious; to the ignorant, who are easily misled; and to the profligate, who have no hope but from mischief and confusion; let his love of the people be no longer boasted.

It is clear that Johnson considers patriotism an elitist value and an index of class differentiation. This partly explains why a large chunk of western political philosophy is traceable to the gentry. There is no doubt that Johnson intends to impact every stratum of society, including the conduct and ethics of parliament as well as the judiciary. One final quote from Johnson and we move on to other considerations:

A true patriot is no lavish promiser: he undertakes not to shorten parliaments; to repeal laws; or to change the mode of representation, transmitted by our ancestors; he knows that futurity is not in his power and that all times are not alike favourable to change....

Thus the nation was insulted with a mock election, and the parliament was filled with spurious representatives; one of the most important claims, that of right to seat in the supreme council of the kingdom, was debated in jest, and no man could be confident of success from the justice of his cause.

Samuel Johnson demonstrates a true grasp of history, literary incisiveness and a significant conservative bent in politics similar to that of the classical philosopher, Plato, excepting that he did not ban poets and dreamers from his own ideal republic. The critical crosscurrent in Johnson's modes and methods clearly establishes Ade Ajayi's subtle point that patriots often seek to protect traditional polities, and, for that reason, would tend to be conservative, whilst, on the other hand, nationalists tend to seek a new order and a new nation. However, Johnson's cross-referencing with British martial and political rivals, America and France, shows that the two concepts often intersect and are quiet frequently interchangeable.

II Philosophical Interventions

Lord Bertrand Russell (1872–1970), that exceptional British philosopher, has further crystallized our intellectual understanding of these mercurial concepts in his encyclopedic documentation and analysis of western philosophy and culture (1946, 1984). Russell's monumental work on western philosophy spans three major epochs in seventy-six movements in the works of over forty thinkers. The work is a humanistic masterpiece not only because it

creates a broad historical tapestry but also because, through philosophy and science, the author imparts an internal logic that makes the basis of comparative study invaluable. It seems to me that the present subject of study on patriotism and nationalism throws light on the ideals of social cohesion and the duty of the individual in a community or the nation state. Among the Greeks, it would be within the city state. Social cohesion, as established in monarchies, tends to result in strong kingdoms and nations though there has to be a balance in the liberty that the individual enjoys such that initiatives and differences are not completely stifled. Extreme individualism creates disunity and allows for external influences and contests. This is an underlying, though subtle, phenomenon in the definitions that Ade Ajayi gave for the respective concepts of patriotism and nationalism. The patriot continues to seek the preservation of a national and collective heritage whilst the nationalist creates an elitism of some sort in which he projects an overriding sectionalist interest. This tension, as we see from very early in the history of state formation, has always been a factor of human history, so our country is not, by any means, an exception. It has, in fact, led to a civil war and might have put an end to the colonialist invention called Nigeria. It is obvious that lack of strong principles and institutions undergirded by adherence to the rule of law is still a major challenge in our method of state creation. For this reason, our elites and nationalists are often half-baked and intellectually unfledged. Some of them are no more than empty moneybags seeking fulfilment in gaudy materialist pursuits without thinking their motives through. In essence, we need more thinkers and more philosophers. As Bertrand Russell has lucidly expressed the matter:

Social cohesion is a necessity, and mankind has never yet succeeded in enforcing cohesion by merely rational arguments. Every community is exposed to two opposite dangers; ossification through too much discipline and reverence for tradition, on the one hand; on the other hand, dissolution or subjection to foreign conquest, through the growth of an individualism and personal independence that makes cooperation impossible (1984: 22).

Russell's prescription is the doctrine of liberalism which is an effort to fabricate or distil a social order not based on irrational dogma but insuring stability whilst avoiding such restraints as may inhibit the coalescence and preservation of the community. This, roughly in the language of modern transformation studies, would be called *communitalism*.

In the discussion of the state as a commonwealth, we shall like to offer some brief comments on Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan* (1652, 1972), a publication which also comes under Russell's scalpel. Hobbes, of course, believes that all men are essentially selfish and that men enter into the contract of state formation only to avoid anarchy. This, I believe, is quite true for my compatriots as they are to this day. Were Hobbes to be Nigerian or African, he could not have found a better nation for his intellectual experimentation. Hobbes believes that in politics there are two major questions: one appertains to the form of the state, the other to the extent of its powers in relation to its citizens and subjects. For him the best form of governance is the monarchy but he is careful to say that a man should not

submit to a sovereign who cannot protect him and, by extension, that cannot feed him or provide for him. Hobbes recognizes that there are two dangers facing a community or a commonwealth – those of despotism and anarchy. These are analogous to the tension to which we earlier referred except that they slightly differ from that between patriots and nationalists. One is systemic and the other technical. Hobbes's undue support for the state is due mainly to his fear of anarchy. But it is quite clear that a nation may be so chaotic that temporary anarchy would be a most welcome panacea to its woes. As examples: Nigeria of 1966; Rwanda of 1996; or, much farther afield, France of 1789 or Russia of 1917.

Russell's two major criticisms of Hobbes are, in our view, eminently valid. Hobbes's concern for the monolithic state hardly makes a distinction between the different classes in society as if the interests of all citizens and subjects are the same. This Karl Marx has recognized as the impetus for social change. The other limitation in Hobbes's philosophy is his lack of attention to the relationship between international states, except only in relation to war and conquest. In *Leviathan*, he sees the different nations as being in a state of nature and constantly warring against one another. Russell is, therefore, right in observing that as long as distinct national states exist and constantly war against one another, then that will always be a recipe for a holocaust or the destruction of the human race (1984: 541).

III Literary Exegesis

We like to turn our attention at this point to the literary and dramatic exploration of the concept of patriotism and

nationalism in the art and craft of a few classical writers—some Greek dramatists and Shakespeare - to see what cultural and intellectual dimensions emerge from the tension generated by the two concepts as presented in their works. There is no better place to examine the psychology, the motives and the human elements of society than in plots and characterization of fiction. We begin, naturally enough, with the Greeks who, incidentally, lived in traditional societies somewhat similar to what we have in present-day Nigeria and much of Africa. This should offer some comparative advantage in the understanding we seek regarding these social and cultural concepts.

To graphically illustrate the twin concepts of patriotism and nationalism as exemplified in the royal house of Thebes, I summarize three thematically related and historically contiguous plays: Sophocles' *Antigone* (440BC), *Oedipus at Colonus* (401BC) and Aeschylus' *Seven Against Thebes* (467BC). The three plays actually constitute a triptych, so I shall summarize them to abstract the sequence of their historical and dramaturgic details. After the tragedy of *Oedipus the King* written about 430BC, Oedipus was exiled from Thebes and moved with his four children to the neighbouring city of Colonus. His brother-in-law, Creon, became the regent of Thebes. His two male children, Eteocles and Polyneices, both heirs to the Theban throne, were to alternate the title to the throne starting with the elder, Eteocles. However, when it came to the turn of Polyneices to rule, Eteocles refused to vacate the throne. A protracted conflict ensued and the younger brother enlisted the support of six warriors from Argos in support of his expedition against Thebes, his fatherland. Both brothers

died in the war and Creon once again became the regent. He, thereafter, enacted a decree that Eteocles who successfully defended the city would be granted honourable burial whilst Polyneices who led an invading army of the Argive against his city should be left to rot in the fields, stripped of all funerary honour. Anyone who contravened the decree not to bury Polyneices was condemned to death. However, their younger sister, Antigone, who had, with her elder sister, Ismene, heroically looked after Oedipus, their father, was as committed to family honour as she loved her city. She was therefore torn between the virtues of civic and filial duties as well as family honour. She chose to bury her brother damning the consequences. Even though she was engaged to be married to Haemon, Creon's son, the law took its course. She was martyred. Her fiancé, in sympathy, committed suicide. Eurydice, Creon's wife and Antigone's prospective mother-in-law, heartbroken, also killed herself. Now, this Greek tragedy has prompted so many questions, especially in regard to the strength of its choric and dramatic characterization. Some of the questions are as follows:

- i. Were the two brothers who inherited their father's throne patriots or nationalists? Were they pressing the love of their country or were they ideological egoists?
- ii. Should a patriot uphold the force of arms to defend a principle or an ideal either against or in support of his fatherland, as the two protagonists did?
- iii. In seemingly upholding the law against the general principles of culture as Creon, the

- Theban regent, did against Polyneices and Antigone, was he a patriot or a nationalist?
- iv. Where should the line be drawn between adherence to individual principles and the laws upheld by one's commonwealth?
 - v. Is it possible for a conscientious objector to be a patriot?
 - vi. Does patriotism flourish better in a federation or in an oligarchy?

As far back as the 5th Century BC, these issues were already being debated in the human communities and the commonwealth of the time — just as much as we are doing now.

Having discussed the Greeks, we now turn to a comparative example in the Roman state of the same period which Shakespeare subsequently adapted for the Elizabethan stage. This is the story of the legendary Roman patrician and soldier, Gaius Marcius Coriolanus. Coriolanus loved his country and had led her through notable military expeditions and exploits. Like all tragic heroes, however, he had his character flaws. He was short-tempered and overbearing towards persons of lower status or social class. He somehow fell foul of the law of the land and was exiled from his nation state. He later led the Volscian army to march on the gates of Rome. He was subsequently dissuaded from occupying the city by his mother, Volumnia, and his wife, Virgilia. Though some other authorities named his mother as Veturia and his wife as Volumnia, this is of very little consequence in the present context. The question then arises, as Shakespeare clearly

intends it to be asked in the play: Could Coriolanus, a man obviously caught in the web of patriotism and nationalism, truly march, with the Volscian army, on Rome, his city? It is clear that Coriolanus has violated the boundaries of patriotism and might have re-defined the concept of nationalism in his futile attempt to merge two historically disparate civilizations and cultures after an ill-conceived campaign. Besides, to preside over the senators, patricians, plebeians of both culturally and historically diverse states might have presented a classic study of statecraft, state making and chivalry in the 5th century BC. In addition, it might have been a classic representation of what we referred to earlier on as the recidivist temptation for the patriot or the nationalist to render injudicious service to his fatherland.

IV Beyond Peter Ekeh's Two Publics

We consider it useful at this point in the lecture to examine Peter Ekeh's 1975 path-breaking concept of what he dubbed "the two publics in Africa." The article has been somewhat over-referenced — but rightly so, I believe. The colonial or vassal state is bound to regurgitate this principle where a citizen's loyalty is always at cross purposes between two publics in a nation-state. The first or primary public will always be one's kith and kin while the civic public is the public service or government to which one owes a secondary allegiance. Corruption festers because when a public servant steals public funds to satisfy his/her relations, friends or lovers, nepotism is always available to protect the offending officer whose loyalty will be first to his/her ethnicity or kinsmen and, then, to the larger amorphous nation of which he/she is an artificial citizen by

colonial fiat. The two publics are hardly congruent and one is preferred to the other. As the saying goes: 'Government work is servitude; the labourer must feather his own nest!' In traditional Yoruba parlance: *'Oṣise ijoba fī ara e s'ofa'*. To escape or abridge Ekeh's ingenious classification, you will have to make yourself a trader or a contractor where you can assuage your conscience by showing loyalty to one of the two publics at a time rather than sharing your loyalty between the two. The resolution of Peter Ekeh's typology has, in our peculiar context, put both patriotism and nationalism beyond redemption; rather, a new form of pan-Africanism will have to be constructed such that the identity crisis is resolved by the individual in a new form of individualism. Public morality helps but it falters in the face of mob pressure, primitive acquisition, conspicuous consumption and spiritual or intellectual poverty or decay.

The eradication of one public or the establishment of many publics is necessary in the context of a new nationalism. The atavistic obverse is easily found in the resort to renegade religiosity or blatant terror as in kidnapping or massacres. In line with Johnson's witticism, the renegade or scoundrel will always claim to be a patriot under a faith-based or 'ritualistic' ideology. Ekeh argues that the primordial public has its seat and identity in ethnicity. The individual seeks to materially endow his ethnic group or his primordial public in return for "intangible immaterial benefits in the form of identity or psychological security" (1975: 107). The implication of this is that the state itself as an institution is hardly strong enough to give moral and psychological security to its members, hence their having to

fall back on the structures of their ethnic groups or primordial communities.

Because of the peculiar crisis of identity engendering a conflict of loyalties which postcolonial nationalities often suffer, two countermending statements from both Samuel Johnson and Thomas Hobbes are worth examining.

- (a) Samuel Johnson, observed, among other things, in his 1774 address to the electors of Great Britain, that: 'He that wishes to see his country robbed of its rights cannot be a patriot.' Fine, we would say. But, then, his countryman, Thomas Hobbes had asserted a century earlier in justifying self-defence, that:
- (b) A man has no duty to a sovereign who has not the power to protect him. He made this statement as justification for his submission and loyalty to Cromwell when Charles II was sent on exile. I have often regarded this assertion of Thomas Hobbes's as 'guarded opportunism' whereby one might become the stooge of any government in power, be it benevolent or malevolent. For, in reality, there are governments which mean well for their citizens but which are not able to provide adequately for them just as there are dictators who rule and make promises of short-term largesse which they do not intend to keep.

If we now relate all this to Peter Ekeh's thesis: Is it then the case that Nigerian, Kenyan or Ghanaian citizens fail as patriots because their countries could not provide for them? Would they, however, be considered patriots by their kinsmen to whom they bring some national cake? Or, still, should they be considered nationalists rather than patriots in such peculiar circumstances?

The Nigerian novelist, Chinua Achebe, presents two classic examples of a complex issue of conflict of interest in regard to patriotism or nationalism that has helped to further theorize Peter Ekeh's principle of the two publics. In his short story, "The Voter" (1965, 1972), a typical Nigerian voter finds himself torn between the factional interests of two political parties from which he has received bribes and sworn to an oath which he can only break on pain of death. Fortunately, the voting is by secret ballot. At the same time he is worried for his personal safety lest the oath be truly potent. In the voter's tent, he checks that no one is looking and decides to tear the ballot into two equal halves — one for each ballot box — and thereafter holds the two pieces up for the deity to see that he has been loyal enough to both parties to obviate the consequences of his oath. In this case there are actually three publics established, and the three are equally disenfranchised. They cancel out their respective interests because the ballot is not only voided, the voter has, in addition, violated his oath at the same time as he has subverted his own primordial interest. But he has received pecuniary gains from his two publics at his own expense. The point being made here is that in the process of the various interests cancelling out one another, everything is

lost while a fractured, battered and disembodied identity is firmly established.

The second instance is from his novel, *A Man of the People* (Achebe, 1966). The main protagonist, Chief Nanga, seeking to compromise a younger, more credible rival, Odili Samalu, takes a bribe to Odili's father's home in the village and establishes his primordial public thus:

I am no guest here. I regard here as my house and yourself as my political father. Whatever we achieve over there in Bori is because we have the backing of people like you at home (p.130).

As soon as his more articulate rival debunks his phoney claim to that primordial space, the chief accuses him of being a nationalist! The obvious inference is that he, Chief Nanga, is the real patriot. The questions arise with reference to the emergent nation-state: If, as Samuel Johnson prescribes, you rob your country or wish to see your country robbed of her rights, you are not qualified to be a patriot. But if, as Thomas Hobbes avers, your country robs you of your rights by not protecting you or providing for you, you need not aspire to be a patriot. Or, as the character in Achebe's novel, aspire to be called a nationalist. Which of these is the right position to take?

There have been numerous instances in contemporary Nigeria where school children quietly sleeping in their hostels have either been slaughtered or abducted and taken away. Many have either not been seen again or have

become the subject of plea bargains and ransoms. The most celebrated of these cases were the 219 school girls taken away from their schools in Chibok, Borno State of Nigeria in April 2014. Many are yet unaccounted for three years after their unfortunate abduction. A number of other horrific incidents have been recorded in Lagos since June 2017. It is also true that communities bereft of social and psychological security within the state have had to resort to the services of primordial vigilante groups rather than Nigeria's law enforcement agencies. Many around the Bakassi area of the Cameroonian borders have been stripped of their national identity and have become stateless in the context of their own nation state. We are urged to believe that we derive our identity through ethnicity, linguistic grouping or our nationality. But the nation state is the dominant factor of the modern world, not ethnicity. Allegiances are to a constitution, flag, anthem and travel document. Where day-to-day living has become precarious and citizens are unable to find security and a sense of belonging, patriotism suffers, and there is the resurgence of various degrees of nationalism. This once again reinforces Samuel Johnson's and Thomas Hobbes' affirmation that a citizen owes no allegiance to a nation that cannot provide him with livelihood and social security (Johnson, 1913; Russell, 1984; Layiwola, 2007).

There have emerged other interesting advances following on Peter Ekeh's thesis in, for example, Basil Davidson (1992) and David Laitin (1998), where there have been discussions on the historical crises of the modern nation state especially as regards ethnicity, language and the crossing of geographical frontiers. My own view on the

matter is that the modern state will increasingly develop along multi-national lines and that the boundaries in between patriotism and nationalism will continue to narrow until an infinitesimal point is reached where ethnicity and nationality will merge and conflate. Then the task of nation-making and nation-building, identity multiplicities, identity mutations and diasporic tendencies will be easier to accomplish in shared geographical boundaries. In our present era, the concept of Francis Fukuyama's end of history is still far ahead as issues regarding the concept of primordial humanity are a strong and potent factor of politics and politicking. We are not yet a race of angels, deracinated and without nationalities and ethnic identities.

V Conclusion: *Omoluabi*, *Ubuntu* and the Global Negritude Movement

I cannot conclude this paper without talking about the aspirations and the ideal of home-grown theories that have emerged in the last century or so. Historically, the context of the homegrown theories as they concern social and institutional frameworks is important because they constitute a philosophy and an ideology. They also represent an important strand of cultural nationalism which needed articulation as the intellectual component of the liberation movement from colonialism and the stigma of slavery. In a sense it also is a patriotic move not in the sense of the love of a single country but of a race or a conglomeration of countries. The fundamental impetus was both economic and social since slavery, subjugation or discrimination always has to do with status as well as social class. The resort to a form of cultural nationalism was justified and justifiable. In this case the purpose of this

nationalism is not to fit persons of the same language and culture into a nation state but to fit persons of identical cultural backgrounds from diverse geographical locations into one ideological fold. Negritude is a reaction to the collective experience of black people to western domination. The etymology of the term clearly indicates that skin colour and pigmentation is a crucial factor.

The history of prolonged European contact with Africa, and subsequently with the rest of the African diasporas, saw not only the development of trade but also the establishment of conflict, agitation and domination. Abiola Irele has rightly observed, in agreeing with Georges Balandier, that:

The establishment of colonial rule in Africa brought with it a drastic reordering of African societies and human relations. The fact of domination, and all that this meant in the arbitrary political and social reorganization of the African communities, along with the misunderstandings that naturally followed, created "a state of latent crisis." Colonial rule also substituted new poles of reference for social organization and individual life, which were often in conflict with the established traditional pattern, and thus created a society which, in Balandier's words, "appeared to possess an essentially non-authentic character" (Irele, 2011: 3).

This peculiar condition which led to the upsurge of intense nationalist consciousness began at different points and in

different ways on the African continent, and with the African diaspora in the Americas. At first, the movements were aggressive and often violent. This method achieved a measure of success and created its heroes. A very celebrated example was the revolution led by Toussaint L'Ouverture which resulted in the first Negro Republic of Haiti in 1804 (James, 1963, 1989). This is of immense significance as it has proved to be one of the inspirations behind the Negritudist movement as one of its founding fathers, Aimé Césaire, has affirmed (Mannoni, 1950: 10 – 30; Irele, 2011: 6 – 7). The other founding fathers include Leon Damas, Sedar Senghor, René Maran and Étienne Lero. The first three are, however, the best known, with Aimé Césaire always put in the lead and Sedar Senghor being the only mainland African amongst them.

It is worth noting that Ade Ajayi (1960, 1990), E. A. Ayandele (1970), and James Coleman (1971) in their excellent analyses of the background to, and definitions of, nationalism emphasize that Nigerian nationalists owe their inspiration to European nationalists of the 19th century. However, it is now increasingly clear that a number of Francophone intellectuals found inspiration in the works and activities of nationalists in the African diaspora. Most of these intellectuals were mainly writers, historians and poets. The complete history will, therefore, show a complementarity which we have neither adequately acknowledged nor emphasized.

The third factor which we need to more carefully interrogate is the folk derivative of patriotism and nationalism as enshrined in two Africanist terminologies:

Omoluabi and *Ubuntu*. The first is a Yoruba concept for a thoroughbred, the quintessential person. Yoruba philosophy believes that this essential quality of being is intangible and is a quality taken on at birth, by acculturation, tutelage or by training. This is encapsulated in the etymology of the word when broken into its component syllables or morphemes – *omo Olu iwa bi*. That is, *Omo Olu ti iwa bi*. It is the holistic or ramifying concept of a complete gentleman or woman (cf. Awoniyi, 1975; Kehinde, 2016). The concept is about the theory of being in a society and a cultural commonwealth. It, therefore, also encapsulates the love of society and its other inhabitants where the benefits of life are composite and reciprocal. An *Omoluabi* is, therefore, a patriot. He or she may or may not be a nationalist.

Among the Bantu of the lower Congo, the term *Ubuntu/Umuntu* is the concept which represents that oneness of being and *sociation* in human society (Tutu, 1999; Wilson & Jarikre, 2016: 293). The principle is based on the simple logic that: ‘I am because others are’; ‘I am because you are.’ It is the main pillar on which the very basis of being and society is constructed. This concept recognizes the reconciliation of virtually opposing patterns and the basic interconnectedness of the mutually exclusive. It, therefore, believes that human existence and survival depend on it.

We like to emphasize, in concluding this essay, that there exist, among the various ethnicities on the African continent, variations of this concept which emphasizes the unity and collectivity of ideals in human aspirations and society. The philosophy is meant to locate metaphysics

within the context of praxis. These concepts, in their holism, surpass the Cartesian logic of: 'I think, therefore, I am.' They further emphasize that man finds meaning in society only because others, in a collective league, are there with him. They perceive the unification of ontology and epistemology and believe in the ultimate unity of all humanity. That is, in society, we partake of multitudes. They also believe that anyone who fully imbibes any of these principles is bound to be a patriot. It is this writer's firm belief that in further theorizing these concepts, and not necessarily excluding those from the western hemisphere, we can realize the real purpose of *patriotism*, that ideal which has remained the ultimate goal of *citizenship* in all humane societies.

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