

## NIGERIA'S NATIONAL ANTHEMS AND THE CHALLENGES OF NATION-BUILDING

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### **Abstract**

*National anthems are highly nationalistic, often accompanied by a suitable tune that evokes deep emotional and patriotic connections. They have survived to this day as important political tools for nations. Nigeria, a diverse country with a complex history, has experienced key events, struggles, and milestones that have shaped its national identity. This study contributes to the existing body of knowledge by unraveling the role of poetry and symbolism in the formation of national identity, cohesion, and nationhood, as reflected in Nigeria's national anthems. It investigates the challenges of achieving a harmonious national anthem, tracing the historical transition from Nigeria We Hail Thee (1960–1978) to Arise, O Compatriots (1978–2023), and now the re-adoption of Nigeria We Hail Thee under Asiwaju Tinubu's current administration. This transition resonates deeply with the entire nation, considering Nigeria's ethnic, cultural, and religious diversity. The study provides a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between recurring historical challenges of nation-building and the evolution of Nigeria's two anthems, drawing parallels with the experiences of other iconic national anthems around the world. It also identifies the messages conveyed by both anthems, presenting aspirations and visions for Nigerians while offering insights to prevent the repetition of negative historical patterns. The study emphasizes the role of patriotism, unity amid diversity, and integration in fostering a sense of hope and sustainable progress. However, the current challenges in Nigeria reflect a state of disunity, rendering it difficult to hail the nation or inspire compatriots to arise.*

**Keywords: Nigeria, National Anthem, Nation-building, Unity, Patriotism.**

### **INTRODUCTION**

"Nigeria's National Anthems and the Challenges of Nation-building", delves into the intricate relationship between symbolic representations and the practical obstacles hindering the construction of a cohesive national identity and nationhood in Nigeria. By analysing the national anthems as cultural touchstones, the study highlights their role in fostering unity. However, it underscores the challenges posed by Nigeria's diverse cultural, ethnic, and historical tapestry. To overcome these obstacles, the study advocates for inclusive policies, educational initiatives, and open dialogues that respect and integrate the nation's rich diversity through the leadership measures already set up and ongoing, ultimately contributing to a more robust foundation for nation-building, but still seems to have little or no effect in building the country as a nation and failure to look into the relevance of Nigeria's National anthems as a major guide to curb all the challenges of Nation-building in Nigeria.

### **Conceptual Clarification**

#### **Concept of Anthem**

The concept of an anthem typically refers to a musical composition, often a song or hymn, that holds a special significance and is associated with a particular group, community, nation, or cause. Anthems are characterized by their inspirational and unifying nature, meant to evoke a sense of pride, identity, or shared purpose among those who associate with the anthem (Vocabulary, 2021).

The most common use of the term is in the context of a national anthem. This is a musical composition chosen to represent a country, played on official occasions, and often expressing patriotic sentiments. National anthems serve to instill a sense of unity and identity among the citizens of a nation. Some

institutions or organizations may have their own anthems, often used to instill a sense of identity, pride, and unity among their members. These can be in the form of songs or musical compositions that capture the ethos and values of the organization. Anthems can also be associated with social movements or causes, serving as rallying cries for those advocating a particular ideology, rights, or social change. Such anthems are used to inspire and mobilize supporters. In cultural or religious contexts, anthems may be employed to represent a community's values, beliefs, or traditions. These compositions play a role in fostering a sense of belonging and shared heritage. Thus, the concept of an anthem extends beyond the musical realm; it's a symbolic representation of collective identity and purpose. Anthems are designed to evoke strong emotions and foster a sense of belonging, whether at the level of a nation, organization, or social movement (Vocabulary, 2021).

### **Concept of National Anthem**

Etymologically, anthem comes from old English, 'antefn' which means, 'a song sung antiphonally or in turns by two groups of singers' (Vocabulary, 2023). National anthem is a nation's official song which is played or sung on public occasions and on national days like during nursery, primary and secondary school assemblies as it is done in Nigeria on national days, independence, National and International sporting events democracy days, national conventions, political gatherings or when a head of state or sovereign of a state is present and so on (Collins Dictionary, 2023). Karen A. Cerulo (1989) defines the national anthems as official patriotic symbols-the musical equivalent of a country's motto, crest, or flag. As such, they represent the nation's identity or character-its mood, desires, and goals as put forth by those in power. National anthem is one of the integrative mechanisms adopted by states to promote positive intergroup relations amongst people of a country like Nigeria (Jaja, 2021). A national anthem is intended to evoke a feeling of patriotism and make the peoples of the country to interact and work for the progress, unity and growth of the country among others.

### **Concept of National Anthem**

Bauer defined a 'nation' to be, the totality of people who are united by a common fate so that they possess a common (national) character. The common fate is primarily a common history; the common national character involves almost necessarily a uniformity of language (Bauer 1967). A nation's essential features includes: stability, continuing community, a common language, a distinct territory, economic cohesion, and a collective character (Stalin 1988). Global Policy Forum further explains, 'A Nation is a large group of people with strong bonds of identity - an "imagined community," a tribe on a grand scale. The nation may have a claim to statehood or self-rule, but it does not necessarily enjoy a state of its own. National identity is typically based on shared culture, religion, history, language or ethnicity, though disputes arise as to who is truly a member of the national community or even whether the "nation" exists at all. Nations seem so compelling, so "real," and so much a part of the political and cultural landscape, that people think they have lasted forever. The question is, is Nigeria a nation, a nation state or nations in a nation. This shall be explored in the course of this research.

### **Concept of Nation-building**

Nation building is the process whereby a society of people with diverse origins, histories, languages, cultures and religions come together within the boundaries of a sovereign state with a unified legal dispensation, a national public education system, an integrated national economy, shared symbols and values, as equals, to work towards eradicating the divisions and injustices of the past; to foster unity; and promote a country wide conscious sense of being proudly united, committed to the country and open to the continent and the world (Thapa, 2020). In the view point of Gambari, "nation-building" has many important aspects, firstly, it is about building a political entity which corresponds to a given territory, based on some generally accepted rules, norms and principles and a common citizenship. Secondly, it is also about building institutions which symbolize the political entity-institutions such as a bureaucracy, an economy, the judiciary, universities, a civil service and civil society organizations. Above all else, nation-building is about building a common sense of purpose, a sense of shared destiny, a collective imagination of belonging. Gambari further deposes that, "nation-building" is about building the tangible and intangible threads that hold political entity together and gives it a sense of purpose. Even in days of globalization and rapid international flows of people and ideas, having a viable nation remains synonymous with achieving modernity. It is about building the institutions and values which sustain the collective community in these modern times. Nation building is the process of defining the nation and unite people under one country to share a common identity, sovereignty, constitution, a national public education system, and integrated national economy, shared symbols and values,

as equals among the people which cannot be said of Nigeria but this is what the national anthems of Nigeria suggests (Thapa, 2020).

### **THE SPIRIT OF ANTHEMS THAT FOSTERS UNITY AND ONENESS.**

The spirit of an anthem that fosters oneness and unity typically revolves around invoking a shared identity, pride, and a collective sense of purpose among the people. Characteristics of anthems that promote unity include:

- **Inclusive Language:** The anthem uses language that encompasses all citizens, transcending differences in ethnicity, religion, or other demographic factors.
- **Patriotic Imagery:** It employs imagery and symbols that evoke a sense of national pride, reflecting a collective attachment to the nation.
- **Call to Action:** The anthem may include a call for collective action or service, emphasizing the responsibility of citizens to contribute to the well-being of the nation.
- **Shared Values:** It highlights and celebrates shared national values, emphasizing what unites the people rather than what divides them.
- **Historical Resilience:** Anthems often reference historical events that showcase the nation's resilience and strength, fostering a sense of continuity and shared history.
- **Hope for the Future:** There may be expressions of optimism and hope for the future, inspiring citizens to work together for a better collective destiny (Erden, 2019).

Overall, an anthem that fosters oneness and unity seeks to create a shared emotional and psychological connection among the diverse members of a nation, instilling a sense of pride and commitment to the greater good.

### **IMPORTANCE OF ANTHEMS**

Anthems hold significant importance in various contexts, serving as powerful symbols that evoke emotions, foster unity, and represent collective identity. Here are instances illustrating the importance of anthems;

1. **National Identity and Unity:** National anthems are powerful symbols of a country's identity. They instill a sense of pride, loyalty, and unity among citizens, serving as a musical representation of the nation's values, history, and aspirations. For example: The "Star-Spangled Banner" in the United States which instill a sense of patriotism and unity among citizens, reinforcing the shared identity and values of a nation. They are played on important occasions, fostering a collective spirit.
2. **Institutional Identity:** Anthems are part of a nation's cultural education. They are taught in schools, and learning the anthem becomes a way for individuals to understand and appreciate their country's history and values. For example: School or university anthems. Anthems associated with institutions contribute to a sense of belonging and pride among students, staff, and alumni. They often encapsulate the ethos and values of the educational institution.
3. **Social Movements and Causes:** In the context of social movements or causes, anthems serve as rallying points. They inspire and energize participants, becoming anthems of resistance, empowerment, or solidarity in the pursuit of social change. For example: "We Shall Overcome" during the civil rights movement. Hence, Anthems for social movements serve as rallying points, unifying people behind a common cause. They inspire and energize participants, creating a shared emotional connection.
4. **Cultural Representation:** Anthems can represent a nation's cultural heritage and distinctiveness. They celebrate traditions, folklore, and historical narratives, fostering a sense of cultural pride. They contribute to preserving and promoting cultural traditions and are often seen as cultural symbols. For example: "Waltzing Matilda" as an unofficial Australian anthem.
5. **Sports and Competition:** Anthems are often associated with official ceremonies, events, and rituals. Whether it's the opening of a sports competition or a state function, anthems add a ceremonial and formal touch to such occasions. Anthems played at sports events are to honor winners and represent countries. They create a ceremonial atmosphere, celebrating achievements and emphasizing the global unity of athletes. For example: "Olympic Fanfare and Theme".
6. **Religious and Spiritual Significance:** In religious contexts, anthems contribute to worship and communal rituals. They convey sacred messages, inspire devotion, and reinforce spiritual values within a religious community. For example: Hymns in religious traditions.
7. **National Ceremonies and Events:** Anthems are a crucial part of national ceremonies, state functions, and official events. They lend a formal and ceremonial touch, reinforcing the importance of the occasion. Also, National anthems are played at international events, representing a country on the global stage. They contribute to diplomatic and cultural exchanges, emphasizing a nation's presence and identity in the

international community. For example: "March of the Volunteers" during official events in China.

**8. Historical Significance:** Many anthems have historical roots, linked to key events in a nation's history. They serve as reminders of struggles, triumphs, and the evolution of societies, connecting the present with the past. For example: "La Marseillaise" during the French Revolution.

**9. Expressing Values and Aspirations:** Anthems encapsulate the values and aspirations of a nation or community. The lyrics and music convey messages of hope, resilience, freedom, and progress, shaping the collective mindset.

However, National anthems play a vital role in shaping collective identity, fostering unity, and encapsulating the values and aspirations of nations, institutions, social movements, and cultural groups. Their significance extends beyond the musical realm, influencing emotions, and contributing to a shared sense of purpose and belonging (Erden, 2019).

### **History and Development of National Anthem of Iconic Countries.**

The exact origins of many of these anthems have been obscured by the passage of time. But their lyrics carried messages of praise for monarchies, when nations were supposed to be symbolized by their rulers. Thus the more proper term for these songs would be the monarchist anthems which is the roots of National Anthems.

### **History and Development of National Anthem using 'Wilhelmus' of Netherlands.**

The first anthems readily created as songs originated in Europe in the 16<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> centuries. The oldest of these is the Dutch anthem, *Wilhelmus van Nassouwe* (William of Nassau), made during the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Its 15 stanzas, of which only the 1<sup>st</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> stanzas are officially sung, basically tell the exploits of the man who led the Dutch War of Independence against the Spanish. The *Wilhelmus* reflects the religious and patriotic sentiments of its time. Its lyrics are steeped in biblical references. The Dutch saw there was a battle between the Protestant Dutch and Catholics of Spain but in the end led the Dutch people to liberation. Although, the war was framed not only as a nationalistic struggle. The war was an effort to define the true path of Christ. It basically tells the exploits of the man who led the Dutch war of independence against the Spanish. The anthems themes of loyalty, faith and defiance against tyranny resonated deeply with the Dutch population, fostering a sense of unity (Masigan, 2016). Initially sung in small circles, the *Wilhelmus* gained momentum as the Dutch revolt continued. Its lyrics spread through pamphlets and oral tradition, becoming a rallying cry for those advocating for independence.

The anthem's popularity grew in tandem with the burgeoning sense of Dutch national identity. Music from this time, encouraged people to take up arms. People fought not only for the love of their country but also for the love of their religious beliefs. Despite its popularity, the "Wilhelmus" wasn't officially recognized as the Dutch national anthem until 1932, reinforcing its role in Dutch national identity. Queen Wilhelmina declared it as such, solidifying its status as a cherished national symbol (Daily History, 2023). The anthem's journey from an underground resistance song to an officially recognized emblem showcases its enduring significance. The "Wilhelmus" continues to hold a special place in Dutch culture and history in present day Netherlands. It is sung at national events, sports competitions, and moments of national importance. The anthem's themes of perseverance and unity resonate with the Dutch people, acting as a bridge between the past and the present. The evolution of the "Wilhelmus" reflects a broader global pattern in the development of national anthems. Across continents, anthems have emerged from historical contexts, evolved to represent values and contributed to the shaping of national identity (Masigan, 2016). The "Wilhelmus" serves as a lens through which we can understand the universality of these anthem narratives. Its history and development highlights the ability to encapsulate a nation's journey. The process of formalizing a national anthem varies. Some anthems are adopted through legislative or executive actions, while others gain popularity organically. In this contemporary era, national anthems continue to evolve as societies evolve. They are sung at international events, sports competitions, and civic ceremonies, reinforcing their enduring relevance.

### **History and Development of National Anthem using 'Kimigayo' of Japan.**

"Kimigayo" means "His Imperial Majesty Reign" has a rich history that dates back to the 9th century, making it one of the oldest national anthems in the world. The lyrics were derived from a Waka poem found in the "Manyoshu," Japan's oldest poetry anthology.

The lyrics of "Kimigayo" consist of a single stanza:

君が代は  
千代に八千代に  
細石の  
巖となりて  
苔の生すまで

**English translation:**

May your reign  
Continue for a thousand, eight thousand generations,  
Until the pebbles  
Grow into boulders  
Lush with moss.

Over the centuries, the lyrics evolved and were associated with different poems and melodies. During the Meiji era (1868-1912), efforts were made to establish a national anthem to enhance the sense of unity and patriotism. In 1880, "Kimigayo" was officially adopted as the national anthem, but it wasn't until 1999 that the law was amended to specify the exact lyrics and melody.

The lyrics of "Kimigayo" express themes of loyalty and reverence to the Emperor, embodying a sense of continuity with Japan's imperial history. The anthem reflects Japan's cultural heritage and the enduring spirit of the Japanese people. However, it has also been a source of controversy due to its association with Japan's wartime past, and some have called for revisions to better represent contemporary values. Despite these debates, "Kimigayo" remains a significant symbol of Japanese identity, with its historical roots and poetic verses contributing to a sense of unity and national pride. Which was and is still an example to other countries who became a nation afterwards (Jack, 2019).

**History and Development of National Anthem using 'Yiyongjun Jinxing' of China.**

The lyrics of the Chinese national anthem, "Yi Yong Jun Jinxing Qu" (March of the Volunteers), are as follows:

义勇军进行曲

起来！不愿做奴隶的人们！  
把我们的血肉，筑成我们新的长城！  
中华民族到了最危险的时候，  
每个人被迫着发出最后的吼声。  
起来！起来！起来！

我们万众一心，  
冒着敌人的炮火，前进！  
冒着敌人的炮火，前进！  
前进！进！

**English Translation:**

Arise, ye who refuse to be slaves!  
With our flesh and blood, let us build a new Great Wall!  
The Chinese nation has arrived at its most perilous time,  
All forcefully expend their last cries.  
Arise! Arise! Arise!  
Millions of hearts with one mind,  
Brave the enemy's gunfire, march on!  
Brave the enemy's gunfire, march on!

March on! march on!

These lyrics convey themes of unity, resistance, and sacrifice, emphasizing the collective spirit of the Chinese people in the face of challenges.

"Yiyongjun Jinxing" meaning "March of the Volunteers" holds a profound history, deeply intertwined with China's tumultuous 20th-century experiences. The anthem emerged during the Chinese resistance against Japanese aggression. In 1935, playwright and poet Tian Han wrote the lyrics, and composer Nie Er crafted the music. The song was initially part of a play called "Children of the Storm," depicting the Chinese people's struggles against invaders.

The anthem gained popularity during the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945) and later the Chinese Civil War (1927-1949). It served as a rallying cry, fostering unity among different groups in the face of external threats. Adoption as National Anthem (1949): When the People's Republic of China was officially established on October 1, 1949, "Yiyongjun Jinxing" was adopted as the national anthem. The choice reflected its association with the revolutionary spirit and the sacrifices made during the years of conflict. The lyrics convey themes of sacrifice, heroism, and national pride. They highlight the struggles of the Chinese people against oppression and their determination to build a better future. The repeated call for volunteers symbolizes the collective effort required for national rejuvenation.

During the Cultural Revolution, the anthem, like many cultural elements, faced scrutiny. However, its revolutionary undertones and association with the founding of the People's Republic helped it endure as a symbol of the Communist Party's legitimacy. In the post-Mao era, "Yiyongjun Jinxing" continued to be a central symbol. Its solemn melody and evocative lyrics have contributed to its recognition on the global stage, marking various international events involving China.

Today, the anthem remains a key element of China's national identity. It is played at official events, ceremonies, and international gatherings, reinforcing a sense of unity and pride among the Chinese people. "Yi Yong Jun Jinxing Qu", encapsulates the spirit of resilience, sacrifice, and determination that characterized China's struggles in the 20th century, making it a powerful emblem of the nation's history and aspirations (Work Info, 2018).

### **History and Development of National Anthem using 'God Save the Queen' of Britain.**

The British national anthem, "God Save the Queen" (or "God Save the King" depending on the reigning monarch), has the following lyrics:

God save our gracious Queen!  
Long live our noble Queen!  
God save the Queen!  
Send her victorious,  
Happy and glorious,  
Long to reign over us,  
God save the Queen!

"God Save the Queen" has a fascinating history, evolving over the centuries to become a key symbol of British identity, unity, and continuity.

The anthem's origins are believed to date back to the early 18th century. While the music is often attributed to John Bull, the lyrics have undergone variations over time. Originally sung as "God Save the King," the lyrics were adapted to reflect the gender of the reigning monarch. This adaptability allowed the anthem to maintain its relevance across different reigns, fostering a sense of continuity. By the 19th century, "God Save the Queen/King" became widely recognized as the de facto national anthem. Its use extended beyond royal events to include public gatherings and patriotic occasions. During times of national significance, such as the Napoleonic Wars and later the two World Wars, the anthem became a rallying point, symbolizing unity and resilience. It played a crucial role in fostering a sense of collective identity. As the British Empire evolved into the Commonwealth, the anthem's use spread to other realms where the British monarch was the head of state. It became a unifying element across the Commonwealth nations. Over the years, there have been debates about the appropriateness of the anthem. Some have criticized its association with the monarchy, while others argue for the need for a more representative national anthem. "God Save the Queen" has left a lasting impact on British culture. Its melody is instantly recognizable, and the lyrics, particularly the refrain, have become ingrained in the collective consciousness of the British people. The anthem is still an integral part of official and ceremonial events in the United Kingdom. It is performed at state functions, royal ceremonies, and major public events, symbolizing national pride and loyalty. However, "God Save the Queen" has evolved from its origins in the 18th century to become a symbol deeply ingrained in the historical

and cultural fabric of Britain. Its adaptability, role in fostering unity during challenging times, and connection to the broader Commonwealth underscore its enduring significance that Nigeria should emulate (Charles, 1953).

### **History and Development of National Anthem using ‘Star-Spangled Banner’ of United States of America.**

The United States national anthem, "The Star-Spangled Banner," has the following lyrics:

O say can you see,  
By the dawn's early light,  
What so proudly we hailed  
At the twilight's last gleaming,  
Whose broad stripes and bright stars  
Through the perilous fight,  
O'er the ramparts we watched,  
Were so gallantly streaming?  
And the rocket's red glare,  
The bombs bursting in air,  
Gave proof through the night  
That our flag was still there;  
O say does that star-spangled  
Banner yet wave  
O'er the land of the free  
And the home of the brave?

"The Star-Spangled Banner" has a rich history that reflects the United States' resilience and unity. In 1814, during the War of 1812, Francis Scott Key, an American lawyer and amateur poet, witnessed the British bombardment of Fort McHenry in Baltimore. Inspired by the sight of the American flag still flying after the attack, he penned the poem "Defence of Fort M'Henry," which later became the lyrics for the national anthem. Set to the melody of the English song "To Anacreon in Heaven," Key's lyrics convey a deep sense of national pride and endurance. The anthem's verses recount the perilous night of the bombardment and celebrate the triumph of the American spirit, symbolized by the resilient flag. The lyrics foster unity by emphasizing the shared experience of overcoming adversity. Over the years, "The Star-Spangled Banner" gained popularity and significance. It was often performed at patriotic events and gradually became associated with national identity. In 1916, President Woodrow Wilson signed an executive order designating it as the national anthem for military ceremonies, and in 1931, Congress officially declared it the national anthem of the United States. The anthem has since played a crucial role in fostering a sense of unity during pivotal moments in American history. It serves as a reminder of the nation's endurance and collective spirit, reinforcing the shared values that bind its diverse population together. "The Star-Spangled Banner" continues to be a symbol of pride and patriotism, resonating at events that celebrate the nation's history and achievements (American Battlefield Trust, 2017).

### **HISTORY OF NIGERIA’S NATIONAL ANTHEMS.**

The National anthems of Nigeria have diverse origin but similar history, meanings and interpretations to different Individuals, scholars or intellectuals all pointing towards Nigeria's past, present and future. Lines of the national anthems reveals so much about the history and structure of the country as they both play major roles in thematically fostering unity, cohesion, nationhood and nation-building. Every Nigerian must uphold the tenets of past heroes through these lyrics. The anthems are provided here in for easy reference:

#### **FIRST NATIONAL ANTHEM (1960-1978).**

Nigeria We Hail Thee  
Our Own Dear Native Land  
Though Tribes and Tongues may differ  
In Brotherhood we stand  
Nigerians all are proud to serve  
Our sovereign motherland

Our Flag Shall be a Symbol  
The Truth and Justice reign  
In Peace or Battle honor  
And this we count as gain  
To pass unto our children  
A banner without stain

O God of all Creation  
Grant this our one request  
Help us to build a nation  
Where no man is oppressed  
And so with Peace and Plenty  
Nigeria may be blessed.

**SECOND NATIONAL ANTHEM (1978-DATE).**

Arise O Compatriots,  
Nigeria's Call Obey  
To serve our fatherland  
With love and strength and faith  
The labour of our heroes past  
Shall never be in vain  
To serve with heart and might  
One nation bound in freedom peace and Unity.

Oh God of Creation  
Direct our noble course  
Guide our leaders right  
Help our youth the truth to know  
In love and honesty to grow  
And living just and true  
Great lofty heights attain  
To build a nation where  
Peace and Justice shall reign.

**History of 'Nigeria We Hail Thee' National anthem.**

According to Oyewale, the Nigerian national anthem shows how the Nigerian people, who want peace, justice and unity, live their lives. 'Nigeria we hail thee', has a history that goes back to 1960 when the country got rid of British colonial rule. Before independence, the British Colonial anthem, "God save the Queen", was used for official events as former colonial masters and the system of governance of early independence was monarchical and parliamentary. This marked the absence of a distinct national identity represented in the anthems. So, there was need for a lyrical nationalist symbol, which in 1960, Nigeria adopted its first national anthem titled, 'Nigeria we Hail Thee', the lyrics of which was written in 1959 by Lillian Jean Williams, who had lived in Nigeria before independence, while the music of the anthem was composed also in 1959 by Frances Berda, who developed it into a beautiful melody. On independence day, 1<sup>st</sup> October, 1960 when Obafemi Awolowo declared the freedom of Nigeria from British rulership, 'Nigeria we hail thee' was sung as a sign to reveal sovereignty, through the waving of the Nigerian flag. If an anthem is meant to reflect the history, culture and identity of the people it represents, 'Nigeria we hail thee' it is. It spoke of our nativity, cultural diversity and the imperative of unity and concomitant federal structure in the land in which truth and justice reign and no man is oppressed. Thus, the anthem indicates the freedom of Nigeria from colonialism and the need to express their joy for freedom irrespective of the different tribes and cultures. The lyrics of the anthem also revealed Nigerians' prayers to be able to serve the fatherland in truth and justice, as well as a prayer to God to bless the motherland (Chika, 2022).

The anthem was criticized because it was written and composed by British expatriates without any contribution from a Nigerian, citizens and leaders of Nigeria, believed that the anthem should be composed by someone who is an indigene, has sympathy and empathy for the nationals to summon dedication and arouse emotion of patriotism and diligence for the growth of the country. Those who eventually saw the change of the anthem to the present one said, did not approve of the reference to Nigerians as native people



and tribesmen evident in the line, 'though tribes and tongues may differ...', which was not promising to a new country that sought nationhood, they reasoned deceptively that after 18 years (1960-1978) into independence, the first anthem of Nigeria, 'Nigeria we hail thee', should not be heard reminding Nigerians of their diversity on a daily basis and so there was need for a change of anthem (In Know Nigeria, 2023) The anthem was replaced in 1978 with the title, 'Arise O Compatriots', under the military administration of General Olusegun Obasanjo. Therefore, a committee was formed to gather signatures for a petition after 'The Daily Service', a publication by the Yoruba organization Egbé omo Odùduwà, launched a rebellious campaign against the national anthem.

### **History of 'Arise O Compatriots' National anthem.**

As a result of the criticisms that came with the first national anthem titled, 'Nigeria we hail thee', the Federal government of Nigeria sought for a change of the National anthem claiming it had colonial influences and in order for the Nigerian people to emphasize their independence and freedom. The decision to adopt a new national anthem was made in the late 1970s precisely 1978, during Nigeria's transition from military rule to civilian governance. The country had and still has enough talented poets and musicians who could compose solemn words and melodies for the compatriots. Thus, there was a call for a new anthem made by a Nigerian to be evolved and supported with a National pledge of loyalty to the country. Following different shortcomings of the first national anthem, 'Nigeria we hail thee', an agitation to have it urgently changed was staged, although not violently and so, a national competition was organized for the purpose of choosing a new one with a committee created to choose the best entry. "They received about 1449 submissions", after which five best entries were selected and awarded a sum of one thousand naira. The five winners were: Babatunde A. Ogunnaike, Eme Etim Akpan, John A. Ilechukwu, Sota Omoigui and P.O Aderibigbe. The lines gotten from these winners were put to music by the Nigerian police Band under the directorship of Benedict Elide Odiase in 1978, who was in charge of music for the Nigerian Police Force during this period (Nzenwi, 2007).

The process of turning these seventeen (17) lines of 'Arise O Compatriots' poetic national anthem into a song is seen in a situation where Pa Benedict Odiase asked Professor Akin Euba for help, and the Nigerian Police Band then put the words of the anthem to music. The first time Nigerians sang this new anthem was on October 1st, 1978, during General Olusegun Obasanjo military regime. Many people cheered for the anthem because it praised the country's rich culture and history. Also, the lyrics of this song shows, how much Nigerians are expected to love their country. This great song is a national call for all Nigerians to serve their motherland passionately with patriotism. The anthem highlights the past, especially the struggles of the national heroes before independence. It also highlights what the next generation hopes to achieve. Unlike the old national anthem, this one shows how every citizen of Nigeria is connected by a single chord, no matter where they live. The second stanza is usually recited in solemn events like church or mosque. The second stanza was chosen as the official national prayer by the Federal Executive Council in 2012. It was meant to replace the Christian and Muslim prayers that Nigerians often said separately at official events and gatherings. Overall, the Nigerian Anthem touches the hearts of Nigerians and dream of everyone living in the country for forty-five (45) years now, the anthem is still in use as the lyrics amended all of the shortcomings of the old, 'Nigeria we hail thee' national anthem. Rather than criticize the current national anthem lyrics, the actions, attitude, behavior and adherence of Nigerians towards these guiding anthem is now what is criticized because of the lack of nationhood in the country (Nzenwi, 2007).

### **MESSAGES CONVEYED IN BOTH ANTHEMS**

The national anthem of Nigeria, "Nigeria, We Hail Thee and Arise O Compatriots", conveys several positive advising messages that contribute to nation-building as guided by Bola (This Daily Live News, 2022). which includes:

**Unity Amid Diversity:** The anthem emphasizes unity, with the phrase "Nigeria we hail thee, our own dear native land" promoting a sense of togetherness among Nigerians of diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds. The diverse heterogeneous nature of the nation and the desire to build a nation bound in unity, brotherhood and ensure peace rather than the suspicion, inter-conflict and rivalry to undo one another. There is need for patriotism that should be passed on to those unborn. The pre-colonial and post-colonial struggle that culminated into a civil war is still fresh in the minds of Nigerians mitigating against unity. Hence, unity is vital for nation-building as it encourages solidarity and a shared national identity.

**Patriotism fosters Unity:** The anthem calls for compatriots to "Arise" and emphasizes the need for unity. Fostering a strong sense of national unity can help bridge ethnic, religious, and regional divides, addressing

one of the key challenges in Nigeria's nation-building process. By encouraging citizens to "serve our fatherland," the anthem promotes a sense of loyalty and commitment to the nation. A strong patriotic sentiment can help mitigate divisions and promote a collective focus on the common good. The anthem encourages Nigerians to "call obey" and "to serve with love and strength and faith." This emphasizes the importance of civic duty and active participation in nation-building, which is essential for overcoming challenges. The anthem fosters a sense of patriotism and pride in one's country. While, Nigeria we hail thee speaks of "in peace or battle honor and this we count as gain...", encouraging citizens to be proud of their nation and to work together for its betterment. Through patriotism the anthem conveys a sense of responsibility by urging Nigerians to "serve with heart and might." It encourages citizens to actively contribute to the development and well-being of their nation. All these themes play vital roles in fostering nationhood in Nigeria as they encourage Nigerians to be devoted to their country and actively engage in efforts to address the challenges faced in nation-building with the anthem as a guide but the attempt of adherence to the dictates of 'Nigeria we hail thee' was brought to bare as it failed in bringing some of the themes to reality during the eighteen years of usage by Nigerians.

**Sense of Hope:** The anthem conveys a message of hope and optimism for a better future, with phrases like "though tribes and tongues may differ" and "in brotherhood we stand", It encourages Nigerians to work together "in brotherhood" for the betterment of their nation. This shared vision for progress is crucial for building a strong nation.

**Progress and Development:** The anthem speaks of "the labour of our heroes past" and "the task of nation-building." It encourages Nigerians to "call obey" and "to serve our fatherland with love and strength and faith." It reflects the aspiration for Nigeria to achieve greatness and for its citizens to contribute positively to that goal. It conveys the importance of continued efforts to develop the nation and contribute to its progress. However, "Arise, O Compatriots" conveys themes of unity, patriotism, acknowledgment of history, hope, duty, and the aspiration for greatness, which can contribute to avert the challenges of nation-building in Nigeria by promoting a shared identity, commitment, and a positive outlook for the nation's future. The anthem's aspiration for Nigeria to achieve greatness can serve as a unifying goal, motivating citizens to work together for a better and more prosperous future (Fawole, 2023).

### COMPARISON BETWEEN "NIGERIA WE HAIL THEE AND ARISE O COMPATRIOTS". Nigeria, We Hail Thee" (1978-1979)

**Themes-National Pride:** Expresses pride in Nigeria as the homeland.

**Unity and Progress:** Emphasizes unity among Nigerians and conveys optimism for the country's progress.

**Faith in the Future:** Reflects a sense of faith and hope in the future of the nation.

**Lyrics-Notable Phrases:** "Nigeria we hail thee, our own dear native land".

**Patriotic Tone:** The lyrics have a patriotic tone, celebrating the nation and its people (Bola, 2023).

### Arise, O Compatriots" (Adopted in 1979-Till Date)

**Themes-Unity and Peace:** Strongly emphasizes the need for unity and peace in the nation. **Collective Action:** Calls on compatriots to serve with heart and might for the progress of the nation. **Hope for Prosperity:** Expresses hope for a united and prosperous Nigeria.

**Lyrics- Notable Lines:** "Arise, O compatriots, Nigeria's call obey".

**Collective Responsibility:** Encourages citizens to respond to the call of nation-building, emphasizing collective responsibility (Bola, 2023).

**Comparison- Depth of Message:** "Arise, O Compatriots" goes beyond expressing pride; it calls for active participation and service for the nation's growth.

**Call to Action:** While both anthems express love for Nigeria, "Arise, O Compatriots" stands out for its call to action and the idea of serving the nation with heart and might.

**Unity Emphasis:** Both anthems touch on unity, but "Arise, O Compatriots" places a more pronounced emphasis on the importance of unity for the progress and prosperity of Nigeria. Meanwhile, "Nigeria, We Hail Thee" exudes national pride and optimism, while "Arise, O Compatriots" takes a more proactive stance, calling for collective action and emphasizing the crucial role of unity in the nation's development (Bola, 2023).

### RECURRING FACTORS AGAINST NATION-BUILDING IN NIGERIA.

Nation-building in Nigeria has been hindered by several reoccurring factors. These include:

**Ethnic and Religious Divisions:** Nigeria is a diverse country with over 250 ethnic groups and a significant divide between the Muslim-majority North and the Christian-majority South. These divisions have led to ethnic and religious tensions, which have resulted in conflicts and hindered nation-building. For instance,

the Nigerian Civil War (1967-1970) was a result of ethnic and political tensions between the Igbo people in the Southeast and the federal government. The history that created the nation is still today the history that directs its social relations like the perception of lack of support by the masses from the government and the belief that the rulers were more concerned about themselves than the masses led to more identification with ethnic and communal ties than the nation. This equally led to the formation of ethnic militias representing different ethnic groups and regions and engineered a system in which each ethnic, religious and political group perceive that, "it is each group for itself".

The persistent mistrust, prejudice and violence that have ensued between groups have led to a perpetual state of concern that one group is out to dominate the other and a heightened need to protect itself from present and anticipated marginalization or even total annihilation in the power tussle. While, the colonial rulers set the platform for ethnic, religious, political and regional rivalry, Nigerians individually and collectively in social groups have maintained the division in the country through their actions and inactions at times such relations were peaceful, at other times, the people engaged in violent confrontation (Jaja, 2021). These divisions continually results to lack of nationhood, patriotism and unity amongst Nigerians which authenticates that Nigeria is not a nation, that is why Nigerian citizens and leaders are loyal to their ethnicities and tribes instead of the national government.

**Corruption:** Corruption manifests in every society but the degree or extent of its manifestation differs. In general it is a condition of moral defilement. It is a quasi-legal term, which means failure to carry out proper public responsibilities because of the pursuit of private gain. The use of political for financial gains or to satisfy one's interest falls into the category of political corruption. Corruption is pervasive in Nigeria attested by Nigerians and non-Nigerians, which has weakened the state's ability to provide basic services and infrastructure. The misappropriation of public funds by politicians and officials undermines trust in government and impedes economic development. The case of the "missing" oil revenue, exemplified by the Malabu oil scandal, is a clear instance of corruption inhibiting nation-building. Indeed, the late Shehu Musa, a former secretary to the federal government once said, "In Nigeria, it is not just that officials are corrupt but that corruption is official". Prominent cases include the misappropriation of funds in the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) and allegations of corruption within the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC). Corruption undermines trust in government and diverts resources from development (Chuks, 2012).

**Poor Governance and Leadership:** Nigeria has experienced periods of ineffective governance and leadership, with leaders prioritizing personal gain over the welfare of the nation. The mismanagement of public resources and a lack of accountability have hindered development. A striking example is the mismanagement of the power sector, leading to frequent power outages. It was precisely a desire for some form of change in the conditions and management of the Nigerian polity which led to upheavals within the civilian establishment and 'rebellious' actions by sections of the Armed forces, for example, the civil war of 1967-1970. The factors that underline the leadership crisis in Nigeria are to be found in the behaviour of the political elites such as political God-Father system, nepotism, intoxication and misuse of power and authority, greed, individualism as they are almost totally dependent on the state for social and material reproduction. The installation of democratic institution has not resolved the problem of accountability. For the most part, the electoral leverage that political parties and politicians have depends on the amount of support given to them by strong men and women because to all intents and purposes, these are people who secure and 'win' elections. It is rare to find an electoral victory that was not compromised or literally delivered by a strong man who controls the constituencies with the cliché know as 'God-Fatherism'.

**Tribalism and Nepotism:** Tribalism in Nigeria refers to the strong loyalty and attachment individuals have to their ethnic groups. This can lead to favoritism in various aspects of life, including politics, employment, and resource distribution (Dele and Okafor, 2022). Nepotism, on the other hand, involves favoring family members or close friends in matters of appointments, promotions, or resource allocation. In Nigeria, this is evident in political circles where leaders appoint or promote individuals based on familial or personal connections rather than qualifications. This practice undermines the principles of meritocracy and can lead to inefficiency and corruption within government institutions. For example, the recent employment exercise in Rivers State Nigeria (2022-2023), where unqualified people from the Ikwerre clan were massively employed. Both tribalism and nepotism contribute to a fractured social and political landscape in Nigeria. They fuel a sense of inequality and marginalization among different ethnic and social groups, hindering the development of a shared national identity. This lack of unity can impede progress of nation-building, as the focus shifts from collective well-being to the interests of specific groups or individuals. Addressing these issues is crucial for fostering a more inclusive and harmonious nation-building process in Nigeria.

**Insurgency and Insecurity:** Nigeria has faced ongoing security challenges, including the Boko Haram insurgency and clashes between farmers and herders which have caused widespread instability and violence, leading to loss of lives, displacement of people, and disruption of economic activities particularly in the Northeastern and Middle Belt regions. The government's struggle to contain this insurgency has hampered efforts at nation-building.

**Economic Inequality:** Economic disparities exist between different regions and social groups in Nigeria. The lack of inclusive economic policies and opportunities for all citizens perpetuates a sense of marginalization. This has contributed to the Niger Delta crisis, where residents of oil-producing regions feel that, they don't benefit from the oil wealth extracted from their land. A recent statement credited to Governor Sule Lamido of Jigawa State holds that, "Irrespective of their differences of tribe and religion, members of the elite are united in preserving their advantages over the masses (Ebenezer, 2010). The masses have the capacity to unite because they are burdened by poverty and deprivation. The elites have taken away dignity, self-esteem, pride and self-worth off the populace so much that they cannot even organize themselves. These elites have kept "the common man" wretched and "in hell" despite the nation's enormous wealth (Jason Osai, 2023). They are feverishly outdoing each other in building private Taj Mahals, which are trophy houses and mere magnificent mansions of future melancholy for their successors. Everyday Nigerians see the ruling elite quarreling and calling each other bad names—but it is just a game intended to fool the public: in reality they are quite united in quietly sharing the loot from the treasury and delivering little or nothing to their various constituencies. They have a stake in keeping the citizens poor, weak, confused and, therefore, easy to exploit. The lack of inclusive economic policies and infrastructure development continues to perpetuate a sense of marginalization. For instance, the Niger Delta region, despite being a major source of oil wealth, has seen little development and a high level of poverty (Ebenezer, 2010).

**Weak Institutions:** Nigeria's institutions, including the judiciary and law enforcement agencies, have often been criticized for inefficiency and corruption. This weakens the rule of law and undermines citizens' trust in the state. Instances of compromised justice, such as the delayed trials of corrupt politicians, the inability to provide justice in cases of corruption or human rights abuses undermines the rule of law and erodes trust in institutions. The Nigerian system of Federalism is often denounced as a veritable source for the country's multifaceted crisis of poor governance. Pre-1967 Federalism had fueled ethno-regional conflict, inequality, insecurity and secession and the current 36-state system is a replay of these challenges that led to this crisis but the citizenry are tired and to scared to fight back rather the act of eloping has become the solution leading to massive Brain drain (Ebenezer, 2010).

**Political Instability:** Political instability, including contested elections and allegations of electoral fraud, has marred Nigeria's democratic processes. For example, the 2019 presidential elections faced accusations of irregularities, which affected the credibility of the electoral system and led to political tensions (Dele and Okafor, 2022).

**Lack of Civic Engagement:** Apathy and disengagement from civic life among many Nigerians have made it challenging to build a sense of national identity and unity. Low voter turnout and lack of participation in community development initiatives hinder the progress of nation-building. "Arise O compatriots, Nigeria's call obey..." Nigerians have abandoned the national call and are dealing with their selfish individual calls, their family calls and their club's call. The anthem further calls for service, evident in the lines, "serve our fatherland with love and strength and faith", which seems impossible because Nigeria is used as an Automated Teller Machine (ATM) and give nothing back by leaders and citizens making, 'the labour of our heroes past'. "To serve with heart and mind". But service was thrown out a long time ago. self-service is more on the increase (Jason, 2023). This lack of engagement is evident in low voter turnout and apathy towards community development initiatives (Dele and Okafor, 2022).

**Other issues affecting nationhood** which is key to nation-building in Nigeria as written by Chinua Achebe are: Tribalism, False image of ourselves, Nigerian-style leadership, Lack of Patriotism which is meant to be the aim of the National anthem in the hearts of the leaders and citizens because, a patriot is one who loves his/her country and not just by saying it but putting it into actions. Just merely singing the national anthem by Nigerians is only an epitome of just words without actions. Patriotism is an emotion of love, selflessness towards development and unity of one's nation as seen in U.S, China, Japan etc but in Nigeria, the reverse has been the case despite the use of two anthems. Social Injustice and the Cult of mediocrity; in his words, "the real explosive potential of injustice in Nigeria does not reside in the narrow jostling among the elite but in gargantuan disparity of privilege they have created between their tiny class and the vast multitudes of ordinary Nigerians". Indiscipline; the goal of indiscipline is self-interest (Chinua Achebe, 1983) as seen in the ill activities of the 2023 elections and the indiscipline of the electoral commission (INEC). Ethnic and Religious tensions, for example; the Igbo problem, Political instability, Resource distribution and inequality,

security challenges, corruption, governance, youth unemployment, regional disparities, lack of civic engagement, lack of shared history, language barriers, external influences.

These reoccurring factors continue to pose challenges to nation-building in Nigeria, affecting the country's stability, development, and the formation of a unified national identity and are deeply rooted in historical, political, economic, and social issues. These issues have led to conflicts, instability, and a lack of trust in the government, making the process of building a unified, prosperous nation more challenging. To address these issues, it is crucial for Nigeria to focus on good governance, social cohesion, economic development, and the strengthening of its institutions.

### **SOLUTIONS TO THE CHALLENGES OF NATION-BUILDING OF NIGERIA CONVEYED IN BOTH ANTHEMS.**

While the national anthems, "Nigeria, We Hail Thee" and "Arise, O Compatriots," don't explicitly provide solutions to the challenges of nation-building, we can interpret general principles from their themes as given by Babatunde (2023), here are solutions aligned with those principles, framed in the context of lines from the anthems:

- Foster unity among diverse groups as seen in the lines: "Nigeria we hail thee, our own dear native land". This can be implemented by promoting inclusive policies and national dialogue to celebrate and appreciate the diversity and interdependence within ethnic communities, the country and the wider international community (Babatunde, 2023).
- Instill national pride and patriotism. As in, "Arise, O compatriots, Nigeria's call obey". Which implementation strategy is to, integrate civic education into the curriculum, emphasizing Nigeria's history, values, and the collective responsibility of citizens (Babatunde, 2023).
- Increase awareness and understanding of the country's natural, cultural, and spiritual resources. This will encourage national pride and ownership, leading to their conservation and national development (Babatunde, 2023).
- Service for Nation-Building: Encourage active participation and service as seen in the lyrics, "Serve with heart and might" by establishing volunteer programs and community projects that allow citizens to actively contribute to the nation's development (Babatunde, 2023).
- Develop basic skills necessary for social, economic, and political decision-making. These skills should include observation, analysis, and inference, alongside traditional academic skills such as reading, writing, and arithmetic. (Babatunde, 2023).
- Ensure access to relevant information and knowledge for personal growth and development. This will enable citizens to contribute positively to society and promote national integration (Babatunde, 2023)..
- Promote a positive attitude of togetherness, comradeship, and cooperation among citizens. Values such as honesty, integrity, hard work, fairness, and justice should be instilled to foster a healthy nation (Babatunde, 2023).
- Encourage adherence to the rule of law by both citizens and the government. This promotes accountability, transparency, and fairness, which are essential for building a just and equitable society. (Babatunde, 2023).
- Faith in the Future: Instill hope for the nation's future as one of the lines reads "Our flag shall be a symbol that truth and justice reign" by implementing policies addressing economic challenges of positive impact to the citizens, investing in education, and creating opportunities for youth to ensure a brighter future. (Babatunde, 2023).
- Promotion of Peace: Emphasize the importance of peace as seen in the line "To build a nation where peace and justice shall reign". Thus could be achieved by implementing conflict resolution mechanisms, address root causes of conflicts, and promote interfaith and interethnic dialogue (Babatunde, 2023).
- Inclusive Development: Ensure development benefits all regions and social groups as the anthem sings, "The labor of our heroes past shall never be in vain". And can only come true when policies are implemented to address regional disparities, ensuring equitable resource distribution, and promoting sustainable development practices (Babatunde, 2023).

These solutions, inspired by the anthems' themes, aim to address the challenges of nation-building by fostering unity, patriotism, active participation, hope, peace, and inclusive development above all nationhood.

## CONCLUSION

The task of nation building is never the exclusive preserve of a leader because they do not possess the omnipotent wisdom to do it. They can only craft a vision while the citizenry drives it. The role of political opposition is to constantly test those ideas against democratic best practice and in as much it elevates the welfare of the people and put the Nigerian nation on the path of sustainable development. It is not that countries that are prosperous and have achieved true nationhood do not have disagreements within its political ranks or do not have ethnic diversities or do not have corruption in their midst – after all, corruption is a subtle part of every capitalism; but national interests have been allowed to flourish over sectional interest. This patriotic demean-or can only be brought about if Nigerians irrespective of allegiances and affiliations embrace a new paradigm whereby the progressive interest of Nigeria becomes paramount to everyone. Nigeria needs to be the larger local community which is what these anthems suggest. Notwithstanding the myriad of challenges and fortuitously though, Nigerians have been able to tag along as one indivisible country contrary to the predictions of people that felt the fault lines will continue to widen. Despite the evident periods where the tension was palpable and the country tilted to the precipice of implosion, it managed to pull itself together. The recent electoral season was a proof of that irrepressible spirit of the people to remain ethnic and nonchalant actions has become the behaviour of Nigeria because their hope once again was destroyed. To strengthen unity, there's a need for inclusive policies, education, and dialogue that acknowledge and respect Nigeria's rich diversity. There is an immediate call for patriotic compatriots to arise else the situation will get worse, to a point of decay that the possibility of building a Nigerian nation will be thin and impossible. So let all Nigerians hail their motherland because this is home, either in peace or battle honor, service with heart and might is all that is needed for the benefit of everyone in the country and the eventual build-up of Nigeria as a nation.

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