

Appendix C: National Objectives and the Faculty of Arts and

Social Sciences.

INTRODUCTION

The state is a political phenomenon with abstract characteristics which cut across time, space and culture. As such, it rests on a universally applicable raison d'etre which derives from the very nature of human survival. On the other hand, each individual state has peculiarities which result from the uniqueness of the specific combination of space and time to which it is tied. The proper conceptual environment within which to determine the national objectives of any state, therefore, must first be based on a desire to align such objectives with the fundamental reasons for the existence of states. Secondly, it must be based on the need to set these objectives - and to identify others - within a framework determined by the peculiar circumstances of the state in question.

Nigeria's national objectives must be determined, then, from the very fact of its being a state whose existence derives justification from the performance of functions which citizens everywhere and at all times expect their state to perform for them. In this connection, a state is essentially a device for creating the requisite conditions for human survival at a tolerable level of civilization. Such concepts as unity, self reliance, justice, democracy, economic growth, etc are merely individual facets subsumed under the conditions which states create for human survival. These Universalistic ideals form the core of the national objectives discussed below. But they are set within the context of, and derive concrete interpretation from, the peculiar circumstances which characterize and circumscribe Nigeria as a political community. It is to a brief analysis of these peculiar circumstances that the rest of this preamble now addresses itself.

The historical derivation of Nigeria is perhaps the key to an understanding of the country's existence as a state. The first significant point about the history of the country is that prior to British colonial entry, the area now making up Nigeria consisted of a patchwork of various political entities, with different sizes, cultures and degrees of external exposure. Of course, these different entities formed part of a wider African historical process which was firmly rooted in the peculiar character and evolution of the African environment. They were engaged in varying degrees of interaction through trade, wars and various forms of cultural diffusion process. Consequently, on a continental or broad regional level, they shared certain common cultural, technological and ideological traits. Nevertheless, these entities had individualistic conceptions of national destiny which in each case was rooted in the

existence of a unique cultural and historical experience.

The second significant point has to do with the character of British colonial "intervention", the driving force behind which was the appreciation of the fact that success in commercial exploitation depended squarely on political control. Hence British political activities were directed at ensuring minimal conditions necessary for the diversion of the country's wealth, and at ensuring that there existed a certain level of controllable hostility between ethnic groups consistent with minimal stability. Given such clearly ulterior motives, it would have been quite illogical and out of character if the British had gone out of their way to actively encourage the emergence of a truly Nigerian nation and to instil a sense of national consciousness in the citizens. Apart from this singular act of deliberate omission, the British - also understandably and in keeping with normal colonial practice - discouraged the development of a vigorous internal economy that could assert sufficient independence from the metropolitan base. Even more important, because it underlies the relatively intractable problem of reorientating our society away from a deeply entrenched psychological commitment to the colonial ethos, is the fact that the British appreciated and tried to meet the need for wider cultural indoctrination as a precondition for the long-term success of their essentially materialistic designs.

The third significant point is that in granting independence, the British had no intention of giving up the benefits which their association with Nigeria had conferred on them. They went through the motions of handing over political authority to Nigerians, but in reality clung tenaciously to the substance of it. Thus they continued to control and manipulate the internal production and external exchange relations while, into the bargain, relinquishing the financial responsibilities of an overt colonial relationship.

Apart from taking a look at the above features of our political history, it is also important to consider the present-day environment which will influence the working out of a destiny for the country. These will be considered in terms of the world context, the African context and the domestic situation.

Viewing Nigeria in the context of the entire world, a number of significant points are apparent. The first point is that she is part of that section of the world usually labelled as economically underdeveloped. Secondly, she is a victim of external relationships of a neocolonial nature which implies that her economy is subject to subtle, incessant and reverberating manipulations from the outside and that mere ripples in the economic fortunes of powerful western countries - and of their 'international' corporations - produce substantial turbulence in her economy. Thirdly, the economic and military helplessness, consequent on the

above features, places her quite low in the hierarchy of world political power.

However - and this is the fourth point - she is endowed with a size of population that is by no means insignificant. Of course, her size of population only places her in the middle range in relation to the world pattern, but it is significant for at least two reasons. It is the largest in Africa and also it is the largest population of black people grouped with a country anywhere in the world. The logical consequence is that she is normally expected to assume a position of leadership in the struggle for the total emancipation of the African continent in particular, and the entire black population of the world in general. Moreover - which is the fifth point - her possession of substantial resources means that the economic, hence ultimate military and political, potential for giving subsistence to her leadership role does exist. In particular her oil wealth has proved crucial. In this connection, the recent world oil crisis has helped to unmark the vulnerability of the present economic supremacy of the western powers. Finally, her strategic position in relation to the struggle for Africa and black emancipation, coupled with the growing realization of her considerable potential for economic and political power, leads naturally to her being closely watched as a potential threat to existing structure of world power.

Whereas, from the point of view of the currently powerful nations, Nigeria is viewed with awe because of her strategic position, for African countries in general she is, or at any rate should be, thought of as a source of hope. Any degree of success that attends her continuous attempt to give substance to her independence will have hopeful implications for similar success elsewhere in Africa and will further strengthen her for the role of effective leadership. On the other hand, in her struggle for a more concrete independence, not only can she expect direct obstacles from the world powers who stand to gain by her continued subordination, but also her efforts will tend to be thwarted by some African countries who are (unrepentant or merely helpless) neocolonial clients of these major world powers. This means of course that her position vis-a-vis other African countries is not as straightforward as it might appear and that in trying to lead them, she will have to pick her steps carefully through a complex web of entrenched international interests of bilateral and multilateral dimensions.

Even more important for the working out of our national objectives is a clear appreciation of the domestic situation, several features of which may be identified. On the credit side, there is the existence of substantial human and natural resources which, if put to proper use, would ensure a high level of general good. But against this is a whole series

of problems which not only hinder a realization of the benefits which our resources promise, but also strike at the very basis of human happiness. There is the problem of economic underdevelopment, linked with the problems of low technology, productivity, and education. Quite apparent from the quantitative aspect, the educational problem may be further analysed, in terms of orientation and content and also with regard to geographic incidence. Another feature of the domestic environment are the problems which surround the inequality of access to resources and in the distribution of the national output. There are inequalities between the rural and urban populations, between farmers and middleman, between owners of capital and the providers of labour, and so on. These are matched by, and in some cases give rise to, similar inequalities of access to power, justice and equity. Add to these the problems of corruption and nepotism and those of ethnic chauvinism and you have a society seething with injustice and hate. These problems are of course the logical consequences of a value system which exhibits a number of ugly features. One of the most abhorrent is the deification of wealth irrespective of the means by which it is acquired. Another feature is the failure to place the qualities of self-assurance and originality a high up on our scale of values. Yet another is our passiveness which borders on fatalism. Thus there is the disposition, for example, to see very little that is wrong with might being right and to accept hierarchy as an inevitable principle of social structure.

### National objectives

The above preamble has attempted to present a brief outline of the environment within which to define the country's objectives. In fact, it is such an environment that underlies the debate on fundamental national objectives which has gathered momentum since the crisis and civil war. Out of this debate, a consensus has arisen over the need to systematically forge national unity; the need to eliminate all forms of foreign control and manipulation; the need to rapidly improve the conditions of life and the dignity of the common people; the need to ensure just and equitable distribution of wealth and amenities; and the need to bring about genuine popular participation. The following national objectives are discussed within the framework of these fundamental needs.

#### 1. National Integration and Unity

The importance of this objective is not necessarily that the existence of Nigeria as a nation is still in doubt but it is a manifestation of the will of a community to further strengthen the bonds of unity amongst themselves. It arises mainly from a realization of the adverse consequences of disunity, both in terms of the impossibility of normal life and in terms of opportunity for foreign manipulation. Policies must be devised, then, which seek to

strengthen this country, not merely as an ad hoc governmental activity, but as a fundamental social aim. To achieve this, national institutions and public programmes must be designed to carry out policies which are integrative in nature.

## 2. National Self Reliance

This refers to the continuous effort to generate and harness the forces of production in order to increase a nation's use of its own resources and reduce its dependence on others to a minimum. Since production is a necessary condition of human existence, the attempt to sustain a nation's existence and development through internally generated forces constitutes at once a process and a condition, a means and an end.

Inasmuch as self reliance involves a continuous effort to achieve self sufficiency, it constitutes a process. Self reliance is also an objective in the sense that it embraces and recognizes the idea of independence as a national value. Furthermore, the fact that total independence or complete self sufficiency is impossible to attain, there will always be reason and a necessity to endeavour to achieve the desired life state. It is its double character of process and goal which gives self reliance its permanence. Permanence, then, is a fundamental characteristic of self reliance. There can be no such thing as self reliance which is intended to cover a specific period of a nation's life. Rather self reliance can be thought of as a basic principle within which a diversity of programmes of different durations and magnitude can be implemented. Self reliance, strictly speaking should be pursued in the sense of a 'permanent revolution.'

Self reliance is total, not partial. It covers all aspects of a nation's life and cannot, by its nature, be restricted or limited to a selected number of problems. There is the danger of concentrating on a few problem areas, e.g. food production, achieving a certain measure of success in these areas and therefore assuming, on the basis of this result, that self reliance has been attained. It is almost meaningless, if not altogether contradictory, to talk of self reliance in, for instance, the national economy when the educational system is totally dependent - especially if the major role of the educational system in a nation's economy is recognized.

The element of totality points to another very important characteristic of self reliance, that is its systemic nature. The systemic quality of self reliance lies in the fact of the interrelatedness of a society's institutions such that changes in one institution are followed by or are associated with changes in other institutions. Development in education, for example, produces changes in the economic output of the nation, affects the system of social values, shows its influences on the family structure etc, etc. The

systemic nature of self reliance further confirms its totality and thus emphasizes the need for a broad-based and integrated approach to the problem.

These considerations point out quite clearly that the essential aim of self reliance is to achieve a high measure of self sufficiency and independence both on the national and individual level. More specifically it seeks to promote in and, at the same time, expects of the individual originality, inventiveness and, above all, emancipation, whereby emancipation is regarded as a necessary condition for originality and inventiveness. On the national level self reliance means establishing and maintaining independence (i.e. ensuring freedom from foreign control) in all aspects of national life, especially taking full control of the national resources away from foreign monopolies and using them for national development.

Individual emancipation and national independence must not be, and are not necessarily, contradictory. The apparent contradiction in the simultaneous endeavour for individual and national independence in fact underscores the non-additive nature of individual actions which constitute the totality of national performance. It is precisely in this sense that cooperation becomes a major factor in all phases of self reliance.

### 3. A Great and Dynamic Economy

This objective must be qualified. A great and dynamic economy which encourages considerable social and economic inequality on the basis of private accumulation of wealth cannot be accepted as a desirable objective.

Such an economy will only be beneficial if it ensures full employment, public control of the key sectors, and an efficient and satisfactory distribution of the social product. This objective can only be achieved on the bases of the development of heavy industry as the motor for any dynamic economy.

### 4. Justice and Equity

People can hardly be expected to identify with national causes, show responsibility and commitment etc., if they are denied their rights or are accorded no rights at all or where conditions are such that certain individuals or groups can impose their will on the generality and effectively operate with their own definitions of justice.

One of the primary conditions for effecting social justice and equity is the prevalence of a general awareness of the rights of the citizen and the existence of the means for securing them. In practical terms it involves an equitable distribution of resources of the national product not

only between geographic areas, but also between social categories and individuals. Ultimately, the exploitation of man by man must be abolished and all individuals must have equal access to the facilities and opportunities for personal development and for the improvement of their social and economic condition. More generally it means the establishment of social justice as a societal value and as a principle guiding social relations. For it is a quality which can only be brought about if those in policy-making positions are imbued with the right attitude and the compassion for making decisions that will engender social justice.

##### 5. A Free and Genuinely Democratic Society

The need to enshrine these qualities cannot be over-emphasized. Freedom is necessary to enable the individual live his fullest life under the protection of a united, strong and self-reliant nation. But he must be free within a circumscribed sense. Absolute and unlimited freedom is certainly not the purpose of this national objective. Individual freedom must be conceived within a limited perspective especially in so far as the action of individuals can subvert the collective will of the people or cause considerable discomfort and distress to other individuals. It therefore means that individuals should be able to exercise certain basic freedoms within an established national philosophy. Such freedoms can include:

- a) freedom of thought to enable individuals think and generate ideas about existing and future directions of the country. This is particularly important if opportunities for beneficial change and transformation of society are not to be lost sight of.
- b) freedom of movement which allows for individuals to move freely within the country and of course to settle wherever they wish. The recognition of this freedom by the state is a precondition for the establishment of a united and strong nation.
- c) other individual rights and freedoms which are necessary in every society and help to enshrine a sense of security and identification with the nation.

In order to bring about a genuinely democratic society, the system must encourage popular participation in all spheres of national life to the extent of total involvement. To initiate this process there is first the need to make the citizens aware of the national condition and problems, and of the resultant national objectives. Then there is the need to make them feel a sense of personal commitment to the achievement of these national objectives, and to enable them realize that their individual contribution is called for.

There is thus a situation in which every individual sees himself as an active, useful link in the chain of activities that constitute national production. It is this realization by the individual, of the useful part that he can play, is expected to play, and is rewarded for playing, towards the realization of a noble objective that leads to total involvement which is the means and essence of genuine democracy.

### The Role of the University

National objectives may be regarded as statements or definitions of goals formulated and adopted by a country as guidelines or orientations for the totality of its activities. They do not only serve to give direction and purpose to action but also constitute a basis for evaluating individual, institutional and national performance. Hence the very existence of our universities cannot be justified except in so far as they operate with the spirit of, and positively advance, our national objectives. As institutions which produce, transmit and apply knowledge, skills and ideas, and which subject ideas to critical dissection, they occupy a very strategic position in the entire national system. It is for this reason that any country which allowed its universities to be controlled by foreign elements inimical to its vital interests might just as well hand over its reigns of government to foreigners. The entire national situation (both internal and external) as well as the problems that confront all areas of our national life must be the concern of the universities. Their specific role must be that of creating and disseminating a consciousness of our national situation, creating the necessary mental conditions and attitudes for coming to grips with our problems in the context of our national objectives, and supplying the relevant practical skills for running the national system.

This discussion has an important implication for the academic work in Ahmadu Bello University.

1. It suggests that no student should be allowed to graduate from this university without imbibing a consciousness of our national circumstances and the mental attitudes which should impel him towards selfless, dedicated, and beneficial service to his countrymen. It is therefore suggested that a beginning university-wide course on general studies be launched with the aim of ensuring a certain level of sensitivity to our national problems and of inculcating the right mental attitudes in our graduates. It is also suggested that such a course should have philosophy as its foundation in order to equip students for the war of minds which our national destiny implies.

2. Lecturers will also require a reorientation. The incessant hankering after "prestigious overseas journals" as



outlets for their publications must stop. Instead, since our national objectives demand that their aim should be to effect improvement in our national situation and to influence policy in this regard, emphasis must now be shifted to the encouragement of local Nigerian/African journals. Also lecturers must be discriminating in their attendance of overseas conferences, and when they attend they must be sure that they are not merely feeding foreign interests with the information for making decisions that are ultimately antagonistic to us.

3. Promotion of academic staff should reflect contribution to national development.

4. Finally, there is need to re-examine the external examiner system in over to ensure that the standards which we seek to maintain are really those which are relevant to the achievement of our national objectives.

### The Role of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

The faculty of arts and social sciences has the specific tasks of conducting research and teaching into social existence and consciousness. Given these tasks, it seems that the faculty should direct itself to the following, in order to work towards the national objectives:

1. The development of commitment to national unity through the study of the existing state of national intergration and unity and the forces transforming this.
2. The development of national consciousness and self-respect through the study, appreciation and creative work in Nigerian and African languages, literature, art and other forms of cultural expression. The appreciation of these is to be deepened by supplementing it with the study of significant and relevant expression of the culture of other parts of the world.
3. The development of an awareness of the position of Nigeria and Africa in the world today and of the problems and obstacles to achieving genuine independence through a study of the forces and relations which are determining this.
4. The development of an awareness of the conditions of life of the common people of this country and the ways and problems of improving this and ensuring their livelihood and dignity through the study of the concrete conditions here and in other countries in similar circumstances.

5. The development of an awareness of the evolution, structure and values of the Nigerian political and social systems of the ways of ensuring national intergration and stability through genuine popular participation; through a study of the concrete conditions here and in other countries in similar circumstances.
  
6. The development of the committment, capacity and self-confidence to conduct research and discover more about all these through the création and modification of new and more relevant concepts and methodologies.

In trying to discharge these functions, the faculty should not feel constrained by the existing disciplinary boundaries, but should make use of the interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary approach wherever a research or teaching problems demands it.