THE CONSTRUCTION OF A LEVIATHON: STATE BUILDING, IDENTITY FORMATION AND THE CRISIS OF POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA.

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The Nigerian state is failing. The hope of greatness and of giant-hood of Africa is falttering. The Nigerian project has remained at the best a problematic. A major manifestation of the failed hopes has been in the suffusing of the polity with a resurgence of identity politics, heightened identity conflicts as well as the polity's submergence in all kinds of virulent identity based riots, wars and violence. There is ethnic, communal, religious and regional conflagration at the slightest provocation. More recently, armed militias have become the fighting armies of different communities and ethnic groups in very violent confrontations with the state and other groups.

The Nigerian identity, common citizenry, attachment and loyalty is very weak and failing. Ethnic, communal, religious, regional and sectional identity has become the safe haven in the circumstance of an incompetent, weak, failing and insensitive state. The huge leviathan of identity problems has impacted in very undermining form on other dimensions of the state and governance crisis and development failure just as it is itself being intensified by the complex and multifarious crises.

The state and its officials and the competing ruling class and its factions have been fingered as central to the resurgence and heightening of identity, identity politics and conflicts. Being the main base of class formation and accumulation and being consequently huge in its stakes and centrality to personal and group welfare and survival, what is created is an intense and fierce competition and an amoral and lawless politics. With the state as an actor, a locus of conflict and an instrument of the struggle, Nigerian politics has been that in which groups have been excluded and marginalized, disadvantaged and rendered powerless. The result has been very deep challenges by numerous groups of the national question and the advocacy of new reforms, forms and structures for continuing existence.

The initial wave of identity was a colonial creation. Colonialism hindered a common national identity and consciousness by its promotion of ethno-religious separate-ness, consciousness and loyalty. But beyond this, identity construction has largely been indigenous. Nationalism, the nationalist leaders and the post independence leaders fostered and heightened identity nationalism, mobilization and politicization. The nationalist struggle was the initial opportunity for ethno-religious and regional identity construction and solidification. Since then, the Nigerian ruling class and elites have persisted in the factional struggle for access to regional and federal power and resources, in the construction and transformation of identity such that it has become a monster, a ravaging leviathan that has stunted, damaged and undermined
Nigeria's political development and pushed it several times to the steep cliff and even beyond the threshold.

The situation raises numerous questions and issues that requires historical, and theoretical analysis. How did state officials and elites construct and transform identity such that it has generated a citizenship crisis, pushed the citizenry to primordial enclaves, polarized identity and made identity as a mobilized and popular base for the inter-elite struggle for power and resources. What were the processes and dynamics of this construction and transformation at the formative and early stages of Nigeria's nationhood? What institutions and activities were the instruments and what were the immediate and long term goals of the construction. In what arenas and formation were the context and battle grounds for the identity construction and transformation? What were the linkages to the contemporary period and how do the early forms of construction continue to impinge on the contemporary situation?

The paper would rely on secondary and archival data to construct the processes, methods, actors and agencies of the construction and transformation of identity into the contemporary ravaging leviathan.