

## **A Restructured Nigeria, a Rebranded Nigeria**

Anyone who is acquainted with Nigeria political and economic trend will not give up on the question of whether Nigeria is progressing or retrogressing. Is the country better off? Is there any prospect for the so-called giant of Africa? Nigeria has slid from being the giant of Africa, the richest black nation on earth to the poorest nation on earth. According to Quartz Africa, Nigeria has the highest extreme poverty on the planet. The promise of a great nation becomes a mirage and blew into oblivion in bewilderment leaving the country in the shadow of itself to live in some past glory.

This is why Nelson Mandela lamented "I cry every day for Nigeria. Nigeria helped us to emancipate from Apartheid, Nigeria helped Angola to retain freedom, Nigeria helped Malawi and Namibia to rise up. Nigeria helped East Africa, Zambia, and Zimbabwe, Nigeria did all that but cannot help herself. Nigeria is now bedeviled by corruption, inmate corruption"<sup>1</sup>

This elegy, there was a country and the need for a restoration of lost glory, the yearning for a dream Nigeria and a rebranded Nigeria are what pushed concern and patriotic Nigerians from different quarters out of their cocoon in a cry for restructuring. In this context, restructuring connotes changes from the old ways in an attempt to make a thing work better and effectively.

Nigeria currently practice a federal system of government. By virtue of this, the federal government oversees the affairs of state and local governments. The federal government controls and approves state and local governments' resource and allocation. In other words, the state government and the local government don't have the veto power to initiate power generating project. They don't enjoy the liberty to embark, execute or complete any meaningful project within their domain or sovereign state without prior permission and approval from the federal government no matter how important, necessary and beneficial it is to the state. For instance, if there is fire outbreak at the local level the fire service at the local level will have to wait for approval, signal, and provision from the federal government before they swing into action which may never come until the entire building melt to ashes. In a restructure nation, my dream Nigeria, it is the sole responsibility of the federal government to oversees foreign policies, defense while the state government enjoys the liberty to meet the state most necessary needs. These and many other reasons, which some of them will be revealed later, necessitate many voices to join the chorus for devolution of power.

Excessive power at the central also contributes to the cause of corruption and nepotism in Nigeria. According to the corruption perception index reported by Transparency International, Nigeria has progressed from 139 in 2014 to 150 in 2018 out of 172 countries in the world. There is no longer election in Nigeria but selection, on rare cases where there will be an election, it is not peaceful than a battlefield. Men of questionable characters thrust themselves into the corridor of power through the back door. This is against the backdrop of credibility, accountability, and responsibility to the people they claimed whose interest they claim to represent. It is utopian that many of these political desperadoes seek public office not because of what they can do, want to contribute, offer nor because of the ideal they ideal to harness and develop the resources in their territory for the better of the citizens but to take their share of the

---

<sup>1</sup> Extracted from Mandela was Angry with Nigeria by Dr. Hakeem Baba-Alhmed.

national cake, loot and embezzle the public funds. This is what Nelson Mandela meant when he lamented "you (Nigerians) should encourage leaders to emerge who will not confuse public offices with the source of making personal wealth." Nigeria's electioneering process has turned to what it is, war front, by the politicians because of their wrong motive to enrich themselves with the money, resource from and at the federal level. The character, reputation, and the dossier of politicians need to be locally x-rayed and meticulously scanned before giving them the opportunity to lead. In some societies, those at the local level don't know and cannot attest to the character of their representative both at the state and at the federal level. There is an urgent need for the intervention of devolution of power for a transformation from this old archaic political rout, to curtain with the menace that associate with it; imposition of leaders into power without considering his or her record and their rapport with people at the grassroots, and build a wall against this political nuisance.

Even the blind can see and the deaf can hear of the nepotic and tribal appointments in Nigeria begging for urgent arrest. This process has thrust mediocre into public office of power through the back door against emerging leader by merit. The Nigeria Police Force is a typical example of this. It never gives room for credibility, accountability, and responsibility of an emerging public servant or leader.

In term of economy, I believe in the school of thought that devolution power will contribute to rapid economic growth as each of the federating states or unit will be obliged to enact law, policies, and program to generate their revenue and control their resources, initiate a project that is most important to their development. Every autonomous leader will be compelled out of their comfort zone into a critical thinking of what they can do with the resources available to them in their state and how to attract investors from within and outside the country. The era of dependency on oil and allocation from the federal government for state and local government project will be a thing of the past and that will bulldoze the leaders to strategize and look beyond their nose for resources or opportunity at their disposal which they were hitherto blind to and exploit them for economic growth. It will in another way call for an accountable and responsible governments who will carefully manage the hard earn generated revenue and thereby guard against any form of waste.

Absolute reliance on federal allocation and oil has made some Nigerian leaders lazy, unserious and inactive. In terms of agriculture, for instance, Edo State is among the highest producer of cocoa, cassava, plantain, palm product and assorted fruits in Nigeria. Malaysia is the second largest palm oil producing country in the world behind Indonesia. It was believed that Malaysian got their palm seed from Nigeria (although there is a controversy on this assertion). If there is anything that can recall the attention of the leaders from what they will get from the federal government to what they can do with what they have for economic growth this is the opportunity. In addition to agriculture, the natural resources located in Edo State; crude oil, natural gas, clay chalk, marble, and limestone can also be harness and manage for the betterment of the citizen. In the midst of these abundances, the people of the state are dying of hunger and unemployment. Edo State tops the list of unemployment in Nigeria, whereas there lies in pitiable state industry that can absorb thousands of employees. Bendel cement company, Okpella; Bendel Brewery, Benin City; Bendel Pharmaceutical Plc, Benin; and Flour Mills, Ewu are in dilapidated state. There is a need for a cure of this lackadaisical attitude by Nigeria's leaders to what they have for sustainability instead of reliance on oil and allocation from the federal government for survival.

By Aimuan Paul