

## Death of A Nation

### Nigeria failed by forgetting why it was created

\*John O. Ifediora

A purposive thought of a united Nigeria necessarily engages an Orwellian DoubleThink, the conscious effort to hold two completely contradictory positions at once on an issue, and simultaneously believing in both. The nation-state of Nigeria was never designed to succeed as an organic entity that independently meets the needs, visions and aspirations of its varied citizenry. It could not have, even if the British who cobbled it together executed its formation with the best intentions. As is true with all colonized geopolitical territories within the muscular domain and political competence of Great Britain, the primary objective of colonization was two-fold: to create exclusive control of material and human resources native to the submissive territory to benefit domestic productivity in Britain, and as a component of the broader objective of empire-building. None of these self-serving impulses factors into its calculus the welfare and desires of the natives.



*British colonial rule in Nigeria/Getty images.*

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Nigeria was no exception to this exercise of power and subjugation, and was ultimately stillborn, presumptively resuscitated and sustained for administrative convenience; that it managed to remain reasonably viable after independence from Britain in 1960 is a feat to be admired, but seeking to elongate such feat would be reckless and irreconcilable to refined intelligence. Calls for Nigeria's dissolution as a unitary geo-political entity, and to create in its stead multiple nation-states, have grown steadily in recent years amongst its disaffected citizens as the declining health of its economy lays bare concretized ethnic and religious fault lines. The rationale to retain its identity as a unitary nation-state with a strong federal character may no longer be serviceable nor can it be reasonably expected to endure much longer given its perennial failure to serve its proper functions.

The cumulative effects of long-neglected internal dysfunctions, misdirected loyalties, and concerted effort by Nigeria's political and economic elites to use the nation's treasury as personal assets are unsurprisingly manifesting themselves in various forms. Pervasive insecurity inspired by sectarian violence and terrorist groups, kidnapping for ransom, oppressive levels of unemployment, conflicts between Fulani herdsmen and residents of southern states, disaffected Igbos seeking a separate nation of Biafra, the Oduduwa movement for a separate Yoruba nation-state, unsustainable incidence of illiteracy and poverty are the most obvious of what currently ails Nigeria. Most of these is self-inflicted and avoidable, but the most deleterious of the lot, however, is structurally induced and not amenable to effective governance or responsive public policy.

Take the bloody conflict between Fulani herdsmen and everyone else who oppose their presence in southern states; herds of cows need water and expansive land mass to thrive. This need could have been easily accommodated by a functional nation-state with a unified vision and common purpose. Take the monstrosity of Boko Haram, a terrorist group in the north-east corner of the nation that has killed and destabilized residents of the region for years; failed attempts by federal and states governments to neutralize the group speak to years of sustained efforts to marginalize and weaken essential social institutions. Take the presence of Sharia laws in some northern states, and the application of constitutional and legislated laws in southern states of the nation; such anomalies are incompatible to the ideation of a nation-state with articulated shared values.

## **Why the concept of a united Nigeria is no longer serviceable**

For a nation-state to self-sustain and endure, it must have the capacity to inspire loyalty and pride amongst its citizenry; but most importantly, it must meet the basic needs of its population and engender a sense of collective ownership. This latter requirement fosters ready identification with it by its citizenry. On all these counts Nigeria has failed miserably; it perennially fails to meet the basic needs of its population, it does not inspire, it lacks pride of collective ownership, and its citizens are all too ready to disown it within and without its territorial competence.

Within Nigeria, a foreigner who seeks personal information from a native is invariably informed that he or she is Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo or a member of one of its constituent ethnic groups. Identification as a Nigerian is usually an afterthought, and only if pressed. Beyond the boundaries of Nigeria, a similar inquiry is usually met with mixed responses, prevarication or a qualified response. One would be hard pressed to get such tongue-splitting responses to what should be a simple display of pride of ownership and identity if Nigerians felt that way.

In no other national arena is the dysfunction in Nigeria better exemplified than the political system of 'rotational' presidency. While not articulated in the current national constitution, it is an undisturbed norm that each cycle of a presidential election should produce a leader from a different ethnic group; qualification and the ability to govern are never important considerations in Nigeria's presidential elections. Ethnicity and religious affiliation, in this order of importance, are the primary and only qualifying considerations.

The election of a new president provides an even clearer observation that Nigeria as a nation-state lacks any semblance of unifying factors. A cursory look at the new administration and its functionaries provides sufficient guide as to what ethnic group the new president identifies with; invariably, almost all important ministries, legal and economic institutions would be headed by individuals who also identify with the ethnic group or religion the new president identifies with.



The rationale and goals are simple enough; to maximize transference of the national income and political power to the president's ethnic and religious group. The remainder of the country would have to wait until one of their own occupies the presidency before economic and political gains accrue to them. This is Nigeria's reality.

This political arrangement was readily accepted by Nigerians when the tide of oil boom lifted almost all willing and able participants in the national economy. The steady decline of oil revenue beginning in the 2000s shrank the national income, and as politicians and policy makers took more for themselves, existing consequential national fault lines became more visible; those without access to political power and economic resources are now asking for a new political and economic arrangement. The old norm was no longer serviceable; the nation was never one in the first instance. The pretenses to a united nation-state of Nigeria are no longer benign and harmless illusions. A course correction is now cardinally imperative.



*The oil boom of the 1980s / Getty images.*

## **A tortured illusion of exceptionalism and prosperity**

In a high tide every swimmer's capability in the water would appear evenly distributed; it is when the tide subsides is this perception corrected and those with marginal talents are revealed. This is true with nations. From the late 1970s to the mid 1980s Nigerians generally had reasons to be hopeful as the nation embarked on mass reconstruction of social infrastructures after the civil war that ended in 1970. Foreign aid and the subsequent oil boom of the 1980s spurred further investments in all relevant segments of the economy, and the nation's Gross Domestic Product sustained an upward trajectory. Both rightly and wrongly, Nigerians saw an apparition of real economic growth and projected a sense of exceptionalism amongst other Africans, and for good reasons: migration into Nigeria by Africans from neighboring and far off nations seeking economic opportunities and admission to elite Nigerian universities rose remarkably. The illusion of prosperity that bordered on grandiosity was pervasive. But that was then.

In periods of economic prosperity, flawed social and economic institutions, unsustainable political arrangements, and incompatible cultural and religious sensibilities would seem innocuous to the less observant. In Nigeria the oil boom of the 1980s provided enough annual receipt of passive income to give the illusion of real economic growth, and lifted many from poverty. The rising economic tide hid the latent dangers of a deeply flawed social-economic arrangements, and a starved and neglected national educational system sustained the illusion that proliferation of private and public institutions of formal learning was better than quality. Industrial policies essential for real economic growth were not spared by the same illusion of economic prosperity.

The conflation of real and nominal economic growth fueled by oil revenue had more insidious effects than realized. Policy makers and the governed deemed it necessary to spread the newly found 'national wealth' to more Nigerians and began creating more states to a grand total of 36, including the capital territory. The cultural and ethnic divide once latent, became the basis for wealth redistribution; existing states were further subdivided on ethnic lines on the mistaken assumption that the national revenue from oil would be more effectively distributed with the creation of more states. Parity through nominal wealth distribution from a single source of national revenue became a paramount public policy objective. Energized ethnic minorities seeking more autonomy and group identity sustained further dissipation and misdirection of oil revenues. The important requirement for newly created states to demonstrate the ability to self-sustain was beside the point.

The drive for multiplicity of states in Nigeria, while ostensibly to effectively distribute windfalls from oil, was in point of fact motivated by identity politics. The agitation for group autonomy began the gradual unmasking of the suppressed reality that Nigeria is a nation-state comprised of ethnic groups that have absolutely nothing in common except in name only. The scramble for increasingly scarce and declining oil revenue further magnified the absence of shared values or cultural observances held in common.

To understand why Nigeria has failed to develop economically and grow into a middle-income nation-state comparable to its Asian counterparts, one must begin with a serious analysis of its structure of political leadership since its first republic in 1963, and prior experiences as a colonized geo-political entity. While both are intimately related and share the same pedigree, the socializing effects of the one are deeper, broader, and more durable than those of the other.

## **The everlasting gift from the British**

In countries colonized by the British, two entirely different strategies were deployed in the native territories. One called for full occupation of the acquired territory as if it were a physical extension of Britain, and to be treated as such by encouraging and assisting British immigration to the new protectorate. This is invariably the case in conquered territories with hospitable environment, conducive weather, and abundant landmass to cultivate exportable raw materials. British settlers, as a matter of course, brought with them social institutions and political sensibilities already in existence in Britain to guide their self-interested objectives in their new homeland. This was the case in the United States, Australia, South Africa and other colonized territories the British intended to reside permanently even when political control is eventually relinquished. The political, legal and economic institutions put in place by the new immigrants shaped and informed the favorable outcome these countries now experience long after independence from Britain.

The second empire-building strategy deployed by Britain was strictly one of extraction. It was reserved for territories not hospitable for permanent residence, but had the requisite raw materials and cheap labor, and provided markets for British manufactured goods. Lacking any semblance of socio-economic and legal institutions available in Britain, and other favored British colonies, these territories remained in semi-enlightened state after gaining political independence from Britain. This was the case in Nigeria, and other similarly situated ex-while British protectorates.

It is within this context that the current state of Nigeria may be profitably adjudged. A nation-state born out of administrative expediency with no unifying common language, contains three major ethnic groups each with cultural sensibilities completely irreconcilable to the others, boasts a population with vastly different formal educational attainment distributed along ethnic lines, and almost always encumbered by loyalties to different religious observances. From these minus the stabilizing influences of functional socio-economic and legal institutions, and the experiment called Nigeria becomes understandable.

But this is not to suggest that Nigeria's current difficulties derive entirely from colonial experiences; a great deal of what now afflicts the country is directly traceable, with relative facility, to its long string of leadership, and debilitating apathy of the governed. The British are long gone, but their colonial practice of extraction laid the foundation for the crippling bureaucratic corruption that Nigerians have practiced to perfection. The civil servants left behind after independence failed to correct the practice they were trained to execute as agents of British indirect rule, and as a matter of course.

When the British left, the civil servants in the various ministries simply substituted their self-interest for those of Britain; they failed to see the folly and self-defeating practice of stealing from the newly created nation-state, and hence from themselves. This is the well-spring of malfeasance, graft, and the common variety bureaucratic corruption now fully stitched into the social fabric of modern-day Nigeria and remains the omnipresent tail that wags policy makers and heads of ministries.

Nigeria effectively became an entity to be stolen from, and not to be replenished for sustenance. The inescapable outcome is an economy in shambles with decrepit infrastructure, failing educational system with neglected facilities, and factions of social groups scrambling for dwindling financial resources.

## Leadership by any other name

The common perception of the string of administrations that have governed the affairs of Nigerians from the first republic to the present is that of incompetence borne out of inexperience and compounded by the absence of appropriate social and legal institutions to guide good public policy and conscribe policy makers. A generous view of the leadership at the federal and state level is one of innocent naïvete but crooked. Lacking in refined formal education and requisite experience, successive administrators may be excused for the disastrous policies that have consistently retarded the nation's development and sustained all manners of pervasive social fractures and discontent. Such views of Nigerian leaders are inaccurate and wide of the mark.



*Tafawa Balewa. First Nigerian Prime Minister / Getty images*



*Nnamdi Azikiwe. First Nigerian President / Getty images*

*Balewa and Azikiwe failed to see the futility of Nigeria as created by the British.*





*General Abacha and General Babangida / Getty images*

*Both facilitated the moral decay and debasement of Nigeria.*

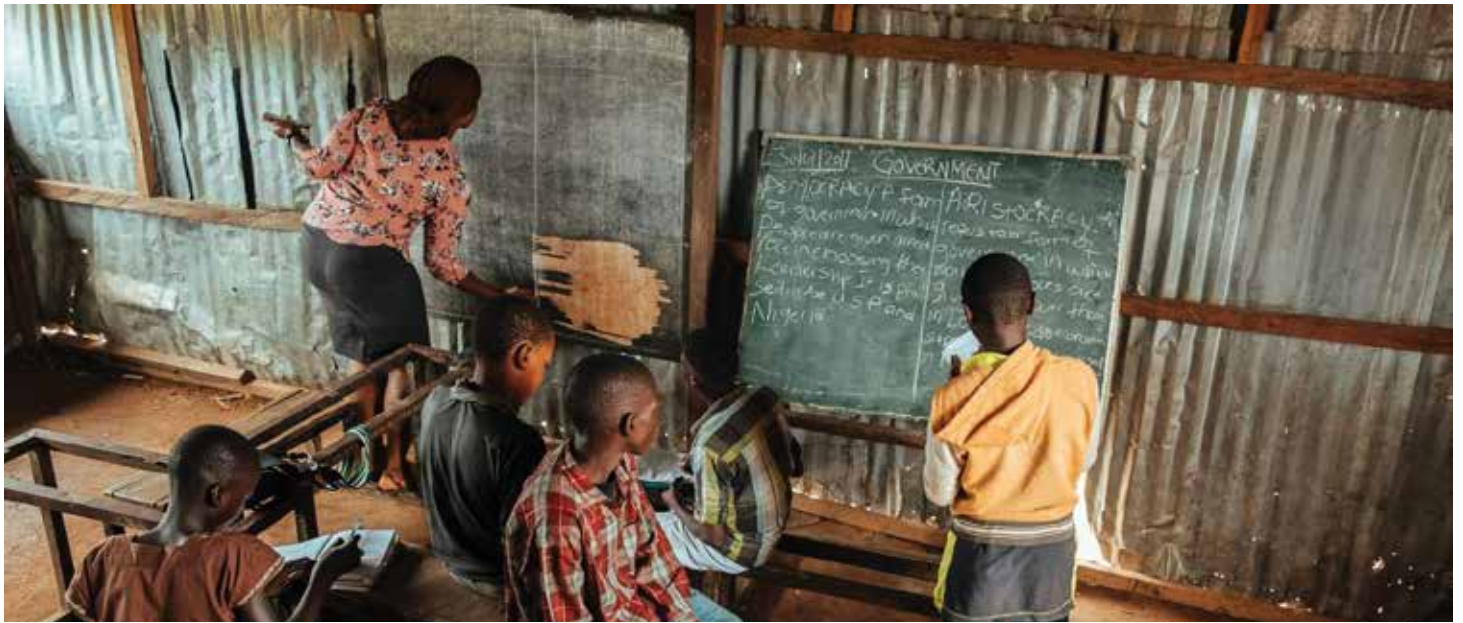
An accurate and apt description of Nigerian policy makers would challenge anyone, but what should be understood is that past and current leaders are very intelligent humans, and rose through the ranks by skillfully adapting their native and acquired intelligence to existing social conditions and legal institutions that circumscribed their natural habitat. By adeptly taking advantage of opportunities made possible by citizens' apathy, high incidence of illiteracy, and general lack of knowledge of citizens' rights and what constitutes effective and responsive governance, the political and economic elites in the nation successfully created a political oligarchy.

But sustenance of such political oligarchy is necessary for perpetual governance. The political elites also know that such governance structure would not be possible without inducing substantive and wide- reaching economic dependency. It therefore became imperative to create an economic chain that would tie the rest of the masses to the center of power, and simultaneously disrupt other means to independent self-development and sustenance. But this approach to governance requires systematic marginalization and dismantling of existing social and productive infrastructure necessary for economic development, and profitable employment of labor and capital. Such is the governance strategy of Nigerian political elites. They have effectively executed it, and may be rightly proud of their achievement, but the consequences of this short-sighted approach to governance is now becoming too obvious as oil revenues run dry. Their governance philosophy, which incidentally pervades much of African nation-states, is made more transparent in the following subsections.

### **Ignorance is power.**

The governing creed of Nigerian elites maybe summarized as follows: Keep the roads and transportation network in perpetual disrepair, and movement of goods and services are rendered inefficient; keep the electric supply in constant short supply, and the capability to manufacture and ultimately industrialize is effectively compromised; keep the educational system ineffective and redundant, and the acquisition of useful knowledge necessary for democratic capitalism is put beyond the reach of the masses. All legitimate and illegitimate administrations that governed the affairs of Nigerians implicitly adopted this general understanding. In principle and practice the mantra is simple enough; keep useful knowledge away from the polity and the governing elites can maintain power indefinitely.

By effectively starving the educational system to near universal redundancy, and forcing the intelligentsia to take flight, successive Nigerian governments succeeded in keeping the Nigerian polity on a short economic leash of subservience and destitution. As social infrastructure crumbled the leash became stronger by making governments at all levels the primary source of economic sustenance; all roads led (and still do) to Abuja and state capitals for the ubiquitous and all too powerful government contracts.



*A primary school in Nigeria. They deserve better.*

The political elites had succeeded; leave the social and economic infrastructure necessary for economic growth and knowledge acquisition in perpetual disrepair, and the Nigerian populace would remain tethered to the elites indefinitely. But this policy is self-defeating and unsustainable if the goal is to continue the myth of a unitary Nigeria layered over a host of ethnic groups with disagreeable cultural-religious sensibilities. As the economic tide that lifted all abated, the economic leash from the center has become weak and brittle. The center may not hold much longer; this outcome was inevitable.



*Empty beds in a hospital ward. The poor cannot afford to be here; those who can are just as worst off.*



## Servitude is Freedom.

The Orwellian 1984 fictional Newspeak is a Nigerian reality. Deprive the masses of means to self-sufficiency, give them handouts and subsidies so they remain hitched to the magnanimity of the political and economic elites, misrepresent facts to align with contrived reality, and one has the history of Nigeria's leadership. Imaginary annual budgets are misappropriated to illusory roads, schools, hospitals, electricity generation, and whatever projects can be conjured up, and make them exist in principle and in name only. Keeping existing roads and transportation infrastructure in perpetual disrepair succeeds in retarding delivery of goods and services and imposes inordinate cost on those who must use the road network; keeping electricity in constant short supply effectively hampers commercial and private activities to the point that no serious manufacturing beyond subsistent levels can be engaged; miseducating the population in sub-standard schools deprives the economy of skilled labor, and simultaneously deprives domestic industries access to high-research needed to drive technological advances and innovations.



*What awaits travelers on public roads.*

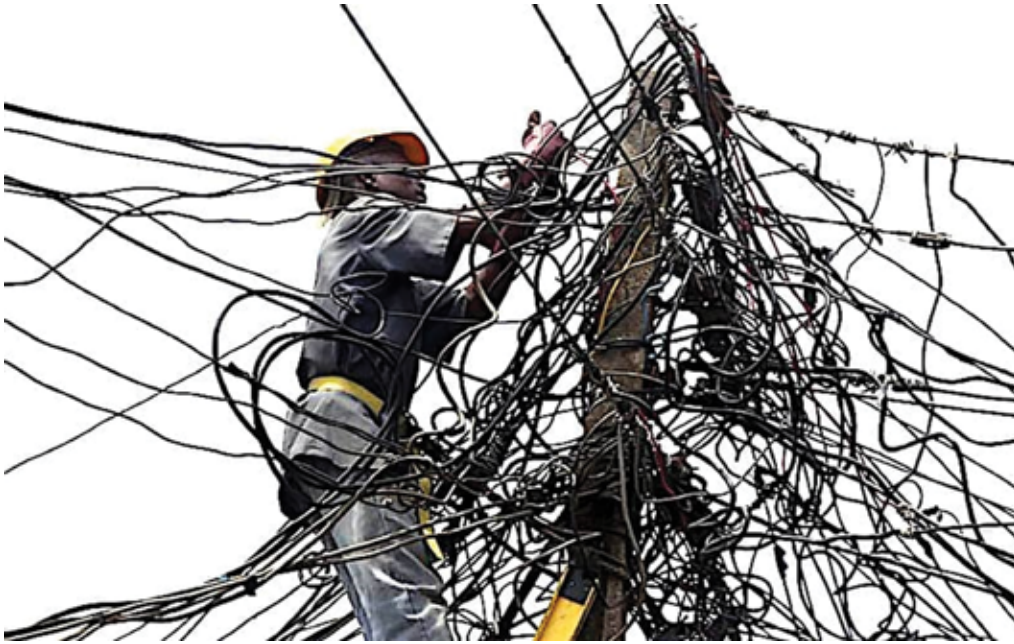
To complete the strategy of induced privation, over 90% of the population that resides in the informal sector are spared the important civic burden of taxation; since governments at all levels of government do not rely on tax revenues from citizens, citizens in turn have no good reason to seek accountability from their leaders on how tax revenues are used. Pay not, ask not; Nigerians are thus relieved of the economic cost of responsive governance, provision of social goods and service, and creation of functional institutions. With such freedom citizens are left to fend for themselves within the limits of economic chains of contracts held by the centers of power.

One may charitably ascribe the disastrous policy initiative by Nigerian leadership in the first twenty years of the nation's existence to a case of uninformed and badly educated leaders. But it would take incredible naivete and abject disinterest in the nation's welfare not to conclude that such policies were deliberately and strategically put in place. A coordinated effort or conspiracy between succeeding administrations is not necessary; the pattern of leadership and the attendant benefits to the political elites are too obvious to be missed or misinterpreted.

## Keeping the informal sector informal

Vast numbers of Nigerians make their living and effectively exist in the informal sector of the economy, and completely outside the legal or formal sector. The formal sector employs less than 20% of the population and accounts for government workers, employees in banking, telecommunication, and extractive industries. The retail, entertainment, hospitality, transportation, construction, and agriculture sectors are where over 90% of Nigerians makes its living, and constitute the economic base of the national economy. The combined value of the housing stocks and other assets privately held dwarfs all income generated annually from oil, and all foreign financial aid given by all countries combined.





*Which lines go where?  
Nigerians waiting for  
electricity are asking the  
same question.*

But in spite of this level of wealth privately held, its enormous market value is not accessible to many because they remain locked in the informal sector where they cannot be used to leverage the owners' purchasing power. In remote parts of Nigeria, and even in urban centers, homes and buildings are not formally registered, and for all practical purposes are nonexistent. Owners are therefore not able to use them to secure loans from the banking system; this inability to leverage purchasing power with existing physical assets is a major retardant to independent self-sustaining economic development and growth. The ability to unlock and leverage capital is a major distinguishing factor between Western and African economies.

This situation where most of Nigeria's economic activities remain trapped in the informal sector could have been corrected decades earlier if policy makers were so inclined. Issuance of verifiable identity cards with numbers, and proper registration of all privately held homes and buildings are a necessary first instance in bringing both people and their assets into the formal sector. Banks can only lend if they have means to identify and verify legal existence of individuals and assets and are able to burden the assets.

Not being able to borrow against their assets, transactions in the informal sectors are constrained to minimal and subsistence levels; those able to accumulate savings fast enough or receive loans from friends, family members or local organizations that offer micro-lending facilities manage to break the cycle of toil-earn-sustain-and-repeat.

The ability to secure governments contracts is what separates the economic elites from informal sector inhabitants. The non-physical wall that separates them is vertical and high; inhabitants of both sides of the invisible wall seldom have any meaningful relationship except that of buyers and sellers of domestic or retail services, and other informal employment that borders on servitude.

That an informal sector exists is not to imply that its inhabitants desire to reside there; they have shown repeatedly their ability to organize in all forms of community-based associations organized to provide needed social support and are run on rules that mimic what obtains in the formal sector. This demonstrates their ability to successfully participate in the formal sector and take the advantages that it can afford them. Barriers to such transition are the missing social institutions that can only be provided by governments – the rule of law that protects private property rights and enforces contracts, the legal means of identification of citizens and formal registration systems of assets, and removing the bureaucratic retapes that impose inordinate burdens on those seeking business permits and licenses.

Traders in the retail industry, farmers, private fisheries operators, proprietors of transportation chains, small and mid-size producers of goods and services trapped in a system that deprives them the ability to access working capital secured by privately held assets often fail, and ultimately join the mass of unemployables seeking government contracts in various centers of political power. This mass of unemployables, lacking in skills and access to working capital or loans from the formal sector must subsist on whatever is available. Petty crimes, kidnapping for ransom, internet scams, and terrorism become alternate professions with minimum investment in human capital. Locked out of the formal sector, the mass of unemployables and their chosen means of subsistence are the unwanted or anticipated derivatives of the leadership strategy of the Nigerian political elites. The chickens have come home to roost; the elites are no longer as safe as they once thought.



Bomb blasts from terrorist groups provide deadly distractions from crippling poverty and high unemployment

A systematic process of integrating the informal sector into the legal system of the economy would have unleashed an unprecedented economic growth in the national economy, quite apart and independent of the oil boom. The informal sector, however, is only as effective and productive as the social infrastructure and institutions at its disposal. As these gradually rotted away and left in disrepair by successive governments, advances in all segments of the economy and society naturally atrophied.

The masses are now asking questions, and once the mass of unemployables begin to make demands for change, nothing short of a comprehensive overhaul of the existing structure of Nigeria would suffice. One would think; but Nigerians have, over many years of insufferable leadership, consistently put in public view their ability to incorporate unpleasanties into evolutionary adaptation of survival instincts. Nothing in this regard has changed; not yet.

## Bureaucratic corruption as a final expression of nationhood

Spitting in the air, as most children often do, has a predictable nasty outcome; and as with corrupt practices, the boomerang effect is just as unpleasant. The possibility of the governed becoming adept in plying the obtuse mechanics of corruption in their daily transactions was not part of Nigeria's leadership animus or expectations; the practice of bureaucratic corruption and the administrative network it sustains were supposed to be the exclusive preserves of the elites. Not anymore. Nigerians have lived with the unpleasantness of corruption since the first republic of 1963 and have become so thoroughly desensitized to its various manifestations that being corrupt now serves as a distinguishing national trait. Without equals or serious rivals, Nigeria stands above all in this peculiarly destructive behavior, and has international gravitas and reputation to justify its image and appellation as the most corrupt country in the world.

The international image of its citizens as fraudsters, and unscrupulous adepts at financial crimes, get-rich-quick schemes, internet and bank fraud, and money-laundering come from decades of unabashed belief in the social benefits of conspicuous consumption designed to put in public display the ability to consume high-brand goods, articles of fashion, acquisition of multiple real estates both at home and in Western countries, and now Dubai. This is one area in which many Nigerians share a common value, where religious and social cleavages have been smothered – acquire material wealth without the odious task of earning it. Religious and secular leaders, government officials and policy makers, preachers and the preached to are just as compliant to this rotten culture made possible by the political and business elites. These baked-in social practices are manifestations of failed leadership that has perennially hampered economic development.

Nigeria's international image would be resistant to any concerted cleansing effort for decades to come, if only because the sources of its horrid reputation are just as resilient. This deserved bad image is in no less measures contributory to the nation's unattractiveness to foreign capital and technology-transfer. Nigerians in the diaspora, after losing all investments in the country in their various entrepreneurial ventures have gone away. Foreigners who have tried but failed to establish productive activities in the country are no longer willing to subject themselves to the nightmarish experience of getting business permits, registering their businesses, cash payments for services that should be free, and ultimately losing their investments to embezzlement, mismanagement of resources, outright theft, and kidnapping for ransom.

This is the final outcome of a nation-building strategy embarked upon over six decades ago by clever and self-serving elites intent on perpetual monopoly of economic and political power. Re-branding the country with a new name would not help. Perhaps allowing constituent ethnic groups to create new nation-states that reflect their various hopes and aspirations but still remain within a loosely defined confederacy may save the geo-political entity christened "Nigeria" by the British from ultimately collapsing under its rotten foundation. A constitutional conference of vested interests that leads to a national plebiscite on how to re-organize Nigeria is now imperative.



*Outgunned and outmatched, terrorist groups remain resilient against Nigeria security forces*



## The case for a “Supranational Body” for current constituent States of Nigeria

Whatever form the current nation-state of Nigeria ultimately assumes, after substantive deliberative effort by its citizens, would be the result of decisions made by Nigerians, and not one superimposed on them. Nigerians may look to historical precedents to guide their decision-making process on the forms of political arrangements that suites their unique character, cultural values, and path to long-run social and economic development. The following serves as a guide:

A political arrangement of democratic Federalism is one that requires a strong relationship between a polity whose affairs are governed and those elected to give effect to laws and policies that advance the collective welfare of such polity. This necessarily implicates the principles of indirect rule that derives sustenance from informed consent of the electorate; the governed are thus placed in a superior status in such relationship. All electoral and important legislative procedures are thus subject to majoritarian principles of decision-making.

In principle and practice, democratic federalism is a union of states within a geo-political competence with sovereign powers divided between the central government and constituent regional governments in a manner that conserves their respective independence but allows for cooperation in execution of duties and obligations constitutionally ascribed to them. A salient requirement of democratic federalism is judicial review that confers on the central government the power to set national standards in law and public policy while preserving the duality of power over citizens by both governing bodies. This is the presumptive political and governance structure in Nigeria in its present form.

An alternate form of political arrangement is a confederacy. A confederacy offers a much loser relationship between constituent states. It is in effect an association of sovereign states in which the central government derives power from the governments of constituent states, and thus depends on regional governments to effectively exercise its duties. Decisions by the central government is guided by unanimity rather than the majoritarian doctrine, thus decisions at the national level would have no effect on a regional government and its citizens unless the regional government subscribes to the decision. This form of political arrangement is akin to what obtains in international bodies such as the African Union where decisions by the governing body have no binding effect on member states without their subscription.

Historical forms of such political arrangements were given expression by early Swiss, German and American confederations. These confederations were formed as collective defenses against external threats and foreign military aggression. The original thirteen American colonies were politically independent until they signed the Articles of confederation and Perpetual Union in 1777 as defense against British colonial intentions. For the Swiss, it was an effort to stave off external aggression by the Hapsburgs. The German confederation was made possible by Napoleon who consolidated three hundred German states into a confederation of the Rhineland, and in 1815 thirty-nine of those states became the German Confederation.

A common thread amongst confederate governments is that there is no central government in the sense that it has no recognized center of power that independently makes binding decisions for member states; it is composed of sovereign states that it does not control. Instead, the pseudo-government of a confederacy consists of ambassadors who can only vote on issues on instruction from constituent members.

While the early basis for a confederate system was for military defense, reasons for confederacy may and can include other grounds such as a common market, provision for a common transportation network, prevention of inter-state hostilities, and reciprocal equal treatment of citizens of member nation-states. The major functions of government...education, finance, economic development, healthcare, the legal system are reserved for governments of members states.

An important historical fact about confederacy is that all early confederate political structures morphed into federalism. Economic depression in America and Switzerland led to the stronger economic interdependence amongst the states and unification, while a strong and sustained economic growth led to the dissolution of confederal Germany and unification into federal system. The problems that afflicted these early confederate systems can be corrected with treaties, articles of confederacy and bi-lateral agreements.

In the case of Nigeria, a very loose and highly decentralized arrangement such as that of the European Common Market, The European Union or regional bodies in Africa such as the African Union would serve as a good alternate form of relationship for Nigerian states. Given the nature of shared public assets, and substantial privately held assets by Nigerians whose state of origin would now be an independent state while their properties are located in a different one, the need to respect the rights to shared public and private assets must be the central basis for a supranational body. In such arrangements, based on multilateral treaties and agreements, citizens of constituent states would have the right to hold private properties in any of the independent states.

The supranational body shall not have the power to make laws but exists as the product of agreements reached by constituent states. Each independent state remains a sovereign entity endowed with all rights and privileges of an internationally recognized nation. The important operational bases for such supranational body in Nigeria would be:

1. To afford each independent state the right to use vital economic institutions and assets held in common, such as seaports.
2. To guarantee the right to privately held properties located in any of the nations.

These imperatives and other important considerations would require a constitutional conference to decide how the various aspects of the governing articles of organization should be implemented, and then subjected to national referendum or plebiscite.

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