

EMERGING SOCIETAL CHALLENGES AND NIGERIA'S SUSTAINABILITY: THE GOVERNANCE PERSPECTIVE

A KEYNOTE ADDRESS

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I feel highly honoured and privileged to have been invited to this intellectual workshop to share my thinking with you. I want to thank the School of Arts and Social Sciences very deeply in my heart for believing in me.

The first letter of invitation was dated October 14, 2019, and then it was scheduled to hold in February 11, 2020. I admired the long term planning skill of the men and women of that School for the long notification. Then the unexpected happened, the usual character of the Nigerian university system often caused by the proprietors of the University, 'strike' since that is the only language they understand very sluggishly. At that time, I captioned my address to you as 'Nigeria, the failed State Posture: The Nation-State building Paradigm', to elongate the strike, Mr. COVID 19, arrived from China and locked everyone in.

In January 20, 2021, another letter from the College arrived in my office, informing me that I will be the 'Keynote address presenter' in today's intellectual convention to speak on 'Emerging Societal Challenges and Nigeria's Sustainability', I decided to stay within the theme of the conference, but to address it through the 'Governance' perspective or perceptual prism. Beyond this invitation, they also appointed me into the Board of their journal. To all of you who sat to pick me from the many that abound, let it be known to you that I am now a friend of the School of Arts and Social Sciences of this College. To whom much is given, much is expected. I consider all these a great honour.

Background

Let me 'doff my hat' for the organizers, the School of Arts and Social Sciences because of your intellectual capacity to periscope the Nigerian State, to be able to arrive at the theme of this conference, 'Emerging Societal Challenges and Nigeria's Sustainability'. You must have been watching with keen interest, events in the State-Nigeria, which has raised your intellectual curiosity as to whether the evolving events would allow the country to remain Nigeria? Or that Nigeria is walking the path of 1990 Rwanda? Only intellectual oriented scholars can do what you have done and are doing now.

Intellectual Business

Let's address the intellectual concerns to put you on notice. Let me inform you that intellectuals are not those who possess doctorate degrees regardless of how they obtained them, but are those;

- i) Who in pursuit of professional excellence, generate added value to the proper development of their society.
- ii) Intellectuals are the life and essence of any civilization since they give advice to humanity on how to conduct its affairs.
- iii) They are men and women who arise to assert that they diagnose the ills of their society and cure them with their unaided intellect. They can devise formulae to alter the structure of society as well as transform the fundamental habits of their citizens for the better.
- iv) They are those who think for the rest of the society, they are men and women of deep thinking, profound mind who invest their time and energy identifying and proffering solutions to the ills of their societies.
- v) Intellectuals are restless, creative people, who possess enormous energy, and are opposed to the accumulation of privileges in a few hands and committed to the establishment of egalitarian society (Uya, 2009). This is what you are doing here.

Nigeria came to be as a by-product of industrial revolution that took place in England. The event produced goods and services which could not all be consumed in the domestic economy, hence they needed external markets which gave birth to the annexation of areas and later aggregating them into Nigeria. The 1884/5 Scramble for Africa and other continents was prelude to the birth of Nigeria.

Michael Crowther had told the complete story of Nigeria's formation in his book, 'The Story of Nigeria'. The people leaving around the river Niger areas were pulled together into Nigerian State without any social contract on the terms of their togetherness, hence 'Social Contract was not established among the people. This informs the calls for restructuring. As a result of how Nigeria came to be, the critical processes of nation and state-buildings were and are constantly ignored in Nigeria. Consequent upon this, Nigerians have remained 'strange bedfellows. The suspicion it breeds came to the head in January 15 and July 29, 1966 and has continued till this day. Successive ruling elites, whether the military or civil governments have continued to forcefully keep the people together without bordering to build a nation out of the various nations trapped in Nigeria. The absence of nation and state building laid the foundation of the 'emerging societal

challenges to Nigeria's sustainability'.

It is a known theory of political science that men moved from the 'state of nature into the community often through the instrumentality of 'social contract' to form the state. Everyone put his rights and consent forward to create the state, in order to obtain the Aristotelian and Platonian good-life. Government administers the state on equal terms because no one life is greater than the other, since we are of different cultures that were pulled together, '**Nation-building**' —the integrating and horizontal processes of making the citizens regard each other as belonging to the same state and same government. The processes of creating 'live and let's live together'. State —building, on the other hand, refers to processes wherein the central government is present in all the states and local councils of the country, not only for elections purposes but also to provide the 'good-life'. However, this is a tall dream in Nigeria. Simply put, there is no unity among the various nations and some nations do not believe other nations belong to Nigeria. In many locations, the citizens wonder if there is government at all. The spiritual sense of cohesiveness is simply not there. There is the Nigerian State, but there is no Nigerian nation. Effective nation and state-building would give birth to Nigeria nation. Every state is administered through the governance processes, but this is a huge problem in Nigeria both at the federal, state and local government levels respectively.

The Problems

- i) The problems which have created the challenges are numerous but we are going to restrict the discourse herein to the perspective of governance. The mode of distributing political and administrative power to institutions of government for the purpose of delivering the 'good-life' to the citizenry. The central and the State governments are very far, hence powers are delegated to Ministries, Department and Agencies of Government (MDAs) to generate and deliver services in the most effective and efficient manner on behalf of the government. Nigeria's governance system is very faulty hence the citizens are not obtaining value of citizenship. An instance of this is the structural incapacity of the Local Government system by the 1999 Constitution as amended in sections 162 (7&8) and in the fourth schedule where it outlined obsolete functions.
- ii) The problem of leadership. A Leader must have the ability to foresee the future as well as the road leading to it. He must relinquish power to others more capable to realize the vision. The leader must be able to acquire new skills and explore hidden potentials, to discharge duties as best as he can. He must have the ability to lead from the front, to

take initiative and tell others to follow him. A leader must give the interests of all top priority and not that of a section of the population (is this true of Nigeria)? A true leader should take the blame for wrong decisions, credit success to his team. A leader must meet the expectations of his team and always set an example for his followers, to consult with others and engage in dialogue. A leader must trust his team, he must know his job and have mental and physical qualifications to enable him carry out his duties. A leader should be the symbol of a society and a living example to younger generations. Leadership by example (Maktoum, 2015 p.47). Nigeria has no one like this presently but defective leadership. Nigerians were promised that the refineries would be fixed, this is not to be, that fuel importation would stop, but this has not happen. Today if Nigeria is at war with any nation, the easiest way to defeat Nigeria, is fuel blockade by any enemy nation.

- iii) The herder's obsession for destroying farmlands, kidnap and rape women in the farms would disrupt the food supply chains and eventually lead to food scarcity and inflation. The threat of food blockade against the Southern part of the country as it was recently carried out is instructive for Southern Governors to rise to the occasion.
- iv) The purpose of Government is to provide security of life and property, consequent upon defective leadership, this purpose is not being fulfilled. Nigeria seems to be back to the 'state of nature' where there was no state and political leadership. Today, Non-State Actors are dictating the pace of governance in Nigeria, kidnappers herdsman, militant) groups. In the East, is the 'Eastern Security Network', and Amotekun in the West. The Niger Delta may come out with theirs and the Middle Belt. This would be walking the road of 1990 Rwanda, Darfur and the Janjaweed.

The Framework of Analysis: Prebendalism

The perspective through which the events and data considered in this address was viewed and scrutinized is the theory of prebendalism popularized by Richard Joseph in his 'Democracy and Prebendal Politics in Nigeria: The Rise and Fall of the Second Republic (1987). In it he averred that prebendalism is a political system where elected officials and government workers feel they have a right to a share of government revenues, and use them to benefit their supporters, co-religionists and members of their ethnic group. He elucidated further that in a prebendal state, offices are regarded as prebends that can be appropriated by office holders, who use them to generate material benefits for themselves and their constituents and kin groups. As a result of that kind of patron-client or identity politics, Nigeria has regularly been one of the lowest ranked nations in political transparency. Segun Ayobolo (2013), in his explication stated that it refers to occupant of public office at all levels in the second republic who felt that their positions entitled them to unbridled access to public resources with which they not only satisfied their own material needs but also serviced the needs or wants of subalterns clients. This kind of

criminal diversion of public resources for selfish private ends starved the polity of funds for development, increased poverty and inequality and intensified an unhealthy rivalry and competition for public office that trigger pervasive instability.

Key Dysfunctions of Prebendalism

- i) When a person assumes office as President/Governor/Chairman, the idea is that of, this is our chance to reap from the Nigerian farms or prebend for the benefit of self and members of one's ethnic group.
- ii) Whenever the office holder has not stolen much from the state coffer or national treasury, and has not empowered members of the region or tribe, he is considered a failure and disrespected in the immediate society.
- iii) Prebendalism is enshrined in the Nigerian psyche at local, state and federal levels of governance respectively, and it is tied to what Ken Post and Michael Vickers termed 'Conglomerate Society', a nation composed of cultural sections, ethnic and cultural difference competing to outdo one another.
- iv) A prebendal state is very unstable because of both centrifugal and centripetal forces pulling it in opposite direction. Every push towards a stable polity is often consistently foiled by prebendal dispositions. It is a state on the precipice of collapse. Some of the practices in a prebendal state include;
 - i) Insecurity- This is currently legendary in Nigeria, perpetuated by pastoralists against farmers all over the country. The response of the coercive apparatus of the state is one of Olympian aloofness; lackadaisical complacency. In the midst of this seeming state of anomie, a state governor is regaling himself with incendiary rhetoric and combustible statement (Obahiagbon, 2021). States that cannot secure its people suggest self-help.
 - ii) Economic management of the state- The current National Economic Strategy of Debt Inspired Economic Growth (DIEG), everything to be done, loan would be obtained) is not inspiring confidence in the populace. Nigeria had receded from the debt clubs, but we are walking backward into it with no development indicators in the horizon. The fear of debt peonage is frustrating and supplanting great expectations.
 - iii) The fact that corruption is not being tackled as promised is yet another form of arresting funds meant for development. The EFCC seem to be selective on those it arrests and prosecutes.

It is a glaring fact that at the moment, the government seemed to have elevated nepotism to be the standard operating procedure as all appointments seems to be in favour of a section of the country. All institutions are headed by a section of the country. EFCC seem to be prosecuting rogues from a part of the country, while much known violators of financial

rules, become holy, persons by reason of prebendalism. All these have created 'government—citizens trust deficit.

Strategic Thinking in Turbulent Times: Sustainability Options

In this section let me point out succinctly, that Nigeria is on the brink of becoming Somalia, Bosnia Herzegovina and other crises ridden failed state at a time. Two options stare Nigeria on the face; (i) to embark on 'good governance' and 'go on with one Nigeria (GOWON); (ii) To remain complacent and continue to slide down the road of Rwanda 1994 (Hutu and the Tutsi)/ Somalia or Bosnia. The lessons from these case-studies and their similarities with the nascent events in Nigeria are very instructive (a matter for another short conference by the faculty).

Let it be known that there are conditions for achieving sustainability, it is a truism that everyone born into the world including Jesus Christ was born into a land area, village, town and country, so is everyone, therefore inviting non-Nigerians from all over west Africa to come into Nigeria is creating unnecessary quest for land area from others, it is invitation of conflict. Land cannot be increased from what God created; it is a major source of domestic conflict.

The dangers are ahead and political violence is likely to continue, but like Jesus said, 'now come let us reason together'. The equation is;

- i) **GOWON GG + L = Sustainable Nigeria** (consensus oriented, participatory, follow the rule of law, make governance effective and efficient, accountable, transparent, responsive, equitable and responsive, reduce corruption).
Good Governance requires;
- ii) Consensus Orientation-This is a means of maintaining high Government and citizens high quotient trust level, when the citizens elected you on the basis of promises made and you keep to it during governance. When this is the case, trust is reinforced, confidence is built and outcomes are positively felt. However, all these are not the case today, as all promises earlier made by the government, none seem fulfilled. The covenant and trust has evaporated and there is desperation in the air (promises such as fixing the refineries, restructuring, war on corruption etc.) have not been fulfilled, leading to frustration in place of high expectations. Government must be built on consensus defined by the votes cast on the basis of the programmes presented to the people.
- iii) Participatory principle-Every component part of the social groups in the polity should be included in the management and governance as well be recipient of the positive outcomes of governance. However, the fact on ground is that of extreme alienation as the governance is defined by prebendalism. The average ruling age of those in governance is 78 years, while the average age of the youth is 19.5 years. There is incongruence in perception of what is good for the country. This affects trust.

The government must retrace its steps and demonstrate positive presence among the various social groups in the state-building process. There should be no social group in the country that should be profiled as inferior and another superior. These stereotypes played significant roles in Rwanda genocide. Participation must be on the basis of justice for peace to reign. The practice of allowing some youths sit in government house to give quit notice to others must stop.

- iv) The Rule of law- Men and women came from different cultures to form the state; this made the rules of law a categorical imperative to guarantee the freedom of the individual, by setting out permissible behavior and what is prohibited. The situation in which a set of people sit on the television to own up to a crime yet no state action is taken against them is appalling. The rule of law is one of the definitional criteria of all civilized state. The principle is the foundation of governance, where no one is subjected to arbitrary rule, everyone is protected against the abuse of power of the state, that persons and authorities within the state, public and private is protected against the abuse of power by the state. It means everyone is bound by and subjected to the benefit of laws of the state. At most those who govern are subjected to the same law for the strong, powerful, the poor, and the weak. It is important to note that 'law is the strongest link between man and freedom'. Man cannot live together without rule which specify what is wrong and what is accepted and what is prohibited.

It is through this process that we get to know that if one man's right is denied then the rest are in trouble. This is the challenge we are in presently. The slaughtering of hundreds of people in Benue state, killing in Nimbo in Enugu, the killing in Taraba, Oyo, Ondo Ogun have seen no one being punished. We must be wary that the rule of law is being eroded.

- v) The State must be effective and efficient providing the needs of the people in the timeliest manner, not to allow it degenerate into crisis and continuously in good quality to add value to the lives, peace and orderly living of Nigerians. This is a function of strong institutions and not of strong men. Strong institutions is a function of recruiting qualified persons through the classical public personnel management practices into these institutions rather than on 'man-know-man' as it is currently the case in Nigeria at all levels of administration. It is strong institutions that halted Donald Trump to have his way with the lies he peddled. It was weak institutions that led to the collapse of Somalia and Libya after the fall of their strongmen. These threats are starring Nigeria on the face, the threats of weak institutions.
- vi) Accountability —the Government at all levels must be accountable, Federal, State and Local Government. Government is the agent of the people, the people have entrusted it with their resources to be used on their behalf. The Government must therefore 'Show me the Money' or 'Return on Investment' (ROI) or the result of the work we sent government to perform. In short the report card of governance is

accountability. When the citizens are faced with increasing negative consequences of the government, increasing insecurity, increasing inflation, increasing poor state of roads, and rising poverty, increasing price hike and worsening hardship. This would smack resentment against the government.

- vii) The State should be transparent and responsive in the discharge of its functions to the citizens, after all the ultimate outcomes of the functions of the state is positive value additions. The government must be able to rise to the occasion of emerging needs of the people. At the moment, the emerging need is security, how is the state responding to it. The current practice of paying ransoms and saying they cannot be routed out of the forest because it would hurt the ecosystem is unacceptable.
- viii) Equitable and Inclusiveness —the government was theoretically consented to, by all in the state to come to be, therefore, it must not only be inclusive in its composition, but it must be equitable in the distributions of the accountable outputs meant to ensure that life is worth living in the state. All ethnic social groups in the state must receive reward in the form of public goods for belonging to the state, paying taxes and bearing the pains of development. Government must not be seen favouring a section and not the others. How not to be equitable and inclusive, the federal government is modernizing the railway lines into standard gauge all over the country but has decided to make the Port Harcourt to Maiduguri railway line to be 'narrow gauge' when the entire country is standard gauge.
- ix) Reduction of Corruption - Corruption is defined as 'arrested development' because when funds set aside for development is taken away without the provisions of the goods intended, then the proposed benefits have been arrested and the citizens denied the impact intended for unintended consequences which often are antithetical to development. No one should be shielded from punishment for corruption. The case of Babachir Lawal, former Secretary to federal Government is a sour thumb. The federal Auditor General Reports and many others that have shown unaccounted funds yet no investigation are sad episodes. The NSA's assertion that the \$ 1 billion meant for arms purchase to fight Boko Haram cannot be found is very sad. Corruption must be reduced if not halted. Good governance is one option towards **GOWON**.

Sustainability option 2

The other option away from good governance to achieve GOWON, is to do nothing and allow the presents situation to continue. The output of the second option would be;

- D) The emergence of warlords in the various regions such as Sunday Igbodo, OPC and Amotekun in the West. Nnamdi Kanu and the Eastern Security Network (ESN) in the East and Boko Haram, Herdsmen/Bandits who are not criminals to the North and

perhaps the militants, transform into Warlords in the Niger Delta. At this point there would be independent states out of Nigeria that would be sustainable. This is a costly option. The choice is before this conferees to choose and advice Nigerians as one of the outcome of this maiden conference.

Conclusion

The principal emerging societal challenges that threatens Nigeria's sustainability are two; to embark on Good Governance and achieve GOWON on the basis of justice and secondly to follow the current pathway and become sustainable committee of independent former Nigerian state. The choice once again is for this maiden conference to decide on which, and convey same to the Nigerian populace. Thank you,
Etim Frank PhD.

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