

## PREFACE

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# REFORM IMPERATIVES FOR A NEW AND SUSTAINABLE NIGERIA

**N**igeria, without question, is mired in many serious problems which threaten its very existence.

The biggest and perhaps the most crucial of Nigeria's problems is that Nigerians generally have no sense of country. This is why they treat their country like no-man's land fit only to take from and not to give to.

The notion that Nigeria is a no-man's land has also infused a winner-take-all mentality in the body politics of Nigeria and made political office a gateway to thievery and banditry.

Secondly, the federal system and structures Nigeria's current democracy is hoisted on is a military creation that was designed, shaped, and tailored to comport to military-style authoritarian dictatorship. This is why political leaders in Nigeria behave like overlords and tin-gods rather than the representatives of the people.

The federal system in Nigeria today is akin to wearing the right shoe on the wrong foot or wearing a garb the wrong side out.

Until we step back and rethink and create a system that is best suited for our twenty-first century clime, the journey to renewing and sustaining Nigeria as one country will be painful if not foolhardy.

Thirdly, governance in Nigeria is the exclusive preserve of the wealthy elite. The ordinary people in Nigeria are not involved and do not have a say in how

their country is run. Politicians are loyal and accountable to political party machineries and not to the people. Nigeria's democracy is a huge scam for the unfettered exploitation of the country's wealth and economic repression of the ordinary people.

Any meaningful effort at reforming Nigeria must, without exception, address the following reform imperatives:

### **REDO OF THE CONSTITUTION**

The 1999 Nigerian constitution upon which Nigeria's democracy is erected is a sham document riddled with many inconsistencies and redundancies. We have to scrap the current constitution and draw up one that is based strictly on Nigeria-style federalism tailored to Nigeria's socio-economic and ethno-cultural realities.

The so-called constitutional amendments of 2010 are insignificant and do not address the fundamental issues facing Nigeria. The amendments are mere cosmetic embellishments tailored by the political elite to consolidate their stranglehold on the reins of power in Nigeria.

### **RULE OF LAW/COURT SYSTEM**

The current court/legal system in Nigeria does not guarantee that the rights of Nigerians are adequately protected. We have to revisit the system and install one that best guarantees the supremacy of the rule of law in Nigeria.

### **GOVERNANCE/POWERS**

The federal system in operation in Nigeria is an authoritarian scam. We have to whittle down considerably the authoritarian powers of the federal government and

install a system that ensures appropriate distribution of powers between the states, local governments and the federal government. The states under the new dispensation must be capable of exercising a level of autonomy that guarantees that they can thrive on their own and pursue interests closer to those of the people in their domains. This would have the effect of empowering ethnic groups in their ethnic centers and de-emphasize competing ethnic interests at the federal level.

### **THE FOURTH TIER**

Government and governance in the current dispensation are too far removed from the ordinary people of Nigeria. A vibrant and successful democracy in Nigeria depends on the participation of grassroots citizens in every nook and cranny of the country. We have to establish a fourth tier of government with administrative powers at the village or autonomous community level to bring governance closer to the people in order to ensure greater access to government resources and better accountability of common resources and public office.

### **NATIONAL RESOURCE**

The current method of resource sharing in Nigeria is unfair and does not effectively compensate the people who directly bear the brunt of resource production. We have to install a system that ensures that while the federal government maintains control and regulation of oil and other natural resources, persons rather than communities enjoy first priority of consideration and are entitled to a percentage of earnings attributable to their appropriated land or facility.

## **ELECTORAL REFORMS**

The so-called electoral reform touted by the political leadership in Nigeria is a mere cosmetic do-over that will continue to guarantee electoral fraud and undermine the integrity of elections. Real and drastic reforms must be instituted for real democracy to take root in Nigeria. Conduct of elections should be the exclusive preserve of local, municipal and village administrations. The national government has no business in conducting or overseeing the conduct of elections.

## **INFRASTRUCTURE**

Control and regulation of infrastructure projects should remain the preserve of government but private sector participation and investment needs to be encouraged in areas of electricity generation and supply with government's role strictly limited to regulation and oversight. There is a need for massive and comprehensive overhaul of the infrastructure system in Nigeria with a refocus on large scale investments in modern infrastructure and a sound technological base that would propel Nigeria's economy from a wholly import dependent economy to a significant manufacturing/export economy.

## **PUBLIC SERVICE**

The present public service system encourages corruption and inefficiency. We have to scrap the federal character reflecting system of balancing employment of public officials and institute a system based on qualification, experience and performance. The focus must be on an effective and efficient government and not on government of competing ethnic interests.

## **ECONOMY/EDUCATION/TECHNOLOGY**

The economic future of Nigeria is bleak as the country continues to depend more and more on imported goods. Massive investments should be made in education and technology so that young people would be better equipped to meet the challenges of the future and through technological innovations help wean Nigeria off reliance on oil as the mainstay of its economy.