

## QUO VADIS NIGERIA? THE JOURNEY SO FAR

By

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Thank you for inviting me to share my thoughts with you. We are certainly in search of a way to salvage Nigeria from self-inflicted tragedy. “**Quo Vadis Nigeria?**” I first asked this question in a lecture I gave at the University of Ibadan in 1984. The question has always recurred wherever Nigeria faces uncertainties in all directions. But like every inactive nation, nothing is done to get Nigeria out of danger. When I marked my 80<sup>th</sup> birthday, the gloom was still hanging over the nation. I published a book “*Quo Vadis Nigeria*”. This question will remain a national question until God in His infinite mercy, sends us a savior that will get Nigeria unto the right road.

Diogenes, a Greek Philosopher was reported to have walked through the streets of Athens with a touch light in the day time. People asked him where he was going with a touch light in the day time. He replied that he was looking for a man. People asked him “Are we not men?” he replied: “You are not the men that will improve the city of Athens.” Diogenes lived in the 4<sup>th</sup> century. He died about 320 BC. He never succeeded in finding an honest man. The search has become another “philosopher’s stone”.

When a nation becomes normless, listless, directionless and anomic, it is necessary to ask this searching question: Quo Vadis?

Mr. Chairman, in search of order in the society, I studied the organization of Rotary Club. In 1976-1977, I, with Barr. Ogedengbe gathered friends to form the Rotary Club of Akure. I fell by the way side. I could not continue because of the demands of my work.

*\*Being text of a lecture to the Rotary Club, District 9141, Warri, 10<sup>th</sup> May, 2018*

But I have remained in love with the Rotary Club. I have given many lectures to Rotary Clubs at Akure, Agbor, Asaba and Warri. I have always wished that political parties would adopt the method of succession in the Rotary Club. It would save the world a lot of instability.

Rotary Club knows in advance who would be governor. This knowledge prevents rancor, conflict and unnecessary competition. The Rotary Club builds on the achievements of past governors. Nobody can ask Rotarians, “**Quo Vadis?**” They know where they are going. An ambitious *nit wit* can never be a governor in the Rotary Club. Rotary Club is a great opposite of the political system.

To ask Nigeria “**Quo Vadis?**” We must understand where we are coming from. The foundation of Nigeria, *ab initio* was not expected to be solid. We cannot examine the reasons in this short lecture. I have however brought two of my works that can assist in explaining some of the issues that cumulatively brought Nigeria to where it is today.

### **Unbalanced Federation**

A principle of federalism requires that none of the federating units should be stronger and bigger than other federating units put together. In amalgamating the federating units in Nigeria, Lugard ensured that the North would be able to check-mate the other components of the federation. E.D Morel had proposed breaking the country into four provinces

- i) Central state with Zungeru as the Headquarters;
- ii) Northern state with Kano as the Headquarters;
- iii) Western state with Oshogbo as the Headquarters;
- iv) Eastern state with Calabar as the Headquarters.

Temple had advocated breaking the country into seven provinces: three in the North, four in the South. The South was to comprise Lagos colony, the Eastern province, the central province and the Western province.

Lord Lugard's unbalanced creation has continued to adversely affect the stunted development in the country.

### **Enahoro's Self-Government Motion**

On the 31<sup>st</sup> of March, 1953, Anthony Enahoro moved his motion for self-government. Ahmadu Bello, the leader of the Northern group amended the motion by replacing the specific date of 1956 with "as soon as possible". This was the first test of the imbalance in the creation of Nigeria. The Northerners ganged up to oppose the motion. Dr. Nnamdi Azikwe and Awolowo came together to support the motion. The North was not ready for self-government. But the North had 50% of the membership of the House of Representatives. The Lagos crowd booed the Northerners. The Northerners withdrew, and vowed that they would not return to Lagos to face that kind of indignity again. The charged debated on the motion in the House of Representatives drew from Ahmadu Bello one pregnant statement that has informed the Northern doggedness in holding on to power at all cost. In the heat of the debate, Ahmadu Bello stood up and said: "**The mistake of 1914 has come to light**". The Southern alliance was ready to summon a constituent Assembly of Southern Nigeria, draft a constitution and declare the independence of Southern Nigeria.

Meanwhile, the Northerners who had walked out, came back with the 8 point programme endorsed by a joint meeting of the Northern House of Assembly and Northern House of Chiefs. The die was cast. The North must do everything necessary to rule Nigeria.

As a result of this crisis a post-mortem was pronounced by the Secretary of State for the colonies in the House commons: the “closely knit, federation envisaged by the constitution of 1951 did not prove workable; therefore, the constitution would be revised to provide for greater regional autonomy, and for removal of powers of intervention by the centre in matters which can, without detriment to other regions be placed entirely within regional competence.

The constitutional conference of 1953 transformed the structure of Nigerian government from unitary foundations to the existing bases of federalism. The constitution of 1954 was a regionalist constitution and created separate states. The British Government knew from this first crisis that Nigeria could not work together on the proposed 1951 constitution. **What do we have now?** The series of military interventions have watered down the regional constitution which the British government in its wisdom bequeathed to Nigeria. Everything is being done, including the use of force to hold this unworkable federation together.

I have written and spoken at various fora **that unless we returned to the independence constitution, there would be no peace in Nigeria.** The system we have now, unfortunately, breeds corruption, incompetence nepotism, injustice and lawlessness.

### **Corruption**

Nigeria as presently structured, cannot fight corruption. Corruption weakens the spiritual and moral fibres of the people. In Nigeria, it has eaten very deep. It has penetrated every facet of life. From politics to education, to religious organizations, to the army, the police force, the universities and markets etc. Abacha said he was fighting corruption. Jonathan said he was

fighting corruption. He lost the election, because his political aides were alleged to have shared and banked the money given to them to deliver Jonathan. Corruption that denudes a sitting president should be studied. It is serious. I am yet to find any area of our nation that is free of corruption. Many years ago, I was so alarmed at the level of corruption that I wrote in one of my books, **Afrocracy**, that corruption in Nigeria is so grotesque and corrupting, that even if the angels were to come to Nigeria to fight corruption, the angels would be corrupted.

All the military rulers who came to fight corruption were swallowed by the corrupt systems.

**Only an apocalyptic transformation can clean up the system. For corruption to be effectively handled, heads must role, and ought to role.**

Lawyers and the rituals of the legal system cannot fight corruption. Our courts have shown that even the judges have not escaped the corrupting fingers of corruption.

### **Insecurity**

This results from the inability of the law enforcement agencies that have been corrupted by the corrupting system to do their work. When those in authority steal money given to them to protect the country, who would go to the war front without adequate arms? We saw this in Nigerian soldiers refusing to fight Boko Haram. Insecurity has been a part of Nigeria's electoral system. In the first republic, the struggle to win election was the in thing. The electorate was very illiterate and were very easily manipulated by the politicians. None of the political parties had any ideology around which the parties could operate. Elections were cash and carry. The ferocity of election campaigns, the vulgarity of political language, coupled with arson, murder and looting, compelled Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe to come out in 1964 to warn the

nation. Some people had begun to regret the departure of the colonial government. Sectional and partisan interests ruined everything. Nigerians could not conduct the first census after independence. Figures were so manipulated that it was impossible for any sane person to accept the census figures.

The second election after independence was horrible. Opposition members were clamped into detention. There were glaring irregularities, arrests, false charges, detention, arson and murder. The nation was at the precipice.

Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe was forced to warn the politicians:

*The way and manner electioneering campaign is being conducted leaves much to be desired. They (referring to the politicians) have no right to use the instrument of power to perpetuate themselves in their stay in office.*

Between 1963 and 1964, there were two major crises: the failure in the second attempt to get an accurate census, and the gerrymandering of the federal elections. The census controversies created a major gap in Nigerian politics. The East and the North became more divided, and press warfare predominated the scene. The friendship between the North and the East during the 1959 coalition appeared to have ended. Political warfare degenerated into a pitiable abyss of tribal chauvinism. The Ibo in the North were victimized, killed and forced to return to the South. There was no move to reduce tension, and the nation went into the 1964 federal elections. The manipulation of the federal elections was so obvious that Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, the president had to warn again:

*If they have decided to destroy our national unity, then they should summon a round table conference to decide how our national assets should be divided before they seal their doom by satisfying their lust for office.*

The following year, 1965 the Western Region was engulfed in a tragic election. The atrocities perpetrated during the federal elections were worsened by the Nigerian National Democratic Party. There were arson, murder, and vandalism. For the second time, the fate of the nation was on the balance.

**Those who are clamouring for state police should have been there to witness the evils of state police under political parties.**

Chairman, the journey so far is that we have never had peaceful elections. Nigerians should commend President Jonathan for saving Nigeria from post-election crisis, by his timely acceptance of defeat. Gen. Buhari had promised to make Nigeria ungovernable if he lost. Thank God he was declared elected. At the end of the day, Nigerians will assess his achievements or failures. He has tried.

The truth is that Nigeria does not have a good political culture that we can pass on to the next generation. It has all been gangsterism, manipulation and questionable registration of voters.

In the short period since our independence, we have had several coups, counter coup and civil war. From 1945 when the Ibo were massacred in Jos, there had be series of killings that compelled the nation to fight a bloody civil war. The North was determined to call the shots. People erroneously thought Nigeria's problem was because of the constitution. We have amended the constitution over and over. We have had many constitutional conferences. Yet every election has shown how difficult it is for us to live as a nation. God has given us all the minerals that could make Nigeria great. Minerals don't rule a nation. We need a good leader that would apply what we have to the benefit of the nation.

We have had a chain of thieves. Leaders cart away our resources to develop other nations. With all our security men and women around, the

thieves are walking around. The little that is left is spent paying lawyers in endless cases in courts.

The present administration came in to fight corruption. Corruption appears to be fighting back. Government claims that a lot of stolen money has been recovered. Did we congratulate the thieves? How many of them have been jailed? From the famous 2.8 billion that **Vera Ifudu** reported missing in the Ministry of Petroleum, to everyday stealing by ministers and politicians, corruption has successfully shielded corruption; the judiciary has proved itself incapable of jailing the mega thieves.

One of God's commandments is, *thou shall not steal*. Maria Corelli, in her book *Sorrows of Satan*, introduced the eleventh commandment, *thou shall not be caught*. Even when they are caught, our porous legal system enables them to enjoy their ill-gotten wealth.

**This administration has not jailed enough thieves that I am aware of. Since government cannot stop them from stealing, let us plead with them to invest the loot in Nigeria.**

Again, Government has failed. One of the reasons people vote, is to choose a government that can give them security of life and property. Under this regime, insecurity is at its highest level. Everyday, people are being kidnapped. The Boko Haram has continued to expose the incompetence of our security system. In spite of this incompetence, the failed politicians are daily deafening our ears with their preparations for 2019. Sycophants are dragging the president to declare that he would contest again.

We should thank God that He listened to our prayers and spared his life. I loved Buhari because I had hoped that he would be able to tame corruption in Nigeria. I was wrong.

## **The Invasion of Herdsmen**

His inability to protect the lives that are being wasted by the herdsmen is very glaring. Nigeria needs a strong and healthy man who can chest out to tackle our national problems. Critics have so far spared the president because of his health condition. The President should not allow himself to be dragged into another election by those who hide behind him. The nation is bleeding. If the President loves Nigeria, he should not risk his health again. He is free to sponsor a person who can do his bidding. He does not have the robust health needed of a Nigerian President at this point in time.

He has not been effective in handling the insecurity caused by the Herdsmen. As the Patron of Cattle Breeders Associations, he has not been able to handle the killings dispassionately. Even his directives on certain critical issues are not obeyed by his lieutenants. In Vanguard of Friday, May 4, 2018, Governor Ortom of Benue was shocked that the leaders of Miyetti Allah who were alleged to have participated in the Benue State carnage, were still free. They were not arrested, and were not tried. A few days after, there were new killings of 17 people including two Rev. Fathers of the Catholic Church. As I was writing, there were further killings in Kaduna State of Nigeria. 48 people were killed.

Let me warn that the Southward push of the herdsmen is a response to ecological push of the Sahara Desert. The push will continue. The only solution is to introduce massive ranching by government. The push of the herdsmen is caused by the systematic drying up of the Sahara Desert. As the Sahara pushes downward, the cattle rearers will be compelled to move southward in search of fertile land for their cows to get green pastures. As long as the Sahara Desert continues to push downwards, cattle rearers will be forced to move southwards.

Unfortunately, with their Jihad mentality, all they know is to displace the indigenous population and settle. For now, they do not know any other method. Effective resistance will always lead to war.

### **Solution**

I have written earlier and advised the federal government to introduce modern ranching methods and learn to do what other civilized nations do. There is no civilized nation where cattle move about without control. It is imperative that the Federal Government leads the way, and encourage cattle rearers and other herdsmen to modernize and establish ranches. Cattle rearing is not a national occupation. But their activities, if not controlled can cause problems.

Government should give cattle rearers loans to enable them establish ranches all over the country. As we have mechanic villages in the cities, so the government can subsidize the establishment of ranches.

### **The Economy**

The Naira, which has been oscillating around ₦360 to the dollar, should be strengthened. The Federal Government injects naira, periodically and gives the Naira a false image and value.

This has become ritualistic. This ritual cannot strengthen the Naira. The Federal Government should introduce fiscal policies that should first, define the use of the Naira. Nigeria has a large market. The Federal Government must ensure that all economic activities must be Naira-based. Government must ensure that Naira remains the only acceptable currency. The volume of economic activities in Naira will shoot up the value of the Naira. The Naira does not need the Central Bank periodic injection. What is needed is the

protection of the Naira to ensure that no other currency competes with the Naira in Nigeria.

For example, in South Africa, no matter who you are, nobody in South Africa would do business with you, unless you have changed your currency into the **RAND**. In South Africa, the Rand is very strong. The Federal Government must **LEAD** the way in the compulsory use of the Naira. The bank has the responsibility of protecting the Naira as the official currency. It is the duty of the Central Bank to monitor the use and abuse of the Naira. If in Nigeria, government insists and implements a policy that insists that every transaction is Naira- based, the demand for the Naira will be not hot, its value is bound to appreciate.

### **Summary**

The nation is sick. The parties are sick. Many politicians are sick. The judiciary is sick. The national assembly members live in dalliance and therefore cannot appreciate what should be done. Policies protect the rich. The Rich are the corrupt that cannot give purposeful leadership.

The leadership that can change Nigeria must be healthy, purposeful, and sincere leadership. Such leadership must emerge from a person or persons who have studied Nigeria's problems. It cannot emerge from the usual gang up of frustrated politicians who cross carpets in search of a safe haven for stealing and covering up.

In this respect, I see Chief Dr. Obasanjo's desperate search for an African Democratic Congress not as a solution but as a frantic reassembling of old faces in order to continue the old game in new ways.

I agree with **Sir Ahmadu Bello** *that the mistake of 1914 has come to light*. The Colonial Government corrected the mistake by giving us regionalist

constitution. They were right. Let me say again, that unless we return to regionalist constitution on which we gained independence, there will be no peace, progress and development. Every region should be charged with the responsibility of growing at its own pace.

The 774 Local Governments were so created to enable some areas get the Federal Government allocation. The new reality is that the Local Governments as presently structured depend heavily on Federal allocations which are not enough for economic and structural developments.

It is important that the nation be restructured for even and rapid development. Those opposing restructuring should consider Nigeria as a nation and see how we are failing because of the way we rule the nation.