



# ROOTS OF PUBLIC UNREST IN NIGERIA

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## ABSTRACT

*Nigeria may rightly be said to have perpetually lived with great degrees of public unrest with all its repercussions since its creation as a country. The search for the ingredients of such unrests that tear the country apart necessitated the present study that examines the roots of public unrest in Nigeria. The study observed that the British amalgamation of the various ethnic groups in Nigeria became forced marriage of unwilling bedmates; such that right from the onset both the colonialists and the prominent indigenous leaders of the people were skeptical of the possible survival of the country as a nation. At the end, the study calls for the good people to always persevere in goodness and not lose their cool even in the face of unbearable odds. Yet, that would not make them to stop fighting for justice and truth.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Amalgamation, Ethnic groups, Justice, Public unrest, Roots.*

## INTRODUCTION

Public unrest is the uneasiness, disturbances, restlessness and common discontentment experienced by non-negligible members of the society due to ignoble actions or culpable inactions of some other people, which may lead to different degrees of resentment, lawlessness, anarchy, or even terrorism and full-blown war. Nigeria may rightly be said to have perpetually lived with great degrees of public unrest with all its repercussions since its creation as a country. The search for the ingredients of such unrests that tear the country apart means looking for the root causes, the microcosm of the macrocosm of the great woes of the giant of Africa. Nigeria is a country named by the British colonialists at the amalgamation of the Northern and Southern Protectorates in 1914 (Ugwuoke, Ajah & Onyejebu, 2020; Ezeanya, 2010). The amalgamation itself became for the peoples put together as one, a forced marriage of unwilling bedmates; such that right from the onset both the colonialists and the prominent

indigenous leaders of the people were skeptical of the possible survival of the country as a nation (Crowder, 1966).

Hence, Uwalaka (2003) while showing the utopic Pan Nigerianism of some of the fathers of independence in their view of the oneness of Nigeria, highlighted some of the skeptical sayings of some other fathers as follows: "Since the Amalgamation of the Southern and Northern provinces in 1914, Nigeria has existed as one country on paper" (Tafawa Belewa, 1947); "Nigeria is so large and the people so varied that no person with any real intellectual integrity would be so foolish as to pretend that he speaks for the country as a whole" (Ahmadu Bello, the Sarduna of Sokoto); "Nigeria is a mere geographical expression" (Obafemi Awolowo); "There is no basis for unity" (Yakubu Gowon).

These expressions are more real, judging from the happenings in the country since independence, than the deceit embedded in the slogan of 'One Nigeria'. It



is not as if Nigeria cannot be truly one and save her citizens from distress and woes, but it is just that the game – players at different wings of the play seem to be most unwilling to shift some grounds to allow the miracle to happen. Several write-ups have appeared on the problems with Nigeria all of which seemed to fall on deaf ears, but the prophecies of the impending doom awaiting such dialogue-with-the-deaf response to the wisdom of the sages seem to be fulfilling as prophesied in a rather more alarming proportions.

Several coup d'états and military interventions in politics did not send any heeded message. The Nigeria – Biafra civil war worsened the obstinacy in injustice and non-egalitarianism in dealing with citizens of the one country. The Niger Delta militancy campaign that nearly degenerated into a second civil war was only placated with the amnesty programme that merely distracted the militants without actually addressing the wholesome challenges posed by their courageous agitations. Since salient issues are not squarely addressed in Nigeria, instead the outside of the tombs of filth and dead bodies are merely whitewashed, reverberated echoes of yore pose stiffer challenges to the Nigerian project.

The menace of the Boko Haram insurgents has dealt Nigeria a very deadly blow, and their mayhem is not yet over. Who knows where the looming rain of the highly organized and peopled campaign of the Indigenous Peoples of Biafra (IPOB) would place the country Nigeria if all in their arsenal are allowed to be let loose through the deaf ears of the Nigerian disposition to address the naked truths of its foundation. Perhaps the climax of the effects of public unrest in Nigeria will come in the most scientific way when the academia loses control through certain administrative policies that go the usual negligent Nigerian way, in the likes of the alien foreign impact factor requirements that retard staff welfare and push them to the walls. These and more call for dispassionate attention to uncover the nursery ground and get to the roots of acts of unrest that hold Nigeria to ransom; and that is what this article seeks to do.

## COLONIAL PRECEDENCE

The British colonialists who also colonized Nigeria were not concerned about the welfare of their colonies as for the eagerness to maximize colonial interests. They blocked the further evolution of the national solidarity of the peoples colonized, and helped to spark off ethnic strife among the people so that they would go against themselves and remove their eyes from the colonialists rather than fighting them (the British) as their common enemy. Officially the British introduced the political strategy of divide and rule

system which charged tribal hostilities among the peoples and ensured colonial peace (Rodney, 1972). This ugly precedence was copied and continued by Nigerian leaders at various levels long after the colonialists had left the country. Hence, the British left neo-colonialism behind for the Nigerian peoples in the guise of independence in 1960. Further revelations show how a year into Nigerian independence, the British allowed a Governor General, Sir James Robertson, to stay on into the period of freedom, with particular interest of making sure that power went to the North, their favourite region.

It is now widely known that Sir James Robertson played an important role in overseeing the elections (or lack thereof) at independence, throwing his weight behind Abubakar Tafawa Belewa, who had been tapped to become Nigeria's first prime minister... Later it was discovered that a courageous English junior civil servant named Harold Smith had been selected by no other than Sir James Robertson to oversee the rigging of Nigeria's first election "so that its compliant friends in {Northern Nigeria} would win power, dominate the country, and serve British interests after independence." ... In a sense, Nigerian independence came with a British governor general in command, and, one might say, popular faith in genuine democracy was compromised from its birth (Achebe, 2012).

The story continued that the young man was promised a lot of wealth in bribery, and even a knighthood, should he carry out the assignment of rigging the election in favour of their chosen candidate. He however declined the assignment with all the mouth-watering enticements, and was maximally disgraced, inclusive of termination of his job and soiling his career. The British however found their way after all. The democracy that survives is the one that is truly fought for and won, based on the global best practice; but where it was given on a platter of gold to a beloved dancer, from an imperialist, like the head of John the Baptist, it is always beguiled with wicked machinations and may best be watched as the Greek Gift.

Nigeria's independent democracy, as we have seen, came on a platter of gold, with the British laying a very ignoble and mischievous foundation for its collapse, and Nigeria has not summoned the courage to surmount that legacy. Those who find themselves favoured by this wicked colonial legacy pay deaf ears to any call for redress. That is why corruption keeps multiplying in the country without measure, and whoever gets up to fight it is first of all suspected and



weighed along ethnic and religious lines as the colonialists had set active. Any laudable revolution is always short lived because the revolutionist is never accepted as a well-meaning Nigerian but as a champion of the cause of his ethnic or religious line. Yakubu made an important remark on the revolutionary coup led by Chukwuma Kaduna Nzeogwu:

The perversity of corruption and bad governance led to the termination of the first government that was put in place within the first six years of its existence. When Chukwuma Kaduna Nzeogwu led the young officers that struck on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of January 1966, no one was left in doubt as to the veracity of their mission. The first broadcast to usher in Military rule in Nigeria made by Chukwuma Kaduna Nzeogwu summarized the level of bad governance and the phenomenon of corruption that had pervaded the country, six years after its independence. His broadcast was couched in this language: "The aim of the Revolutionary Council is to establish a strong and prosperous nation, free from corruption and internal strife...our enemies are the political profiteers, the swindlers, the men in high and low places that seek bribes and demand ten percent; those that seek to keep the country divided permanently so that they can remain in office as ministers or VIPS at least, the tribalists, the nepotists, those that make the country look big for nothing before international circles; those that have corrupted our society and put the Nigeria calendar back by their hands and deeds (Yakubu, 2003).

It is very unfortunate that this coup that was hailed as proper was only translated as the effort of the Igbo ethnic group in Nigeria to dominate the rest of Nigerians, and consequently the ethnic cleansing begun against the Igbo, which led to the Nigeria – Biafra war became the Nigerian response to the wholesome revolution. Their crippled logic was that since the leader of the coup was Igbo, therefore all the Igbo in Nigeria are guilty, and then targeted for extermination. Although it is not necessary to perpetually fold hands and cry over spilt milk of the ugly colonial precedence and the shallowness of minds in some quarters, the problem now is how to get the courage to turn things around for better, and so long as this is not done people are very uncomfortable and are pushed to the walls. It deepens public unrest in Nigeria and keeps the country on a fast counting time-bomb of multiple explosions.

## UNIFORMITY FOR UNITY

An important ingredient of public unrest in Nigeria is the misunderstanding of the difference between uniformity and unity in political and social alliances. Uniformity tries to tailor every aspect of the life and activity of the greatly varied peoples of the country into a regimented rigidity that stifles individual and innovational flexibility. Unity, on the other hand, entails a togetherness based on full and harmonious agreement of all involved, with all freedom of will and intention. It is paradoxical and contradictory to talk of a country in unity where virtually all segments of the peoples that make up the whole, complain of systematized marginalization and victimization by some other peoples in the system. Unfortunately Nigeria seems to be pursuing uniformity for the country while hammering that it has unity. A country in unity does not cry of foundational faults but rejoices over the benefits it enjoys because it is so formed. If the formation of the country is based on unity, it means that whatever troubles it would immediately be freely resolved, either by the same collective will or by the uncomfortable partner freely withdrawing from the bond, just as in statutory marriage.

A little comparison of uniformity and unity in a country of great cultural and historical diversity like Nigeria may reveal the following facts: Uniformity admits of dictatorship while unity is based on democratic principles. Uniformity coerces into the uniform straight jacket while unity admits of diversity. Uniformity is a victim child of unconsummated wedlock, the nativity of whom is perpetuated with spousal suspicion and distrust while unity is a favoured child of voluntary love, trust, and confidence. Uniformity is founded on externality, superficiality, conformity, and is pharisaic, while unity is founded on internality, spirituality, reality, and is emanative. Uniformity fights excusing factors and collapses therein while unity admits of excusing factors and gets stronger with them. Uniformity is a blind isle that leads to anarchy and doom while unity is an enlightened paradise of peace and joy. The fight for uniformity in a country like Nigeria forms a cankerworm which breeds unholy obstinacy for rigidly holding onto the foundational faults of the colonial past and received military constitution; especially where they favour some people based on colonial bias, and clearly disfavour others. To strongly hold unto such divisive and annoying principles of uniformity obviously entails readiness for perpetual strife and public unrest, and that is the Nigerian reality.



## CONSTITUTIONALIZED DISCRIMINATION

The constitution of a democratic country should ordinarily be the grundnorm of the collective 'WE' that freely speak of the agreements on which to stay as a country, contributing to a common wealth that would ensure common joy and unhindered pursuit of happiness. It becomes paradoxical again that in Nigeria we talk of a constitution in a democratic setting being a received body of laws from military dictatorship; and that is what is still in vogue in Nigeria to date, with millions of great scholars and intellectuals in the country and also in leadership positions who are not yet able to reject it. Such a piece of marshal laws (in the name of a constitution) should not have been allowed to dictate what should be, even for a single day into the democratic setting. But for more than a decade and half years into the purported democratic rule of the present dispensation, the body of martial laws still exists as the country's constitution; and the draconian dictates therein beating the imagination of reasonable people.

A detailed analysis of the massive shortcomings of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 has been made by the author in a separate book (Ezeanya, 2012). Suffice it to say here that in line with the discriminatory tendencies of the Nigerian peoples which had been planted right from the colonial era, Nigerians are also discriminated against even in what is called their constitution. The issue of Federal Character which is scattered several places in the constitution is a clear mark of discrimination (Eze, Obi & Ajah, 2020; Ajah, Uwakwe, Nwokeoma, Ugwuoke & Nnamani, 2020; Ajah, 2018). In the guise of emulating the American Affirmative Action principle of redressing the plight of the less privileged in the society, Nigerian constitution began to curtail rights of her citizens based on ethnicity and tribe in the name of federal character. Section 14(3) of the Constitution provides as follows:

The composition of the Government of the Federation or any of its agencies and the conduct of its affairs shall be carried out in such a manner as to reflect the federal character of Nigeria and the need to promote national unity, and also to command national loyalty, thereby ensuring that there shall be no predominance of persons from a few states or from a few ethnic or other sectional groups in that Government or in any of its agencies.

This provision which sounds plausible is used to kill creativity and meritocracy and clearly rejects the candidacy of a shining star in a particular field of work

for a foolhardy dunce in the name of ethnic or sectional group. That is why the provision for state of origin is in practically every form filled for any job in Nigeria. It is also based on it that students would take the same JAMB (Joint Admissions and Matriculations Board) exams for entering Nigerian universities, and a person with a higher score is denied admission to make way for another with a much lower score to enter the university and study the same course both of them applied for, simply for the state of origin of the candidates involved. Some states are classed as educationally less privileged, and in order to help them, brighter students from other states taken to have had more educated people should be stopped from getting educated any longer.

Section 42 of the Nigerian constitution shows the nature of non discriminatory rights it guarantees its citizens. It declares it in the following terms:

42-(1) A citizen of Nigeria of a particular community, ethnic group, place of origin, sex, religion or political opinion shall not, by reason only that he is such a person-

- (a) be subjected either expressly by, or in the practical application of any law in force in Nigeria or any executive or administrative action of the government, to disabilities or restrictions to which citizens of Nigeria of other communities, ethnic groups, places of origin, sex, religions or political opinions are not made subject; or
- (b) be accorded either expressly by, or in the practical application of, any law in force in Nigeria or any such executive or administrative action, any privilege or advantage that is not accorded to citizens of Nigeria of other communities, ethnic groups, places of origin, sex, religions or political opinions.

(2) No citizen of Nigeria shall be subjected to any disability or deprivation merely by reason of the circumstances of his birth.

(3) Nothing in subsection (1) of this section shall invalidate any law by reason only that the law imposes restrictions with respect to the appointment of any person to any office under the State or as a member of the armed forces of the Federation or a member of the Nigerian Police Force or an office in the service of a body corporate established directly by any law in force in Nigeria.

A careful perusal of subsection (3) discovers that the draftsman has artfully withdrawn the non-discriminatory rights granted in subsection (1). It then



means that where it comes to the offices outlined in subsection (3), which almost entails the whole gamut of civil service, then a person may be discriminated against based on ethnicity, state of origin, sex, religion or political opinion. That is practically in line with the import of the Federal Character, ethnic and religious strife prevalent in Nigeria. It is among the several give and takes or claw-backs that characterize Nigerian constitutional provisions, and they cause unrest in the polity, and keep people asking when they would be redressed. The American government being wrongly emulated has its own joyful provision for her citizens against discrimination. A sample of American provision for her citizens' rights as found in Section 1 of the Amendment XIV of the United States Constitution (of July 28, 1868) provides as follows:

All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside. No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.

Based on this provision of the U.S Constitution, any citizen of that country has right to reside in any state and enjoy all the privileges and opportunities available to citizens. The person can stand for election into any office there and get any job he/she is qualified for. In Nigeria however the contrary is the case. Even among people of the same ethnic group in Nigeria, there is still discrimination in line with the particular state each person hails from. The discrimination is also done within each state in line with the part of the state from which the person hails. All these are children of the constitutional provision on federal character. If Nigeria is interested in oneness there should not be anything like federal character in its dictionary; instead the state of residence suffices in ascertaining the base of a citizen (Ajah, Nnam, Ajah, Idemili-Aronu, Chukwuemeka & Agboti, 2021; Ajah, Ajah & Obasi, 2020). When that is done, the issue of ethnicity, tribalism, religious inclination and other forms of discrimination in the country would die a natural death, and as they die, they would draw along with them hyper corruption and consequent evils.

## INTELLECTUAL BIGOTRY

It is said that when God wants to destroy a people, he first of all makes them mad. Bigotry entails obstinacy in being intolerably self-opinionated, based on beliefs or party bias. It is a prejudiced narrow-mindedness that makes a person insist on a personal or clique myopia, mindless of the vast spectrum of possibilities for betterment that could be appropriated. Nigeria has been very unfortunate for not having wiser people at the helm of affairs to lead it to the Promised Land. Yet it is evident that Nigerian intellectuals rank among the highest in the world (Ezeanya & Ajah, 2021; Eze, Ajah, Nwonovo & Atama, 2021; Ajah, Dinne & Salami, 2020; Ajah & Onyejebu, 2019). When they function outside Nigeria they are hailed as very great, but when they are put in charge in Nigeria to repeat their activities abroad they become something different – in the negative direction of course. This calls for serious worry among reasonable people, and the root cause seems to be bigotry with impunity – not excluding corruption definitely.

A Latin adage says '*corruptio optimi pessima*', which means that the corruption of the best is the highest corruption. This is because the effect would more easily envelop the whole polity in a multiplier effect. When those who should know better than others and should be role models of respecting human rights and freedom turn to apply their intellectual greatness to negative use, then they would use all the intellectual power with which they would have enhanced the greatness of the society to achieve its destruction in a carefully presented form that would ordinarily look good but fundamentally are the opposite. Nigeria excels in this type of retrogression, and that is why the country continues to look big but empty. Corruption, greed, and unreasonable vindictiveness are among the reasons for this behaviour.

It is interesting to note that in many tertiary institutions in Nigeria, there are very deep-rooted acrimonies, revolts, public demonstrations of annoyance and strife, based on unjust, vindictive, and anti-progressive administrative and jungle-legislative policies that reduce staff and students' joy and pride in doing their work in the institutions. Means of redress are surely there on paper, but they are very unapproachable in reality for the common person in the country in view of the hyper corruption in high and low places. Laws that would negatively affect the welfare of staff or students or both are made without public hearings, at least, not to talk of engaging those that would be affected in negotiations based on the principles of natural justice, equity and good conscience. The two principles of natural justice are: '*nemo iudex in causa sua*' (no one is a judge in his/her



own case), and ‘*audi alteram partem*’ (always hear the other party).

The administrative officers or senate that would put up the so-called legal instrument that would stifle or make more difficult the process of promotion of fellow staff, or increase the school fees of students, cannot act with justice by simply putting up a decision in writing to that effect, especially where the lawmakers are not so negatively affected as well. They would only be judges in their own case by simply giving the verdict that is merely to their bigoted advantage. Also not to give a hearing to the other party that would be affected by the law makes it unreasonable and suspicious of the integrity and justness of the lawmakers. But impunity is another name for authority in Nigeria. Whoever finds himself/herself in any public or even private office of responsibility towards others takes it not as a privilege to serve but as a license to lord it over others – maybe as a takeover of the position of the colonialists. When this happens among academics the effects are more destructive and devastating on the society because people of ideas rule the world, and when academic power is channeled to ignoble practices the magnitude of the damage is in the superlative.

It is no longer exciting news that staff and students of tertiary institutions in Nigeria carry about placards and put on black clothes as the regalia for mourning the unwholesome policies of the administration against their welfare. All such agitations for redress mainly fall on deaf ears, instead the authorities concerned ordinarily seem to be *praying* for the agitators to damage some public property in frustrating anger, so that the authorities would find easier means of extorting more money from them in exaggerated quantification of the extent of damage they would make, and get the demonstrators to pay for them or face worse penalties. Those days seem to have gone when those in public office struggled to make good name for themselves through selfless services. Today amassment of wealth through questionable means seem to be desired more.

In the University of Nigeria, for instance, the resentment of the members of the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) UNN branch over the sudden introduction of the unpopular requirement of publishing in very hard to get foreign impact factor journals before rising to senior cadres in the university, has lingered for several years till date. ASUU had staged several demonstrations in black regalia, prayed, complained to the authorities and explored several lawful means of redress without success till date. The resultant effect of the unpopular regulation is that in the University of Nigeria one now finds majority of the

lecturers in very low cadres compared to their colleagues elsewhere in other universities who are even lower than them academically and productively, not to talk of their equals before whom the UNN staff would now look as servants. They are dwarfed with the policy for the end not in view. Many great brains now leave the university for others that readily and happily accept them with palatable promotions for their worth, but those who patiently stayed back fighting do not get the joy they ought to get for their good works in the university.

Without going to the details of the positions of each of the parties to the lingering faceoff, it suffices to say that while the administration maintains that it is a way of getting them compete favourably with colleagues globally, the ASUU members do not see stifling their promotion right as the sacrificial lamb for showcasing the university as striving for perfection in the global view. It is also their stand that the ranking of the university globally was higher when the new rule was not yet introduced, and far lower over the years it has been in place. Ordinarily, matters of this sort should be discussed in a general meeting of all concerned, not merely by a privileged few; and the major points of reference, as academics, should be the mind of the founding fathers of the university and the principle of equity that demands that whoever seeks equity must go with clean hands. Maybe if the rank of each of the university’s staff, including the makers of the law, were to be so reviewed for adequate placement of each in accordance with equity, such a policy would not have been allowed in the first place.

It is evident that the University of Nigeria has a history that traces back to the dehumanizing activities of the colonialists against the African. The colonialists were not interested in the greatness of the African. They may gladly acknowledge intellectual giants among black people as helpers rather than professionals at par with them or even greater than them. Hence when the University of Nigeria was eventually started as a revolution against the machinations of the British, the motto of the university became “To Restore the Dignity of Man”, and the logo being the Black Lion in chains, representing the chained king of the forest – hence the great potentials of the black man being neglected and chained. The white man chained this black man, and it is the black man that has the duty of liberating himself as the University of Nigeria is poised to be doing (Anthony, Obasi, Obi, Ajah, Okpan, Onyegebu, Obiwulu & Onwuama, 2021; Areh, Onwuama & Ajah, 2020). With this in mind the University of Nigeria became the first indigenous



university in Nigeria, and carries out programs that align with the intention of the founding fathers.

Based on this fact, it may be said without any fear of contradiction that the requirement of the academic staff publishing several works in foreign based impact factor ranking journals before allowing their promotion to senior cadres in the university is definitely tightening back the chains which the liberal spirit of the university is against; not to talk of the unnecessarily huge capital flight involved in publishing abroad. The founders of the university, most of whom are now in their graves, would be crying foul at that policy, however beautifully it may be painted. Inward-looking for greatness fits more the mind of the founders than allowing the white man or foreigners in the western world to use their Thomson Reuters and other instruments to measure if the academic staff of the University of Nigeria writes well to be great or not.

For the fact that he who pays the piper dictates the tone, western ranking journals may be more interested in issues that concern them rather than the problems of Africans, hence for Africans now to depend on dancing along what the west prices to publish or rate is another way of brain drain that would now make the great people of the Lion's and Lionesses' den to fall back prostrate before the west for further colonization of thought. Hence in order to be promoted the staff of the University of Nigeria would now write to the western ranking journals –irrespective of some of the journals being present elsewhere, - and tell the west what the west would like to hear rather than addressing the internal problems of the Africans without mincing words, whether it pleases the west or not.

At best the university should put up as many internal journals as they may think necessary that would compete favourably with anyone anywhere in the world and encourage her staff to publish therein. That would keep up with the mind of the founders and maintain the wisdom in the liberal spirit which is the aspiration of the university. Even if past administrations had remained rigid or bigoted over the unpopular rule, the present administration should be courageous enough to redress it for justice's sake and allow the staff to be promoted as and when due so as to gladly carry out their arduous task of forming the leaders of tomorrow. By defining democracy as the government of the people, by the people, and for the people, Abraham Lincoln is truly right in maintaining that 'no man is good enough to govern another man without his consent' (Enweonwu, Ugwu, Areh, Onyejebu & Ajah 2021).

There was a time Nigerian Supreme Court was sending appeals to the British Privy Council even after

independence, but when Nigeria discovered that certain beautiful and laudable judgments of the Supreme Court were overturned by the Privy Council based on neo-colonial interests, Nigeria stopped sending appeals anywhere, allowing the Supreme Court of the land to live by its name. The university authorities may seek to know if any western university depended on rating of any African body for the promotion of their staff. Even the Thomson Reuters and other western rating bodies being slavishly embraced by the administration of the University of Nigeria for the promotion of her academic staff, did not even place such ratings for the promotion of academic staff anywhere in the world. Why is it then so important for the University of Nigeria for the promotion of her academic staff? It is as if the university cries more than the bereaved. It is quite unfortunate. The University of Nigeria should borrow a leaf from the Supreme Court; otherwise what is the import of the university autonomy in place.

## WEAK PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS

Corruption has so deeply eaten into the fabrics of Nigeria that public institutions such as the courts, law enforcement agencies or referential higher authorities are also infected with the general disease, such that avenues for venting ones anger judiciously are not easily assessable with confidence as they ought to be. Many centuries ago Julius Caesar had asked the paradoxical question of 'who would watch the watchman'. Indeed whenever the watchman needs to be watched to perform his assigned duty well, then it would lead to an endless continuum of having the need to watch those who watch those who watch.... That is why it is always necessary to have the watchmen that need not to be watched, who readily live up to expectations. Nigeria has not got such, and so long as the lack persists so far is the persistence of public unrest in the country.

Public institutions need to be strengthened in order to address the issue of public unrest in Nigeria. Practically each administration that rose to power in Nigeria, right from the overthrow of the first republic, had always cried of corruption and the determination to fight it in the country. That is why Nigeria has very many anticorruption laws put in place but those to execute the laws seem to be as corrupt as the corruption they try to fight (Nnam, Effiong, Iloma, Terfa & Ajah, 2021; Nnamani, Ilo, Onyejebu, Ajah, Onwuama, Obiwulu & Nzeakor, 2021). It all boils down again to the foundational problems the country has, which had been constitutionalized and put in the hands of whoever rises to power to execute as he deems fit. To think of the law in section 308 of the Nigerian constitution



would ordinarily raise the question of the actual intention of the lawmaker in protecting presidents and governors from legal actions while in office; but to know that the so-called constitution was put in place by a military dictatorship, then one may wonder no more. The section is couched as follows:

308-(1) Notwithstanding anything to the contrary in this Constitution, but subject to subsection (2) of this section

(a) no civil or criminal proceedings shall be instituted or continued against a person to whom this section applies during his period of office;

(b) a person to whom this section applies shall not be arrested or imprisoned during that period either in pursuance of the process of any court or otherwise; and

(c) no process of any court requiring or compelling the appearance of a person to whom this section applies, shall be applied for or issued:

Provided that in ascertaining whether any period of limitation has expired for the purpose of any proceedings against a person to whom this section applies, no account shall be taken of his period of office.

(2) The provisions of subsection (1) of this section shall not apply to civil proceedings against a person to whom this section applies in his official capacity or to civil or criminal proceedings in which such a person is only a nominal party

(3) This section applies to a person holding the office of President or Vice President, Governor or Deputy Governor; and the reference in this section to "period of office" is a reference to the period during which the person holding such office is required to perform the functions of the office.

This immunity clause for the presidents and governors gives the officials the license to do whatever they like while in office without being held accountable at that time. Nothing seems to be put in place to deter them from using the same power of incumbency to rig elections to their favour in their second term bid, and when their tenure is ending, to rig election in favour of their chosen successor that would shield them from litigation after leaving office. Often such successors would be seen to be as corrupt as or more corrupt than the persons in office so as to lack the guts or moral courage to bring up the culprits to book. The Igbo would say *onye nna ya zili ori n'oji ukwu agbawa uzo* a person whose father sent to steal breaks the door with

the leg. These corrupt leaders encourage corruption down the political lines and public offices and even among private business lines and the entire social and political life of the country. That is why people who partner and move on with them normally carry out their corrupt practices with impunity, and the innocent person's joy is greatly truncated, his/her patience seemingly endless, and means of redress almost unavailable. In this way the chain of corruption and circle of doom remain unbroken. Since the cancer of corruption started from the heart of the polity – in the chief executives with almost absolute powers – then the rest of the body would ordinarily align to the trend. That is why hyper corruption seems endemic in Nigeria and public unrest growing with unimaginable proportions.

## REMEDIES

A problem detected is already half solved. Nigerian problem is not that the people themselves are bad; instead it is that the country was built on a faulty foundation. When a landowner discovers that his builders laid a fragile foundation for the house in which he already lives in, he (the landowner) is always faced with three major challenges: whether to destroy the house and start afresh, not minding the cost and the prospective loss of funds and wasted time, or to engage in refurbishing, renovation and fortification, or still to live on in the house and wait for the dooms day which is sure to come, all things being equal. Other challenges could be to sell off or rent the house and deceitfully live on the proceeds of a dangerous trap to others' safety; or even to wait for some miracle to happen whenever the messiah may want to visit the scene. Of all the options, the first two seem to be the most honest. It is either to destroy it entirely or to renovate it to make it stronger.

While the first option tallies with the remedy of disintegrating Nigeria for the different peoples to go back to their ethnic and tribal lines to form different nations of their choice, the second option best describes what Nigerians may truly cherish as the best, which is to renovate it while still retaining what is good in the old structure. The good thing about Nigerian unity is that the immense human and natural resources, coupled with the diversity of rich cultural heritages of its peoples hold a high prospect of greatness that may not be underestimated. But with the present faulty structures the glorious future would only remain a mirage. It is then necessary that Nigerians should rise to the consciousness of the reality of what the colonial past did to the country, and courageously reverse it to the benefit of all Nigerians rather than allowing a few to rejoice at the peril and tears of the rest.





Nigeria should go back to the regional political structure or even to the six geopolitical regions that are only in place by popular acceptance without any legal backing to their existence. That would settle the mutual suspicion of the different peoples and encourage competition. It will also make the people to stop eyeing the resources in other regions or geopolitical zones while neglecting to put to use the ones in their own region or zone. This would also kill the discriminating drive in those holding public offices in terms of tribe, ethnicity, religion and culture; such that obnoxious and vexatious laws would no more be found in the constitution, all in the bid to protect sectional interests of the dictatorial lawmaker or head of government, against the people he intends to subdue and punish for whatever intention. With this, impunity would be shown the exit door, and flexibility will advance economic growth and happier social life.

There should be true federalism in Nigeria whereby the principles of federalism would be functional. As for now, Nigeria only practices a moribund and distasteful unitary system while answering a federal republic. True federalism entails perfect fiscal and administrative autonomy of the federating units that pay agreed tax to the center, with common military, foreign policy, and other identifiers of nationality being the domain of the central government. Each federating unit would control its resources, take care of its laws, which would not conflict with the agreed federal constitution, and then freely send lawmakers to the national assembly without any influence from the central government. In this way federal legislators would function as they should, and not fear the vindictiveness of the president or the federal government. This reduces the cost of governance and nips in the bud the bribery and corruption in the legislature, executive and the judiciary.

If law enforcement agents have no fear of tribal and ethnic influence and victimization they would be more up and doing in their assignment. Those in public offices would then sit up and know that inspectors of their activities are no longer far away from their office or unconcerned about their dedication and achievements. They would then be more careful in toying with the integrity and welfare of the citizens under their control. More trustworthy avenues would then open up for redress, and the common person would begin to see hope in the national polity. Ingenuity would then begin to be rewarded and encouraged rather than being stunted and killed with bigoted, tribal and ethnic sentiments.

## CONCLUSION

If all the ingredients of public unrest in Nigeria were to be exhausted, the book that would be written on them would be too bulky to be carried. We only scratched the tip of the iceberg merely to raise awareness to what is in place. Chinua Achebe's prophetic Anthills of the Savanna concluded the sage's caution to those Nigerian leaders who think that the world stops at their feet that in truth "this world belongs to the people of the world not to any little caucus, no matter how talented..." (Ugwuoke, Ajah & Onyejebu, 2020; Nnam, Ajah, Arua, Okechukwu & Okorie, 2019). Whether people like it or not the society has to keep marching to freedom in line with the order in nature. Human agents of discord and public unrest are only leaving the ugly footprints with which posterity would remember them when the struggle for freedom must have reached its desirable destination as must happen one day. Good people should persevere in goodness and not lose their cool even in the face of unbearable odds; yet that would not make them to stop fighting for justice and truth in line with the biblical injunction of the Lord Jesus Christ to his disciples that "in the world you will have trouble, but take courage, I have conquered the world.

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