

## CHAPTER 3

# IS THE RICKETY, CONTRIVANCE, NIGERIA SUSTAINABLE?

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### **Introduction**

That which is rickety does not have to be old, to be so. A young, new, structure can also be rickety if it is of a form structurally weak, not well made, whose joints are not properly fixed and has the likelihood of breaking down any time. The rickety form lacks the strength to create consensus among the parts, raise issue of appropriateness of identity, appearance and functionality. It thus, inevitably exists within a range of perception of an inevitable disaster; that is of an inevitable subjective conditions which both make any speculation of its existence and worth possible, and also place limits upon that speculation.

Yet, that which is rickety was once of an ordered system until it started to invoke in the observers the speculations about the standards of its structure and functions which seems apparently to be one of incoherent profusion of impressions and sensations by which it could now be construed as dangerous or inimical to the life of the users, the environment, and anybody within the vicinity. Precipitated into the knowledge of it are inability to resolve some needs, and the capacity to do something seemingly unexpected. In its mechanistic model, which is of the form of a contrivance, it may not be able to serve some functions which are technically necessary for a rational society: For as long as it lasts in that form, the appearance itself is a sign to the problematic nature of the articulated parts – such as the production of cacophony of sounds of clashes, clanking of parts, and disarticulation that warrants discursive justification.

From the above discussion we can recognize three factors that would normally suggest that a contrivance should be an object of debate among observers: (1) the structure; which warrants reflections on its permissiveness for autonomy, independence, collaboration. (2) the spaces or gaps between parts mitigating against the effectiveness equality of chances to make contributions towards creating order. (3) The various kinds of validity claims that are made on the make/engineers, and the quality, relevance, appropriateness and justifiability.

The thrust of this paper is that Nigeria is a metaphor for a “rickety contrivance”, state. This is because we can recognize weak parts in relation to the general frame and these sometimes operate as antagonistic, autonomous, parts in willed relationship unable to generate shared meanings, interpretations, values and standards for actors to share common goals, or have collective conscience, known as irreducible truths collectively owned.

## **Nigeria as Contrivance**

In 1997 Ayoade, a Professor of Political Science, hinted that Nigeria is a contrivance, He went on to identify the contrivance's elements, not subjectively as we did, but objectively, as leadership, personnel of government, the people governed, and the kind of structures put up for governance. His definition raises the imagery of a structural relation of parts, basically expected to play roles in governance of the nation, and of the value desirable to its (national) existence as a functional whole. In this wise, he further stressed that, Nigeria's

Federalism is a kind of wedlock in which the twains are one without losing their individualities. This will reduce the acrimonious competition for control.

**(Ayoade 1977:27)**

The insinuation into a 'wedlock' structure implies that Nigeria is a country supposed to have coordinated parts. And should it be coordinated, then, it must be a country in which individuality and collectivity are recognized and encouraged. But then there is also the insinuation of an acrimonious structure of competing parts, indicative of contest, competition that can fail to provide unity or generate consensus and order. As a result of the acrimony between the parts and the parts and the "whole", he warns:

The federation must... be a building block and not a stumbling block

**(Ayoade 1997:26)**

Unfortunately, it is the other way around; as in Fola Ojo's view of the nation,

Nigeria develops in a clime filled with visible and invisible cacophonous cacodemons threatening to sever her jugular and snuff out her life. Her piloting ambassadors are confused and bemused. They know not how best to shake off the protracted pain or brake the shackles of self-enslavement. Is Nigeria a fruitful vine; or a filthy geographical assemblage?

**(Ojo 2020: 24)**

The later expression seems to be most befitting. The reason is that the federation is a stumbling block to self-realization of the potentials of all the parts and of the nation itself. Nigeria is a "Society of the spectacle" (Debord 1994); which is that, it is one of pain and praises, alliances and oppositions, order and conflict, enforcing various and varied expressions of estrangement, alienation, and powerlessness at one time or the other to determine representations and identifications.

It must be stated at this point that it has been difficult even to give the contrivance an appropriate name or crystallize its values and standards. In the final analysis, it is Lord Lugard's naming, Nigeria, that exists as signal to a system of significations of complex ethnic entities moved into a holistic abstraction that is alien to all the parts. The country presents daily a clash of cultures, of identities, of ideas, of ideals, and of expectations and ideologies. Nigeria does not exist as a conscious entity knowing its own significance and relevance due to its physical size, population, and resources. But even if we were to accept that it does, its performances do not underscore

such. Its Political structure, both at individual unit locus of motives and rhetorics, as well as at a consubstantial level, cannot be grouped with other unique parts as joint participants in creating shared principles (of the same or similar standards, expectations and values). It is substantially a formation of hurriedly contrived structure at odds with its parts and its parts at odds with it. In 1953 this was evident when Action Group moved the motion of independence, the NCNC supporting. But the NPC opposed it. From 1953 till now, as Yinka Odumakin observed:

It has been no agreement today, no agreement tomorrow as the music impresario,  
Fela Anikulapo – Kuti put on Vinyl.

**(Odumakin 2020: 48)**

The contrivance hardly can stay stable for the basic reason that the elite has entrenched their privilege position to exploit, appropriate, expropriate, to the detriment of the masses quality of life. This privileged position subsists on violent election rigging, ethnically-defined consciousness, non-ideologically driven goals. These, as Garvin Williams (1980) did observe serves nothing but,

A redefinition of the process of political competition – strategically evolved in relation to exigencies of specific historical situations and contemporary moment. The definition of appropriate solidarities and choice of political alliances is made according to calculations of relative advantage and political judgment.

**(Williams 1980:70)**

The pertinent picturesque which emerges from all the observation is of a nation that is just a territory, a human made. It is not a natural construct and definitely not an accident of history (Osaghae 2019:7); rather it is a product of human thinking and is put together “through deliberate acts of men to serve desired ends” Osaghae (2019:8).

Osaghae (2019) then went on to put up an indictment on elite. They were, he observed,

Not thinkers without a banister; they were rather thinking with the wrong banisters because .... their thinking on the Nigerian state was blighted by simultaneous ‘thinking’ on the component units which mattered more to them

**(Osaghae 2019:10-11)**

The elite make the contrivance to operate with structures of dissoluble unity.

It was preferable to them to allow the parts operate a level of social consciousness of distinction and from time to time, as expedient, into tendencies of independence. The Biafra case is an example. Such thinking led Tunji Ajibade to ponder:

What drives policy makers to take the steps they take in this nation? Do they have an agreed vision of where they want to take Nigeria? Why aren't they passionately committed to it? Except for sloganeering, action and purchasing patterns in government, institutions and don't give the impression that officials are committed to encouraging and purchasing made-in-Nigeria products.

**(Ojo 2020: 25)**

They would not even purchase made-in-Nigeria ideas that are *infra dignitate*. As long as there is no consciousness of the imperative values and standards, shared by all, each part is left to its constitutive meanings. Everything is reduced to its inter-subjective meaning of its existence as a move towards converging beliefs and values. In lieu of the above miss, of a united mindset and values, ideas are the property of individual units, individual groups, as they are rooted in the socio-cultural practices that validate them as unique.

What was not built into the Nigeria framework of Nationhood, and still is not being built into it are freedom, autonomy, independence, as rights to a generation of productive capability rather than to political/geographical distinctions. The desires of individuals and the ethnic unit flow from experiencing action, historicity of relationship that do not fit into the union of the parts, or into a symbolized representation of collective ideas or education, or of a true satisfaction of capability to actualize self in that which enshrine manipulation, deprivation and oppression which characterizes the Nation's public structures.

### **Statistics, Representation, and the State.**

It is not necessary to bring the statistics on various sectors of national development up to date in order to reemphasize the issue of social and cultural conditions in which our dominant aesthetics of presentation and representation has emerged and seems embedded in our consciousness. Indeed, our present predicaments are traceable to historical idealization of Nigeria's image as a contrivance lacking a dominant or unified culture and vision. The scenic character of the nation has been of a compulsive interplay of the object situation (the structural situation) and public representations that have continued to deliver an understanding of an impending doom.

The logical value of statistics, nevertheless consists of determining some general truths about the objects' situations, in order to establish proper corrective measures. But few things in Nigeria change, as to put it on a serious mode. Or put in another way, the actuality is that nothing is ever able to create significant affect that would urge new factual and aesthetic knowledge able to effect a new historical understanding of what Nigeria is. Whatever label that is applied as conceptual state of the nation, failed or failing; crippled, prebendal, rogue, etc, they are consistent with an historical understanding of a continuous state of activities, methods and idealism subverting an ontological realism.

For example, the case of corruption has been part of national experience even before independence and still is so. Also, is the misrule, once thought resolvable by coups. A recent description of transport culture equity demonstrates that although Nigerians may be bothered about their inconveniences and deprivations, but they often appear powerless to change their situations:

It is only in Nigeria you will enter a commercial cab, and observe that the fuel gauge of the car is not functioning, the speed limit is not functioning, the rear mirror of the car has broken, they side mirror are off the car; passengers are expected to open the door from outside, and Ignition of the car is not functioning because the driver can only start the car by joining two wires. They country Nigeria is so humorous to live in.

**(Ogidi, Facebook comment, February 1, 2020)**

An apt description of a rickety state, not doubt, but then how mind boggling to realize that people would still board the vehicle unmindful of the hazard waiting; and as if they have no option. They, of course, probably do have one, which they are unwilling to use and thus have to accept the rickety condition as part of their normal culture. Hence to them, it could excite humour in spite of its sign of dysfunctionality, cause for self-alienation, and urge for rethinking the usage. With such mindset the people would even rationalize its continuity in form and function, as of “Oga Na Nigeria we dey; and I don collect my road worthiness from the VIO (Vehicle inspection officers)” (Ogidi’s, Facebook comment, February 1, 2020) Case closed.

The incontrovertible fact is that in Nigeria, reality and development are intertwined, and in any social context they can be exchanged one for another. Both are significant components of a self-conscious constituent of meaning and drive the need for drive and the drive for needs. Data collection, quantitative or qualitative make no difference, they are meant to create the drives for improvement in situation, as least to the extent they help to, uncover the truth about the “self”, the direction that progress is being made by the “self”, and the capability of the “self” to deal with critical situations. Individuals and collectives thus could, of course, form their own opinion on any data presented and are unmindful of;

The contradiction between compulsion to have an opinion and the incapacity to form an opinion (which) leads many people to accept stereotypes which relieve them of the thankless task of forming their own opinions and get enable them to enjoy the prestige of being in touch with things;

**(Pollock 1978:229)**

Those familiar with exchanges on Facebook, Twitters, and other social platforms would attest to the truth of the above quote. The writers on these spaces have their own opinions, though many seem comfortable with common place, stereotype positions. The exchanges provoke sensitivities and insensitivities, sensibilities and inanities, and draw negative, appealing, scintillating, encouraging, dulling, emotions and moods. Issues are placed in the realm of discourse of aesthetics and pragmatism, logic and illogicality, to generate assumptive or repulsive terms and categorizations that make exchange unfriendly. Indictments are, delivered on partisan lines, making resolution into the “truth” of their situational analysis. Difficult to discern.

In the same vein, statistical records had become controversial in terms of the political, assumptive readings given them. The readings urge a specific type of mystification of performance and progress even though they are of repeated movements between positions already known, mostly. For instance, Nigeria has a population of roughly 200 million. The biggest figure in Africa and it will in the next few years move from being the 7<sup>th</sup> to the 3<sup>rd</sup> most populous after China and India. Also, from another perspective of reading the Nigerian situation, Ghana has a GDP of \$65,5 billion; Rwanda has \$8.7 billion, less than that of the Federal Capital, Abuja (\$29.2 billion); Akwa Ibom (\$14.2 billion), Bayelsa (\$ 8.8 billion); Lagos (\$90 billion). Consistently our population grows faster than our rate of production, and the options before us are, reducing the population and increasing productivity. We are unwilling to do any or a combination of the two, regrettably. Yet these had bred corruption that makes things worse.

The information in Transparency International (TI) publication in its 10<sup>th</sup> edition on Global corrupt Barometer (G C B-Africa) says that our lawmakers, police, judges are the most corrupt in Africa. But in the Punch of July 12, 2019, on its front page, the National Assembly rejected the statistics. Particularly of suspect to them is the work of the enemy; thereby, trying to impose a simple motive that there is mega plots to destabilize Nigeria; while artificially privileging the narrative of the “powerful insiders” as nationalist. Contestations of ideas like this are, of course, at the heart of Nigeria’s rickety state, for they frustrate the emergence of the hegemonic position needed to deal with the issue of corruption, which is discovered from time to time in all sectors and is viewed from respectable perspective as unsustainable actions by many observers. In any case, besides corruption which is man-made action, there is also the issue of poverty. Poverty is, of course, inevitable because corruption endangers equity, equality, and redistribution of property. Expectedly, therefore, the United Nations Development Programmes (UNDP) and the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiatives (DPHI) took the initiative to warn that 50% of Nigerians are now poorer. The data cannot be considered as separate or autonomous from a governance that is increasingly raising its debt profit that stood, as of January this year, at about 29 Trillion Naira. Yet, there is no reasonable number of new infrastructures on the ground to justify the expenditure. Nor can it be divorced from an intellectualist’s perusal of what causes, in a milieu, a serious lack of amenities.

Within the wide spectrum of contemporary critical and speculative thoughts and self-perception, what are termed “negative” statistics projects failure of programmatic actions at state and National levels. They provide insights into the performance or lack of it, of socio-cultural formations – the family, political and educational institutions and institutional leadership – that have come to be publicly designated and criticized for their thoughts and attitudes to needs, intervention strategies, and reflections. They can hardly avoid being indicted, in any case, for the Nigerians’ attitude towards production and consumption is that which the elite have rendered anachronistic and explosive within development of a pluralist society by their insensitivities.

In fact, as long as statistics is of projecting the self, self and collective indictments will continue to be rolled out for public consumption by the ordinary Nigerians on the streets and homes, and they will fit into their expected spectacle frame of the activities of elite, their cheer leaders and the Almajiri Vanguard who are bothered with who, what, where and when in their considerations of the good; rather than how, in order to search for cause(s) and know the affect and the effect (of bad governance) of efforts to rationalize justification or the rejection of elite leadership.

As a final analysis, both the statistical and ethnographic data we have analyzed in this paper not only call attention to the human factor in National development process but also highlight the level of awareness of the “real situation” that present local knowledge system had provided, and as well hint on culture impact on development as those things that are increasingly weaved around skepticism. Our point, though, is this: none of economic progress determinants, or of state competencies, can hardly fail to recognize that the human factors is that which makes a difference to what human environment at any time is. What they, the state and individuals, can deliver as capacity and capability (Albert 2012; Olaniyi 2012). The culture’s crucial role in this origination of self-difference in time and space is to set the template for an ideal in the ontological sense, where an existence is linked to social order – which is about how a society thinks, speaks and why speaking explains the “purport” of its thought through its members

thoughts (Eco 1979: 61-62) Since thinking, speaking, and acting are crucial drives toward development, and *ipso-facto* the sustainability of the society, a society becomes orderly or not, grow or decline, to the degree that freedom of association, interaction, and voice are guaranteed the individuals.

## **NIGERIA, A SUSTAINABLE PROJECT?**

In Nigerians' tendencies to deal with now-situations therefore, they have pointed to the past with a bias to justification of existence or situation; that is, remember that which they want to remember and forget those they don't want in their rationalization. This "opening-closing" of the minds, intrudes into self-contemplation location, and completion of projects and constitutes the systematic structure of ideas, and performance of state actors that interlocks, as temporal configurations, with that which discriminate and as well receive the definition of situation and their meanings, They, as perceptive observers, create the level to distinguish the various and varied meanings for identities – progressive, hailers, wailers, reactionaries, etc. This has been part of our history as a nation, which is that, regrettably, of the narratives to form reactionary actions, to form the plot for power and dominance. Thus, in 1945 and later in 1959 our political leaders could hardly agree on the best Constitution of the newly emerging nation. And since then we have been destined for crisis of confidence in leadership, bi partisanship on idea generation, and on explanation and modeling into non constructive venture. By the mid-1960s there was silent murmuring on ethnicity as problematic; this has cascaded into a cacophony of noises on inclusion and exclusion in project of developments, the division that urge protest and shrieking sounds of dying souls. Many were rendered property less in the Western Region's we tie drama, and many lives were also lost. The rickety contrivance was driven into war of the whole against a part for roughly two-and-a half years. Then came the reconciliatory efforts by general Gowon, which is still ineffective and unrealizable today. So the contrivance wobbles on, in life threatening pace of brigandage, banditry, kidnapping, Boko Haram, etc. with the accompany evocative imagining and realities of pain, loss, death, deprivation, marginalizations. The nation's existence, drives, and sustenance remain under threat as it had always been since the 1950s.

As a fact, no thesis on Nigeria, and of its sustainability, can hardly ignore the sceneries of instability, identity and identifications problematics, as well as the man-qua-man skepticism. These are the "capsule view" of Nigeria's reality (Hinchman and Hinchman, 1997: xvi); which is of the self in the world, in Nigeria; and the corresponding evocation and provocation of meanings and interpretation by which the self orders its environment and experiences it. Life has to make meaning to this man, Nigerian, not by what people say but by what it recognizes as its well-being (Adedipe 2009): Knowledge, sound health, poverty reduction, food security and affordable shelter (Adedipe 2009: 86). These, even as they contend with "mounting demographic pressures; massive movement of refugees; or internally-displaced persons; legacy of vengeance-seeking groups; grievances and paranoia; and chronic and unsustainable future.

Significantly, the present bothers us, Nigerians, only to the existent of missed opportunities of free education; jobs availability; and moral integrity; that were there before now to serve, criteria of and for self-objectification as persons. That past, though still noted for ethnic violence and corruption, set up a path for a sustainable development which was latter covered with "weeds" limiting visibility, freedom, production and moves of any meaningful significance. The past that,

that glorious phase urged upon us is the application of our capabilities and thereby confirm our own rationality. It eloquently states equivocally, however, the power of education development, indicating that in education lies the unifier of man with his society and, invariably, that which is also the sustainability of the self and the society.

But over time the society had moved from the entrenchment of the traditional values, to that which the individual is given no other methods of self-invention and re-invention. Consequently, individuals have to suffer the compulsive pressure of social mobility that is slowed down; certificate seeking, which replaces competence; and quest for material acquisition, which replaces industry and integrity. The people began to look for new processes of self-definition and construction as these could make for relevance and importance in the society. This new thrust in education, formal and informal, suggests, “*Isé kékeré, èrè ñlá ñlá*”. Little work, plenty of profits; and “*Eni se ní ìdí pepe, ní je ní pepe*” You take your feed from where you work, which is suggestive of corrupt practices. The effect of this mind set is that the individual is in a mode of contestation with its society, and self can now be privileged under the constructs of unmet expectations, and be gradually moved into a delusion of the self-importance: as one that no longer need hard work, long time training and deep thinking. And knowledge and ambition coincides in the construction of the self. The individual in conflict with the society cannot produce what it and society wanted or needed, because the necessary materials for such are not available. However, in this new self, the “ordinary” citizens become elite in the ideology of bigmanism that is founded on exploitation, appropriation and expropriation that affirm and heighten socio-cultural criticism, because the preferred is that which itself, a negation of a negation is,; i.e. the negation of the past which is of the present that itself must be negated. This dynamics of development can hardly build a bond of unity between production and consumption, potentials and results, as one negates the other

It is just imperative in the present circumstances that, if man is at the centre of Nigerians miseries, then what Nigerians needs is the right education that negates all that have produced their miseries – unemployment, unproductiveness, opportunistic tendencies, misuse of power and authority, and problematic age. To this end, Nigerians would have to work out that, which makes for the creative, nationalistic, and responsible, responsive and accountable man.

The education needed in our view, is that which rests on three pillars of self and society’s construction and reconstruction, which are, (1) the civic education, emphasizing comportment, characters, industry, values, norms and standards of meaningful living, environment, and nationalism education. (2) The creative education in which the individual engages with ideas production, of artistic, technological, dramatic, communicative and intellectual products. And (3) the economic education which deals with marketing of ideas, commodities, financing sources, and investment strategies. Each of these pillars have their own movements in Nigerian thought, have their own movements by products, and these products rather than being under the control of a few are, in fact, able to control the products. This strategy of sustainability is that which the contrivance, if we are looking for change, can adopt for correction or even freedom of new beginnings.



## Conclusion

We have argued that through education reforming the mind, building values for enhancement of capabilities and leadership, good citizenry and freedom, the inept, rickety connivance can either be completely changed or partially changed to one in which situational experience becomes intelligible to Nigerians, change the serious reality to real sensuousness, removes fear and changes it to hope; and change then replaces change in a continuous, but systematic movement towards the best. The present structure of Nigerian education and the affective processes are not sustainable. The one that can must have civic sense, creativity nurturing, and economic minded acts.

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