

## **CAN NIGERIA BUILD ITS ECONOMIC FUTURE? A CRITICAL REVIEW OF ISSUES FACING THE NATION**

“As long as we have faith [in the corrupt politicians], we have no hope.  
To hope, we have to break the faith [on them].” Arundhati Roy

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### **ABSTRACT**

Nigeria appears to be moving in a vicious circle, shoveling from one failed leader to another, from one failed program to another, and from one fraudulent election to another, and from one unproductive budget to another. Good ideas are often not utilized by the political leaders because they are preoccupied with ‘primitive accumulation of wealth.’ During elections, the ‘political merchants’ would be trumpeting their unrealistic agenda and vision on how to reform and restructure the society and to build a regenerative economy. But the gullible masses that could not control their enthusiasm seem to forget that all previous programs have always served only as conduits to transfer public funds into their private bank accounts. This paper posits that Nigeria cannot build a sustainable economic future without functional institutions and infrastructure and creative entrepreneurs and pragmatic leaders who are committed to replacing the present dysfunctional system with a viable one and utilize the abundant human and material resources in the society to build and maintain the infrastructure and institutions that drive the economy. The people need a new and more humane society for the benefit of the general population, and not for a tiny group at the top.

**Keywords:** Failed Visions, Infrastructure, Institutions, Economy, Entrepreneurs, National Development, Nigeria

### **INTRODUCTION**

Every society deserves a creative and development-conscious leader who works for ‘common good.’ But not all nations are blessed with leaders who strive to fructify the economy and make a difference in the lives of the citizens. Nigeria is, unfortunately, among the countries whose leaders are only good at making sham promises, and as a result, its problems remain perpetually unresolved. The lingering socio-political and economic problems in Nigeria have raised some pertinent questions: Why has Nigeria failed to develop in spite of the vast material and human resources at its disposal? Why have the endless visions and agenda being proposed by the leaders failed to develop the society? Why have the people failed to hold those who are bleeding the society dry personally accountable? Can Nigeria build its economic future without functional institutions and infrastructure? We cannot ask enough questions here.

To clearly understand Nigeria's predicament, one must first understand its history and the mentality of the leaders. As sociologist C. Wright Mills has noted in *The Sociological Imagination*, "Neither the life of an individual nor the history of a society can be understood without understanding both" (Mills, 1959, p.2). Nigeria has had military regimes as well as civilian administrations, but they have had utter disregard for the rule of law, as they have violated the people's human civil rights, destroyed public institutions and infrastructure and looted the public treasury. And the politicians are experts only in rigging elections. This has contributed in no measures to the nation's underdevelopment.

Nigeria is today a paradox: a rich nation with a large segment of the population living in poverty and misery. The economic and technological revolutions that started decades ago and which have transformed India, China and the "Asian Tigers" into an economic super-power are yet to reach the shores of Nigeria. These countries are now an integral part of the global economy and when they 'cough the global economy catches cold.' The inability of Nigeria's leaders to change their greedy and destructive mentality and make wise and educated decisions is among the major causes of the misery and growing discontent in the society. For Nigeria to develop and be competitive in today's global political and economic arena, the leaders must adopt a new way and better ways of thinking and invest in human capital and technological development. In particular, the people must summon up the courage to chase out of office the demigods that are pulling the nation backward with their visionless visions and agenda, and thus bleeding it dry.

#### **UNBROKEN CIRCLE OF FAILED VISION, POLICY, AND AGENDA**

Over the years, Nigeria's political leaders have made history with the business of unbroken circle of policy failures. They have been promising to fix the dilapidated infrastructure and institutions to boost the economy, but each time the promises have been *jeu d'esprit*. Yet the people lack the courage to hold them accountable; there is a huge gap between being angry and taking action to challenge the status quo. A man reportedly said "you either die a hero or live long enough to see yourself become the villain." In developed democracies, those who make positive change impossible often face the people's wrath on Election Day. It is hard to comprehend why a nation, after spending a huge sum of money to build roads and bridges, refineries and power plants, etc, would refuse to repair and maintain them. This simply shows that the political leaders are not committed to the development of Nigeria; they only remember how terrible things are during elections, when they would make new and bogus promises.

As noted, nothing works in the society as they should because the leaders have their own selfish agenda; but the people cannot hold them responsible for anything. Browsing through some of the most recent unfulfilled political promises and failed programs would give the readers an insight into the issues, which involve a mixture of politics and economics, and how they affect domestic as well as global policy of Nigeria.

In 2004, the Obasanjo civilian administration launched an economic development program-the National Economic Empowerment Development Strategy (NEEDS) crafted by Charles Chukwuma Soludo (his former chief economic counselor) in response to Nigeria's development challenges. The program that was supposed to focus on wealth and employment creation, poverty reduction, and to guide national values or mentality reorientation, was adopted by the 36 States and 774

local government areas in the country as they created their own versions of the economic development strategy: State Economic Empowerment Development Strategy (SEEDS) and Local-Government Economic Empowerment Development Strategy (LEEDS) respectively. But after gulping a huge sum of money the NEEDS/SEEDS/LEEDS strategy failed to achieve its main objectives. During the same period, the National Assembly attempted countless times, in vain, to amend the Constitution. In particular, the process was thwarted by the Obasanjo third-term ploy.

When the now late Umaru Musa Yar'Adua became president, he unveiled the Vision 2020 program and the Seven-Point Agenda, and promised that his administration would transform Nigeria into one of the first 20 industrialized nations in the year 2020. And as usual, the gullible masses could not contain their enthusiasm. But no sooner had the enthusiasm surrounding the highly trumpeted Vision and Agenda had hardly subsided than the programs came to a naught. Goodluck Jonathan, who inherited the administration when Yar'Adua passed away on May 5, 2010, has not also gone beyond political rhetoric. He added the establishment of nine new federal universities to his catalog of programs when he started to gear up for the presidency (*Vanguard*, February 10, 2011). Despite all this, Nigeria has continued to whirl in a circle of unfriendly business environment, weak of economy, high youth unemployment and poverty and crime.

The question is: Why Jonathan is rushing to build new universities when the old ones remain underfunded? Everyone knows that this is the usual ploy of giving the poor youth an elusive hope to get their support. Like his predecessors, Jonathan has been unable to resolve the lingering problems facing education sector since he became the President (*Guardian*, October 24, 2010). Because the institutions are underfunded and the teachers are not properly motivated to perform their duties, the schools in Nigeria are unable to prepare the graduates 'for the jobs of the future.' With rising youth unemployment, education does not excite them any longer; some of them are now criminally innovating to make a make ends meet. (*Punch*, November 22, 2010). The politicians seem to be banking on Nigerians amnesia, when they are making their bogus promises. The political leaders would promise to transform Nigeria into an *El Dorado*; but nothing works in the society as they should. Like the other failed programs such as the *re-branding* and the *buy-made-in* Nigeria goods campaigns that were veritable sermons for the politicians and their sycophants, the flopped Obasanjo's *Heart of Africa* project, and the endless poverty alleviation programs that have only served as a conduit for the politicians to transfer public money to their bank accounts, the 'war against corruption' has not gone beyond rhetoric. As noted in the national newspapers (and the mass media), including the *BusinessDay* of February 28, 2011, Goodluck Jonathan and the PDP celebrated the release of Bode George after he served two years in prison for corruption. This is not to mention the failure of the government to resolve the lingering Niger-Delta crisis (Dike, April-September, 2010). However, some of the candidates gearing up for the 2011 general elections are promising to create 'a new Nigeria.' One wonders what makes the 'political magicians' believe that the 'new Nigeria' would be any different than the 'old Nigeria' that has been tainted by corruption and sectarian crisis.

The politicians do not seem to understand the duties of a government; as noted in the *Politics of Aristotle*: "the end of the state is not mere life" but the "promotion of a good quality of life." And without effective political institutions the poor and hungry, out of desperation, could revolt and seize their ill-acquired wealth? In fact, political scientists and economists have noted that there is a tendency for high crimes to occur in any society where a few at the top is in possession of the wealth of a

society (Miller, *et al*, 2010, p.144). Adam Smith (1776; Book 5, Ch. 1) seemed to have had this in mind when he observed that:

The affluence of the rich excites the indignation of the poor, who are often both driven by want, and prompted by envy, to invade his possessions. [And that]...The acquisition of valuable and extensive property...requires [effective laws and] the establishment of civil government.

The National Assembly has been engrossed in countless controversies. It does not operate within the law, and uninhibited by cultural norms and public opinion. In fact, the “law makers” “...are themselves a law” onto others (Durant, 1976, p.87). In advanced democracies, the leaders always gauge the people’s pulse before taking a stand on any critical issue. According to *Jacques Necker* (1732-1804), erstwhile French Minister of Finance under Louis XVI, King of France, (in mature democracies) public opinion is an “invisible power without money, without police, and without an army,” but has enormous power to influence government policies (Behrens, 1985, p.153).

The members have taken advantage of the lack of effective institution to become lawless and erratic. After amending a section of the 1999 Constitution recently, they were embroiled in a spurious debate as to whether or not the President should sign the Constitution for it to become operational. Some of them were of the view that the ‘amendment does not require presidential assent,’ while a majority of Nigerians had a contrary view. In the process, a law suit was filed by Olisa Agbakoba, former president of the Nigerian Bar Association, who was among those that argued that the President must sign the document for it to become lawful. After studying the case, Okechukwu Okeke, a Federal High Court Justice, ruled that the amended section of the Constitution would be ‘null and void’ without the President appending his signature on the document (*Vanguard*, November 13, 2010). The National Assembly succumbed to public pressure after a couple of weeks of power struggle and President Goodluck Jonathan signed the document (2010) on January 10, 2011 (*Daily Independent*, January 10, 2011).

The controversy surrounding the constitution and the amendment process raised some pertinent questions: Is Nigeria running out of people with the requisite skills and knowledge to pilot the affairs of the society? Why didn’t the Constitution state explicitly and unambiguously how it should be amended? Was the power play a political ploy for the ‘lawbreakers’ to circumvent the process? A constitution that is ‘ordained and established by the people’ is supposed to be an institutional framework to govern a society. But any person who is familiar with Nigeria knows that the 1999 Constitution was imposed on the people by the military.

However, the problem with the Nigerian economy is that the leaders have allowed the ‘keystones’ of the economy to rot away. And this often leads to weak economy, high unemployment, social crisis and political instability, which scares away domestic and international entrepreneurs from the economy.

## ENTREPRENEURS AND ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION

The corrupt leaders of Nigeria have created myriad sociopolitical and economic problems in the society. And it appears nobody is making serious efforts to tackle the challenges facing the nation. The economy is thus in shackles because the leaders are engrossed in “destructive destruction” (Schumpeter, 1942). In other words, they are destroying the institutions and infrastructure that drive the economy instead of maintaining them or creating new ones. They are fond of awarding bogus contracts to their cronies who often abandon the projects after collecting a big portion of the money. Because of corruption, the entrepreneurs that could build and maintain the infrastructure that would drive the economy are not motivated. Economists and political scientists have noted that no economy can be viable when the keystones are not functional. “The literal meaning of keystone is the essential architectural piece at the crown of an arch which locks the other pieces into position and holds the arch in place. The figurative use of the term keystone refers to a central aspect of a larger framework or system without which the whole structure would collapse”(see *creativityshift.com*). And if one or more of the keystones of the economy is lacking or rendered ineffective the polity would become dysfunctional. In today’s crisis-ridden and highly competitive global economy both developed and under-developed nations are struggling to survive (see *creativityshift.com*). In mature economies, entrepreneurs are recognized as catalysts for innovation; they are always encouraged to invest in and repair and maintain the critical infrastructure, which drive the economy and create employment. They also invest in research and development (R&D) to propel economic activities (Miller, *et al.*, 2010, pp.129-130). However, because of corruption and poor values system Nigeria’s, educational institutions, roads, bridges and power plants, airport facilities and other essential infrastructure are in disrepair. It must be emphasized that Nigeria cannot compete in the knowledge-driven 21<sup>st</sup> century global economy with poorly educated and unskilled workers. As Durant (1976, p.484) has aptly stated:

There is nothing that [a] man [or a woman] might not do [or accomplish] if our splendid organization of schools and universities were properly developed and properly manned, and directed intelligently to the reconstruction of human character. This, and not violent revolution or paper legislation, is the way out of economic greed and ... brutality. Our schools are the open sesame to Utopia.

Nigeria’s leaders do not seem to accept the fact that the nation’s problems are home-grown. After more than 50 years of independence, it is absurd that some of them are still blaming the West (or the colonial masters) for Nigeria’s problems. Is the West responsible for the nation’s dilapidated infrastructure and institutions? The West did not instigate the leaders to loot public money, neither did it instruct the local industries to produce substandard goods and services or for the business community to import expired drugs, etc. To move forward, Nigeria should look inward to resolve its deficiencies. Nigeria cannot reinvent the wheel. The leaders should emulate the good things leaders of developed and successful countries have done and invest in infrastructural and human capital development. The society should encourage creative-minded entrepreneurs with cutting-edge technologies) to invest in the critical social infrastructure to transform the economy and spur national development.

An entrepreneur is a change agent. Through innovation the entrepreneurs transform obsolete and inefficient methods of production into a more proficient form of production. As Schumpeter (1983) observed, 'The function of the entrepreneur... is to introduce economic innovation, which takes 'a variety of forms such as introducing new commodities or qualitatively better versions of existing ones, finding new markets, new methods of production and distribution, or new sources of production for existing commodities; or introducing new forms of economic organization.' However, one should take cognizant of the fact that innovation requires 'a rare and extraordinary mental creativity and energy' and capital (Schumpeter, 1983, p.66 [1911]; Muller, 2002, p.291).

India is one of the nations that have developed an indigenous strategy to lure private investors into the business of funding, building and managing its critical infrastructure such as power plants, roads, airports and seaports and other structures that drive the economy. The society is not under the illusion that 'democracy' alone would solve all its socioeconomic problems or that the economy would grow without technological capability. Today, innovative private companies such as Adani and G.M. Rao, etc, are involved in financing, building, maintaining and managing the nation's infrastructure. And as a form of motivation, the organizations involved in capital-intensive ventures/projects such as road construction, etc are allowed to collect 100 per cent of the toll revenue for a stipulated number of years to enable them recoup their investments. Some of the entrepreneurs are said to work in partnership with reputable companies in the United States in building and managing public infrastructure (*Time*, November 22, 2010; see *Global* section, pp.1-4). As research shows private/public partnership has transformed India into an economic superpower as well as to rapid growth and expansion of its middle class.

Evidently, the entrepreneurs in India are involved in "creative destruction" instead of "destructive destruction." As Schumpeter (1942 [1975]) observed "creative destruction" is a "process of industrial mutation that incessantly revolutionizes the economic structure from within, incessantly destroying the old one, [and] incessantly creating a new one." Put differently, the process creates new goods and services as it adopts 'efficient and profitable' ways to produce existing products or create new ones (as cited in Muller 2002, p. 294; p.312). Comparatively, there is no 'creative outcome' in "destructive destruction" as nothing new is produced to replace the old in the process, and there is no 'entrepreneurial dynamism' (Schumpeter, 1942; also see Muller, 2002, p.294).

And China is among the countries that have creative and innovative entrepreneurs. They are investing in the critical infrastructure and human capital development to build up the economy. And the leaders are working very hard to make the society less dependent 'on the rest of the world to buy' its goods and services. 'Entrepreneurial dynamism' has spurred economic growth and prosperity in China and 'speeding' up the process of 'urbanization into suburbanization.' And today, China is reportedly trying hard to 'tap the break' on economic growth (*Time*, November 22, 2010; see section-*Global* 1). Also, China is presently among the world's economic giants and it is reportedly working very hard to outperform or outshine the United States as the world's greatest economic and military power' (id). Research shows that China has invested massively in many African countries and now its attention is reportedly focused on Latin America. The country has adopted other strategies, including the devaluation of its local currency to keep its export machine humming so as to improve the living standards of its citizens (Stelzer, December 20, 2010).

The economy of Thailand that, until recently, was submerged in political turmoil is said to be 'taking off' because of 'good leadership' and 'willingness to rise above its challenges.' Other factors that have contributed to its seeming development include constructive 'reform' strategy, 'commitment to democracy', 'innovation' and 'research and development.' More importantly, with extensive investment in human capital development the country has produced a high 'quality workforce' that has turned the economy around and has transformed Thailand into a friendly society for doing business. The World Bank recently noted that the country '...has, over the years, been consistently ranked among the top 20 countries' in the globe 'for ease of doing business' (*Time*, December 6, 2010, pp.82-83).

It is pertinent to note that without copious investment in advanced technology and human capital development, Nigeria will be unable to prepare its labor force for the future challenges in the technology-driven global economy. The political leaders 'talk better than they act;' and there is destructive 'locust in the house' destroying the 'keystones' of the economy and nobody seems to care. While the leaders of other nations such as Prime Minister Lee H. Loong of Singapore, is taking pay cut as well those in the public sector to fix the inequality in the society (see Fareed Zakaria's interview with Prime Minister Lee H. Loong during his program, GPS on CNN, February 5, 2012), the demigods in the National Assembly in Nigeria are receiving "fat salaries and benefits" while the masses are struggling to make ends meet. In other words, the political leaders are producing very little or nothing at all, yet they are being paid handsomely. Their pay/benefits should be commensurate with their productivity. However, without eradicating the 'termites that are eating up the foundation of the house' (so to say), and without investing in the critical infrastructure and logistics; and without creative-minded entrepreneurs and innovation; and without creating an alluring business environment, Nigeria will be unable to build its economic future.

### **'LOCUST' IN THE HOUSE**

One of the major reasons for Nigeria's underdevelopment is corruption. The magnitude of the corruption-related news and scandals oozing from the National Assembly and other public institutions is disheartening. In fact, many Nigerians have the view that the nation's *Achilles Heel* is 'leadership without a moral purpose'. It was recently reported that 25 per cent of national revenue is consumed by the National Assembly. Each member of Congress (109 Senators and 360 members of Representatives) collects a jumbo salary and plethora of allowances monthly. And each senator collects over N15.18m in salary and allowance monthly, while each member of the House of Representatives takes home about N10.59m (*Punch*, December 6, 2010; *Sun*, December 4, 2010).

What infuriates many Nigerians is that such a waste of public money occurs in a society where over 70 per cent of the people live on less than \$1.25 daily. In the face of the culture of mindless looting of Nigeria by those who are supposed to fructify the economy Itse Sagay could not contain his anger as he called the National Assembly a bunch of people with "locust mentality" (*Punch*, Dec 17, 2010). However, because the politicians are unable to "steer their activities in virtuous direction" this writer would add that they have a "herd mentality" (*Time*, April 4, 2011, p.71) as most of them emulate the bad behavior of their colleagues. Worse, the politicians hate to be criticized even when the criticism is constructive. Some of the most powerful 'gods' would verbally, and sometimes physically, attack any person who has the courage to tell the "uncomfortable truth" (Schumpeter, 1936).

Nigeria is increasingly becoming lawless. Top-ranking public officials (even the nation's highest-ranking economy manager) would not obey court orders; some would give orders to their security personnel not allow "court messengers" from one of the Federal High Courts in Abuja to serve them court papers when they have serious cases to answer, and the society would not blink.

Because of this Nigeria is today a paradox: a wealthy nation with a large poor population. Political scientists and economists have noted that no society can develop or live in peace when majority of the population is poor (or when the leaders are lawless). As Smith (1776) has noted, 'No society can surely be flourishing and happy when part of the members [or majority of the people] are poor and miserable' (Muller, 2002, p.64). And Sen (1999) re-echoed this point in *Development as Freedom*, when he observed that without liberating the masses from the claw of poverty, hunger and illiteracy the [or liberating the nation from lawless leaders] society may not develop (pp.87-110).

Since the people have failed to mobilize to change the leaders' behavior for the better corruption has destroyed the social institutions. And all the problems agitating Nigeria today emanate from institutional failure. But no society can develop without the prerequisite institutional and infrastructural factors (Rostow, 1960; Preston, 1996). Yet some of the political leaders are under the illusion that Nigeria could become an industrialized society without the keystones of the economy. In its Corruption Perceptions Index of 2010, the Transparency International (TI) ranked Nigeria 134 out of the 178 countries surveyed. In addition, on a scale of 0-10, Nigeria scored 2.4, the same score it reportedly had, in 2009 (*BusinessDay*, December 16, 2010).

Given the sordid condition of things in the society, particularly economic decline and hardship, it is undeniable that the government has been unable to perform its basic duties. The politicians who are supposed to grow the economy have ruined the society. And because the leadership has failed on 'accountability and responsibility' the society portrays a 'classic preconditions' of a 'failed state'. Nigeria will be unable to build its economic future since most of the politicians are living 'off politics.'

### **LIVING 'OFF POLITICS'**

As emphasized, Nigeria has failed to develop because the politicians have consistently looted the funds earmarked for national development. Put differently, Nigeria is choking on its democracy-experiment because the 'strongmen and strongwomen' in politics are living 'off politics.' Worse still, most of them are not guided by any discernible ideological disposition or hold democratic values. Since most of the politicians do not seem to understand that politics is all about ideology one could hazard to say that Nigeria operates a 'democratic system without democrats'. In other words, they are 'democrats in words and not in deeds' (Dike. April 16, 2006; Bachman,1989).

Nigeria's leaders are intoxicated by the paraphernalia of office and they struggle by any means to remain in power perpetually. Consequently, national policies are often driven by how much money the politicians and their cronies could put in their pockets instead of how they would improve the well-being of the entire citizenry. And this confirms that majority of



them live “off politics” and not “for politics” (Weber, 1994). For Max Weber, there are two ways one could make politics a vocation: “Either one lives 'for' politics or lives 'off' politics.” One “...who lives 'for' politics makes politics his [or her] life, in an internal sense. Either he [or she] enjoys the naked possession of the power he exerts, or he [or she] nourishes his [her] inner balance and self-feeling by the consciousness that his [or her] life has *meaning* in the service of a 'cause.' But according to Weber (1994) one who makes “politics a permanent *source of income* lives 'off' politics as a vocation” because the person is not in politics to fight a just 'cause' or to render services to humanity. But “In order for a person to be able to live 'for' politics in this economic sense...the politician must be economically independent of the income politics can bring him.” That “Means quite simply that the politician must be wealthy or must have a personal position in life which yields a sufficient income” (Weber, 1994).

A country functions as good as its leaders; Nigeria cannot build its economic future under the aegis of the present cast of politicians who specialize in looting the treasury, polluting the people’s minds and the nation’s value system. In fact, “few of them [if any] have any sense of stewardship for future generations, let alone the present ones” (Senge, *et al*, 2010, p.30). Because the nation deficiencies everyone lives on ‘survival of the fittest mentality’ and the people are thus unable to hold the politicians accountable for their actions. In other words, those in the corridors of power could commit any magnitude of atrocities and get away. If nothing is done to ‘tame the monsters’ Nigeria’s socioeconomic and political pendulum will continue to swing back and forth with a catalogue of human misery.

### **TAMING THE MONSTERS**

Social scientists, particularly economists, have noted that economic growth, social development and political stability are interwoven as political forces can influence the course of the economy and *vice versa* (Schumpeter, 1983). Very few of the politicians in Nigeria are people of ‘integrity and credibility;’ some of them would rather mortgage the future of the country to achieve their selfish political ambition. And for Nigeria to move forward the leaders must change this retrogressive mentality. How long the people will endure such mentality is beyond any person’s imagination. Mentality change or adjustment has been identified as a great vehicle for personal and social change. In fact, how the ‘institutions’ in a society operate or function depends on how the people, particularly the leaders, ‘think and interact’ with the critical masses (Senge, *et al*, 2010, p.10). History shows that a widespread social discontent, if not arrested or addressed could cascade into a social or political revolution.

But do the people have the courage to tame the monsters? The sociopolitical landscape in the world is rapidly changing and the leaders should be aware of the social upheaval in some parts of North Africa and Middle East. For some time now the leadership has been prodded to tame social injustice and corruption, ameliorate the burden of youth unemployment and the general suffering in the land. But they have been struggling to maintain the *status quo*. But they should not forget that “Those who make peaceful change impossible make violent change inevitable” (Fanon, 2004).

The masses at the receiving of the injustice in the society can only take it for so long. Howard and Hammond (1989) have observed that “When economic necessity and the demand for social justice compel us toward social change, those who have

the most to gain from change-or the most to lose from its absence-should be responsible for pointing the way” (Colombo, *et al*, 1989, p.514). Although the people have lost confidence in the system, they appear to lack the courage to change the system. As Adlai Ewing Stevenson Jr. (erstwhile Governor of Illinois, 1949-1953) has observed, “Public confidence in the integrity of the Government is indispensable to faith in democracy; and when we [the people] lose faith in the system, we have lost faith in everything we fight and spend for” (cited in Dike, December 27, 2009).

However, if the people want a progressive society they should seek assistance elsewhere and not from the present cast of politicians who have ruined the society. As mentioned, with the growing social discontent Nigeria could explode like a dynamite if the “Madmen [and women] in authority” fail to change their obstructive mentality (Keynes, 1936). A ‘political revolution’, which is commonly discussed by history, could combine with the ‘new revolution’ such as ‘environmental and social crises’ (Senge, *et al*, 2010, p.5) to effect the desired social change. Some people may not support a revolutionary approach of any kind to effect a social change. But recognizing the inherent difficulties of mentality changes in Nigerian rulers’, revolution appears the only language the autocratic or “nondemocratic” Nigerian politicians can understand. As Popper (2006) has noted, “in a nondemocratic state, the only way to achieve reasonable reforms is by the violent overthrow of the government, and the introduction of a democratic framework.”

The revolution, which could destroy the monsters and improve the people’s living conditions, could take the form of the 1981 ‘Rawlings solution’ or the type that greeted Nicolae Ceausescu of Romania, in 1989. It could also take the shape of ‘the necessary revolution’ (Senge, *et. al*, 2010) that has changed the political landscape in Tunisia and Egypt and which is spreading across North Africa and some parts of the Middle East. It is imperative to emphasize at this juncture that the type of revolution this writer advocates is a “revolutionary humanism” that has ‘the potential to awaken the people to use their creative energies to engage with and change the realities of the world in which they find themselves’ (Pithouse, 2001). This is a ‘necessary revolution’ (Senge, *et al*, 2010). However, this writer is certainly opposed to a “reactionary humanism,” which ‘constrains this potential [or] takes the power of creation away from humanity and gives it to the Nation or the Party’ (Pithouse, 2001, p.15).

A brief review of the revolutions noted above could help the readers who are unaware of the episodes. On December 31, 1981, J.J. Rawlings (former military leader) was moved by ‘the cries, hunger and the suffering of the people’ after the former military and civilian leaders had looted and pauperized Ghana. As a result, Rawlings staged a coup, and rounded up the ex-leaders who bankrupted the country, tried them, found them guilty and publicly shot them (Haynes, October 1987).

By any stretch of imagination Rawlings cannot be classified as a democrat and he is not enthusiastic about any form of political ideology. But many people believe he ‘has been good to Ghana,’ because the ‘country would have been in ruins without him.’ At a point during this period a group of journalists confronted Rawlings to ascertain his economic and political ideologies Rawlings reportedly shot back: “Don’t ask me what my ideology or economic programme is...I don’t know any law and I don’t understand economics, but I know it when my stomach is empty” (*BBC News*, December 1, 2000). Nevertheless, Rawlings has today become ‘a beacon of democracy’ in Ghana (and its economic prosperity) since he ‘cleansed up’ the clutter in the society (Haynes, October 1987).

The type of mob action that greeted Nicolae Ceausescu (1918-1989) of Romania, in 1989, could also be adopted to sanitize Nigeria's corrupt political system. Research shows that Ceausescu's harsh policies transformed 'Romania from a state of relative economic well-being to near starvation' as they resulted in 'drastic shortages of food, fuel, energy, medicines, and other basic necessities' (Bachman, 1989). The people of Romania cried out when they were feeling the pinch of the dire economic condition, but when Ceausescu and his cronies refused to yield to their demands for socioeconomic and political reforms. As a result, the people revolted and Nicolae Ceausescu and his wife, Elena, escaped aboard a helicopter when his military guards deserted him. But they could run too far as they were arrested some hours later, tried by a military tribunal for "crimes against the people" and sentenced to death and shot in the street of Bucharest, in December 1989 (Bachman, 1989). The revolution could also take the shape of the wild wind of change that is currently blowing across North Africa and the Middle East. This started in January 2011 with the upheaval in Tunisia (nicknamed "Jasmine Revolution for the national flower"), which drove Zine El Abidine Ben Ali out of power, after about 23 years of oppressive and atrocious rule. His regime resulted in massive suffering, rising prices and unemployment, and endemic corruption, and when the citizens could no longer tolerate it they revolted and sent Ben Ali packing on January 14, 2011 (*Time*, January 21, 2011, pp.23-27).

The pendulum swung to Egypt, a country of about 80 million, which Hosni Mubarak ruled for nearly 30 years. And 'when the barrier of fear was broken' tens of thousands of the citizens took to the streets and after 18 days of protests Hosni Mubarak was forced to step down on February 11, 2011 (*New York Times*, January 25, 2011). The discontent in Egypt was reportedly a mixture of economic and political issues. While Hosni Mubarak and his family was living in opulence the people were battling with poverty as most of them were 'living under' or on about '\$2 a day.' Additionally, there was 'deep-seated anger over injustices, inequalities and corruption' as well as 'poor quality education, health care and high unemployment.' The people were not only demanding that Hosni Mubarak should quit, they needed a fundamental change in the society (*New York Times*, January 25, 2011).

Reportedly, the success of the uprising in Tunisia and Egypt has inspired and energized others living under oppressive regimes in parts of North Africa and the Middle East to revolt and demand for change. The 'people's revolution' has now reached the shores of Libya where Moammar Ghaddafi has been in power since 1969. Bahrain and Yemen are also sweltering (*CNN News Clips*, February-March 2011). It is hoped that this 'wild wind of change' should sweep away other sit-tight 'political monsters' in Africa, such as Robert Mugabe who has ruled Zimbabwe since the 1980s. And he has been tearing down the fundamental democratic institutions in the society to remain in power (Miller, *et al*, 2010, p.22).

However, in mature democratic countries the political institutions do not allow for tyrannical ruler. The people are relatively allowed 'unfettered hands' to participate in the political process, and more often than not, they would influence public policies and affect positive changes. That shows that the welfare of the society is everybody's business - it is not the sole responsibility of the leaders. As the late Austrian economist, Ludwig von Mises (1922) observed in *Socialism: an Economic and Sociological Analysis*:

Everyone carries a part of society on his shoulders; no one is relieved of his share of responsibility by others. [And] No one can find a safe way out for himself if society is sweeping toward destruction. Therefore everyone, in his own interests, must thrust himself vigorously into the intellectual battle. None can stand aside with unconcern; the interests of everyone hang on the result. Whether he chooses or not, every man is drawn into the great historical struggle, the decisive battle into which our epoch has plunged us.

Keynes (1936) re-echoed this belief when he noted that every economy is composed of three sections: individuals, businesses, and government, and emphasized that each sector has an important role to play in national development. The reviewed episodes show that citizens of any society can bring social and political changes if they form a common front. Thus to address the social injustice in the increasingly diverse Nigeria, and to reduce the ‘strains and stresses’ in the society the people should be courageous enough to hold the leaders personally and collectively accountable and responsible for their actions or inactions. The institutions and infrastructure in Nigeria are in shambles because decades of neglect. Nigeria cannot build its economic future under the present unfriendly business environment. It takes ‘leadership with a moral purpose’ to spur economic growth and national development.

#### **SUMMARY AND FINAL CONCLUSIONS**

This paper has painstakingly highlighted and described the myriad obstacles to Nigeria’s social, political and economic greatness. What it has demonstrated, more than any other thing, is the nation’s endless failed policies, visions and agenda and noted that Nigeria needs a pragmatist as a leader—one who knowledge and skill to restructure the system and thus would resist the temptation to maintain the *status quo*. Mature democracies have indicators that measure the performance of their leaders such as ‘the state of the economy’ as well as the impact of public policies on the peoples’ living conditions. Any person who has been following the energy and rigors of Presidential campaigns and policy debates in the United States Congress knows the importance of knowledge and skills in governance and the influence of economic factors, public policies and integrity of the individual candidates in the outcome of national elections. But in Nigeria ‘a dead wood’ or ‘a convicted felon’ could become a leader and would seize the opportunity to destroy the economy he/she is supposed to fructify.

This paper concludes that the political merchants are responsible for Nigeria’s under-development. And to build a viable and productive economy and stable society, the leaders must put the nation’s vast human and material resources into productive use and improve the business climate to lure innovative-minded entrepreneurs into the economy. But for this to be possible Nigeria needs a people-leader with ‘new thinking and new choices’ and committed to creating “gross national happiness” (GNH; Senge, *et al*, 2010, p.40). Nigerians have been subjected to dire socio-economic and political strains and stresses that could provoke a national revolution. And something must be done very quickly to change the course of events “if we are to avert disaster” (p.27). As everyone knows citizens’ revolution is changing the political landscape around the globe and Nigeria should be a part of the process.

Thus, with collective efforts Nigeria could be restructured and transformed into an economically productive, and 'progressive' democratic society, one not sprinkled with 'economic decline, social strife, and conflict' (MacNeill, *et al*, 1991, p.109). However, given the nature of Nigeria, all these are impossible without the people demanding a change in the manner with which the leaders govern the country; without which Nigeria will continue to fall behind politically, socially and economically.

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