

Nigeria 2019 elections - seeds of corruption being sown

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It is count down to 16 February 2019 elections in Nigeria. There are various account of what is currently a flagrant abuse of process by the two major parties in the manner of conduct of their primaries. What is obvious is the actual monetary exchanges that took place in the guise of payments to delegates or in other instances buy-off of competitors. Party chairmen had played the system to the gallery, setting various sums as nomination fees far and beyond common sense.

The seeds of corruption have been sown and there is little doubt these players primarily in APC and PDP are looking at reaping fruits from these "investments".

The question remains. How did these persons seeking office amass so much wealth that they could afford to dispose of these "fantastic" sums for nomination. Have they declared these sources of income to INEC as required? If they are able to dispose these amounts of monies for nomination what should we expect would be their expenses for the actual electioneering campaign?

Lost foundations

I shudder when some argue in support of these two major parties. They continue to justify their position by claiming how wide spread these parties are and how much financial clout they have to cover the whole of the country. The fact remains that their machinations are based on falsehood and lies. A nation built on such foundation is doomed and that has been the bane of Nigeria's difficulties. The premise of Nigeria as a country was thwarted soon after its conception by those who became blinded by sectional interests. The country has never recovered. Sadly this same mal-alignment persists and fuels what has being an egoistic approach to governance that has impoverished the poor by paralysing all vehicles of progress.

Following the eventual decay of the early structures of governance instituted from independence, human capacity has nose-dived to cataclysmic proportions. There has been no evidence of sustainable development in our institutions and systems.

Little wonder nearly six decades on we are unable to deploy indigenous technology towards a more sustainable infrastructural development. The destruction of state run educational institutions from primary to tertiary schools has left today's young so ill-equipped and misinformed that there is little reason to expect value from those we have failed to invest in. The capitalization of human resource development by entrusting institutions of learning to private bodies is an expensive and unwise venture. Only few are able to access such institutions whose quality are also often not validated.

The last thirty years has seen the demise of public institutions from health care to educational facilities; from communication to transport networks etc. For those who think having predominantly foreign mobile networks traversing the country represents indigenous growth, they truly have no clue what independence means. The evidence for this decline is not far-fetched. Majority of the so-called leaders canvassing to be elected into office do not send their children to any state run institution - from primary to university level. The current president of the Federal Republic of Nigeria does not access healthcare within the country. Indigenously trained doctors are leaving the country in droves. There is unprecedented levels of unemployment due to non-diversification of the predominantly oil-based economy to a more productive industries. The bane of infrastructural development relies on foreign expertise without scope for so-called technology transfer. The nation is presently mortgaging its future to the Chinese without evidence of human capacity development confining unborn generations to servitude.

The inequitable distribution of wealth and income has further confined many including those in the civil service to living below the the Nigerian [National Bureau of Statistics \(NBS\)](#) set \$2/day as last published in 2009/10. Extreme poverty is defined as an income less than \$1.25 per day. The current minimum wage has been N18,000 per month, which places majority of Nigerians as living in extreme situations. It is sickening to find that while the members of the National Assembly and Executive has no issues with their unjustified salaries and allowances, they struggle to understand the penury they subject majority of Nigerians to live under.

The cycle of poverty is reinforced by failing public institutions. Non-access to good education or healthcare facilities in no small measure sustains poverty. One wonders if this is indeed the strategy of the political class. To subjugate the common man to abject poverty and hence subject to their whims and caprices. This has indeed bred aggression and criminality witnessed across the country including the now endemic terrorist activities in the north and now encroaching the rest of the country.

Banality of leadership

What is the significance of current patterns of behaviour in predicting future outcomes? Acts replete of moral decadence and economic depravity must be seen for what they represent. However it is telling when those whose interest is in maintaining the status quo assert a view, justifying such folly. It is even more worrying when "learned helplessness" sets in and the voice of reason disappears, with some compromising their own moral compass to accept one of the two evils represented by these major parties.

Clearly the recently witnessed horsetrading by party members in APC and PDP as they juxtaposition themselves for nomination into offices is itself indicative of high risks of future for vote buying.

INEC as custodian of the nation's conscience

It is evident that those that have foisted themselves on the nation as 'leaders' have opted to tread a path deviating from any ethical or moral codes of justice or fairness. This is the only reason they thrive in neurotic bliss pursuing causes that have profited no other but themselves and their cronies. With their conscience seared they unscrupulously bastardise the nations resources for their sole gain.

From North to South and from East to West, there is a commonality among these so-called group whose tokenism is evident in the depredation and inanition suffered by

the poor and vulnerable. Their pursuit of self preservation is seen in their stupendous amassing of wealth at the detriment of their constituents.

The last three decades have witnessed this pattern without fail. Sadly INEC has also ignored this reality. The reality of its poor standards. The reality that with no willingness to stand up to these Cabal, the nation, like a ship adrift, is doomed. This is not mere pessimism but based on facts. The fallacy of make-beliefs in the light of facts is frustratingly criminal. It is self delusion. Unfortunately this has been the foundation of this nation whose premise of being "one" has led to a confusion as to whose "one" defines the nation. The plurality of our oneness is lost in the abrogation of rights by one group over another. It is the carte blanche rule of a state that ignores the rights of its unequally represented constituents. The currently described nation state is as it were not a product of a constitutionally defined nation entity. Nigeria today is a by-product of a military fiat which has continued to embed itself in an unsuccessful attempt to respond to an existential dilemma of defining "one nation".

None of the recent parties or groups in Nigeria has collectively done right by the common man since the first Republic except for a few leaders who were and in recent years, have been clearly exceptional in their approach to leadership. On the whole the poor has been left poorer since the nation gained independence.

INEC may do itself proud by taking up the gauntlet and positioning itself as an arbiter of justice given the dearth of this role in the current leadership. In refining the nations political course, it is necessary for there to be very clear boundaries with consequences for those who chooses to breach such limits.

In addition to checking the excesses of the main parties at election, one is concerned that a number of registered voters have not being able to obtain their PVCs. From speaking to a few acquaintances and friends it does not appear this process is as streamlined as one is left to believe it is. Whilst INEC may not be

expected to be 100% fail proof, reports and observations does indicate there are grounds to be worried.

Solutions

To conclude it is necessary to establish that INEC has the will and the ability to muzzle these so-called big players. The rules around financial transparency and prudence is so grey that the electoral system itself feeds the beast of corruption. It is currently not evident that INEC has responded to what has been a blatant display of indiscretion by political parties during their recent primaries. This raises doubts as to the extent these parties would go to ensure their candidates are elected. There were a lot of irregularities during the 2015 elections but thankfully, with the previous incumbent magnanimously conceding defeat, these were not investigated. Recent by-elections have shown that the process remains subject to abuse with incumbents exploiting office of government to undermine opponents.

Unfortunately voter education is doomed to fail as the group of people involved in thuggery and malpractices are the same desperate groups who have been marginalised over the years by the inequalities perpetuated by the so-called political class.

The only solution is a zero-tolerance policy where any party or its candidate observed or witnessed (including through video or audio devices), engaging in malpractice would summarily lose their nomination and be also subject to criminal proceedings with no option of a fine.

In my view Nigeria will be better served by a process that criminalises election malpractices. Such acts should be considered tantamount to treason.

The outcome of 2019 elections would certainly define this country in so many ways. Whilst some continue to advocate either of the two major political parties, the fact remains that they have served the nation poorly and do not justify any consideration for elected office. The combination of voter apathy, helplessness and ignorance of the population makes it likely they might "rig" their way into offices. However I would encourage the newer aspirants to work together rather than apart, as in doing so, they would present themselves a more credible force with spread and resources to change the tide for good. It would also restore hope and belief in their commitment to selflessness as opposed to the converse, which I am sure is not necessarily true, knowing the calibre of these individuals.

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