

Whither Nigeria?

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Abstract

This paper examines the philosophical framework of Nigeria's Economic Empowerment and development Strategy (NEEDS), its desirability, and the efficacy of its strategies. It argues that its philosophy has its roots in the African Alternative Framework to the Structural Adjustment programme (AAF-SAP). The author concludes, based on a number of scenarios that the effectiveness of the NEEDS strategies are doubtful.

“five years ago when he was asked what his agenda was for Nigeria, President Obasanjo said: ‘to make Nigeria work again’ it was a brief response but a tall order. The President was inheriting daunting — challenges” [Chido Nwakanma and Kenneth Tadaferua. NIGERIA, Monthly Vol. No. 1, June 2004]

The Conceptual and Philosophical Framework of NEEDS

Orthodox development theories attempted to find explanations for the persistent poverty of developing countries and design measures to reverse the trend. Based on the ‘low level equilibrium trap’ theory, it was considered that increased productivity of labour leading to increased consumption and hence increased surplus, which can then finance productive investment, was the key. The culmination of such orthodox theorizing was the import substitution strategy (ISS). The strategy had so much appeal that it was adopted by many developing nations.

The ISS strategy sought to achieve industrialization (economic growth) by deliberate and systematic production at home, goods which were previously imported. It was the uncritical adoption of this strategy, which produced the myriad of problems, which has locked Africa the current crises of reverse development.

The orthodox approach came under increasing attack in the eighties because of the abysmal performance of many African economies. The greatest problem with the ISS policy was that it increased the need for imports, which it was designed to reduce. This is because the import substitution activities themselves required both imported intermediate and capital goods to sustain production. Consequently, the economies became very vulnerable to decline in the availability of foreign exchange and decline in the value of the domestic currencies. The decline in capacity utilization in industrial production in Nigeria to below 30%, is one of the indicators of the failure of orthodox ISS approach to development in

Nigeria. This led to a search for alternatives. The new approach that emerged, rejected government controls and intervention in the market, arguing that economic agents are able to respond optimally to price signals and consequently allocate resources optimally. It was argued that what was required is a 'market friendly' strategy not one of government replacing the market (Tomori, 1995: 243). This new approach produced the different variants of Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP), which many African countries were subjected by the Breton Woods Institutions.

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It was in this environment that the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) under Adebayo Adedeji formulated a new approach for the development of African countries. The ECA approach came to be known as AAF-SAP (African Alternative Framework to Structural Adjustment Programmes - SAP), which many African countries were subjected by the Breton Woods Institutions.

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What was needed was not short-term adjustment mechanics under the orthodox classical system, but an African alternative, which would endeavour to simultaneously address adjustment and transformation problems of the African economies" (Tomori, 1995: 244).

At the core of AAF-SAP is an emphasis on the creation of a favourable environment and effective resource mobilization, which should generate sustainable development. This was to be attained by striking a right balance between the private and public sectors of the economy. The AAF-SAP sees development as:

A process of self-reliant growth achieved through the participation of the people acting in their own interests as they

see them and under their own control. Its first objective must be to end poverty, provide productive employment and satisfy basic needs of all the people, any surplus being fairly shared. (The South Commission, 1990; Tomori, 1995: 246)

The Nigeria NEEDS is a variant of this AAF-SAP approach, informed by the same philosophy and framework. As the NEEDS document states:

NEEDS is Nigeria's homegrown poverty reduction strategy (PRSP)... which derives from the country's long-term goals of poverty reduction, wealth creation, employment generation and value re-orientation. (NEEDS, 2004: 5)

At the core of the African Alternative Framework are two fundamental concepts: national and collective self-reliance; and self-sustaining development. Self-reliance is conceived as:

1. the internalisation of the forces of demand, which determine the direction of development and economic growth processes and patterns of outputs;
2. increasing the substitution of inputs derived from within the system for those derived from outside; and
3. increasing the participation of the mass of the people in the production and consumption of the social product.

Self-sustaining is defined to mean:

The deliberate installation of patterns and processes of development and economic growth in which different components support and reinforce each other so that, when related to the internalisation of the forces determining demand and supply, the whole system develops its own internal dynamics. (Adedeji, 1983: 10, quoted in Asante, 1995: 12)

These twin goals of self-reliance and self-sustainment provides the main intellectual and theoretical foundation for the new alternative approaches to Africa's development and are contained in the seminal EGA documents. These documents are the: Revised Framework of Principles for the Implementation of the New International Economic Order in Africa 1976-1981; Monrovia Strategy for the Economic Development for Africa (1979); and the famous Lagos Plan of Action (1981).

In the new approach, which is also the basis of NEEDS, profiles of development and economic growth are domestic resources determined. It is also the basis for design and implementation of manpower development,

industrialization, and the promotion of domestic production of goods and services. The dynamics are provided by intra and intersectoral linkages and the expansion of national and regional markets (Asante, 1995: 13).

Where does NEEDS claim to be taking Nigeria?

It would appear that worldwide, there is apparent abandonment of the once popular struggle for a Utopian Socialist Society. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union and its empire of Eastern Europe and China's embrace of capitalist principles, advocacy for a socialist Utopia seems to have died to a mere whimper. There appears to be an unspoken consensus that nations should aim to achieve capitalistic societies with human face made up of welfare elements and rooted in equity. This worldwide trend is also the vision which NEEDS has for Nigeria. According to NEEDS, the most recent articulation of the vision for Nigeria, which is adopted, is embodied in the 2001 Kuru Declaration:

To build a truly great African democratic country, politically united, integrated and stable economically, prosperous, socially organised, with equal opportunity for all and responsibility from-all, to become the catalyst of (African) Renaissance and making adequate all-embracing contributions, sub-regionally, regionally, and globally. (Kuru, 2001, Kuru Declaration quoted in NEEDS 2004: 27)

President Obasanjo enunciated the core of the new Nigeria that NEEDS seeks to create as:

One that puts Nigeria, selfless service to the country and love of fellow citizen above all else.
(NEEDS, 2004: 27)

The mission of NEEDS is the creation of a New Nigeria, where all the negative values in our society are reversed and in their place are established enabling values of a caring, well-governed society, where justice and equity reign (NEEDS, 2004: 27). The **foundation** of the national self-rediscovery envisaged by NEEDS is to be:

- enterprise, competition, and efficiency at all levels;
- equity and care for the weak and vulnerable;
- moral rectitude, respect for traditional values, and extolling our culture;
- a value system for public service that makes efficient and effective service delivery to the citizens a priority; and
- discipline at all levels of leadership (NEEDS, 2004: 28).

NEEDS recognises that:

Without paradigm shifts, fundamental changes in the mindset and acceptance that it cannot be business as usual especially by the elite, the change, which NEEDS seeks to bring about will be difficult to attain and sustain (NEEDS, 2004: 28)

The question that needs to be asked at this point is whether the direction envisaged for Nigeria by NEEDS is desirable. The unequivocal answer is a resounding “YES”. We believe that the society envisaged by NEEDS is one that is the dream of all Nigerians - South, East, West or North, and of whatever religion or colour. In fact, one is excited by the candour of the NEEDS document and the impressive strategies and targets. But as Nwakanma and Tadaferua (2004: 32) correctly observe:

Nigerians received the news of NEEDS with deep skepticism and with good reasons. Over time, Nigerians have had to make sacrifices in the name of economic reform programmes but these programmes have largely failed to meet the people’s expectations. The Nigerian is like a patient who has lost hope in medicine. In the past twenty years, Nigerians have been forced to swallow bitter pills based on various economic and social prescriptions but the peoples’ ill health has become more acute and Nigeria’s economic condition progressively worsened (Nwakanma and Tadaferua, 2004: 32)

The skepticism expressed above notwithstanding, we believe that it is the wish of every Nigerian that NEEDS succeeds and prove that Nigeria can after all, really achieve. The big question, however, is whether NEEDS can, given all the factors of the situation; take Nigeria to its stated targets. This is an empirical question and NEEDS itself has recognised that the acid test is the implementation (NEEDS 2004: 12). However, it is possible to examine NEEDS within its own logic and the logic of the Nigerian situation and arrive at a probable prognosis. This is what we now set out to do. Among “the key elements of the unsustainable past” which NEEDS set out to break out of are the following (see NEES 2004: 19-22):

- One of the weakest growing economies in the world:
 - Average growth rate of 2.8% in 1981-1998
 - Zero capital growth rate for 1981-1998
 - Average growth rate of 3.6% for 1999-2003
 - (Lower than the 4.2% needed for significant poverty reduction)
- One of the poorest countries in the world.
 - Per capital income of \$300 in 2001

Between the mid 1970s to 2000 earned about \$300 billion from oil export but per capital income declined to below 1975 level

- External and domestic debt of about 70% of GDP
The recent debt forgiveness negotiated by the Federal Government of Nigeria has reduced this drastically.
- A stagnated manufacturing sector, making Nigeria one of the least industrialised countries in Africa.
- One of the fastest urbanisation rate in the world (at 5.3% annually) and attendant exploding urban unemployment and concomitant high crime rate.
- An average annual investment rate of 16% of GDP, far below the minimum of 30% of GDP required to trigger poverty reducing growth rate of at least 7-8% per annum.
- Sustained de-capitalisation (human and financial). Because of perceived and real risks and high cost of doing business, private agents have chosen to keep the bulk of their assets abroad. Brain drain of over two million highly educated Nigerians to Europe and United States of America.
- Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) mainly only in oil and extractive sectors.
- Highly un-diversified economic structure with oil accounting for 95% of total export, manufacturing less than 1% and progressively dwindling agricultural exports.
- Highly inefficient and volatile and unsustainable public sector spending.
- Traditional instruments of economic management, the National Plan and Budgeting processes rendered ineffective “by corruption and indiscipline.
- Government finances characterised by pension crisis, arrears of civil servant salaries, huge debts to government contractors, misallocation and mismanagement of resources.
- Very low productivity and uncompetitiveness of the private sector, and lack of diversification due mainly to hostile business environment. Hostile business environment constituted of:
 - infrastructure deficiencies
 - poor security of lives and property
 - corruption and rent-seeking
 - weak institutions
 - low level of technical skills of workforce
 - poor work habits and ethics
 - unstable macro-economic and fiscal policies
- Deep and pervasive poverty (70% living below poverty line).
- Very high income inequalities.
- Very high and increasing unemployment
- A pervasive culture of corruption.

NEEDS sees the legacies listed above as the consequences of decades of corruption and mismanagement. It argues that the old model of import substitution industrialisation and **statism** (whereby Government played a dominating role of and controller of producer and controller of the economy) engendered corruption, disincentive, inefficiencies and waste (NEEDS, 2004: 22)

NEEDS Strategies

NEEDS stated specific reform policies, with attendant targets and strategies aimed at tackling the developmental problems and obstacles identified and moving Nigeria into a twenty-first century of economic growth and development. Its main strategies are grouped into four:

1. reforming the way government works and its institutions
2. growing the private sector
3. implementing a social charter
4. value re-orientation

The first three of these four sets of strategies are said to be aimed at:

- wealth creation
- employment generation
- poverty reduction

In the strategies spelt out in NEEDS, the target is to achieve a growth rate that will grow Nigeria out of poverty. The NEEDS document states:

Changing its strategy and achieving an average of 7 percent growth rate per annum, which is the growth rate compatible with the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) of reducing the incidence of poverty by half in 2015. This growth rate leads to the halving of the incidence of poverty in 2015 and leaves less than 20 percent of the population below the poverty line in 2030, provided the growth is broad-based and pro-poor, (emphasis min: NEEDS, 2004: 23)

To achieve this growth rate, NEEDS will:

- diversify the production structure away from oil/mineral resources.
- ensure international competitiveness of the productive sector.
- systematically reduce the role of government in direct production of goods.
- strengthen governments facilitating and regulatory functions.

The key instruments for the envisaged growth are:

- Privatisation, deregulation and liberalisation.
- Coordinated national sectoral development strategies for agriculture, industry (especially SMEs and services industry especially tourism).
- Infrastructural development especially electricity, transport and water.
- Addressing problems of financing the real sector and mobilizing long-term savings and investment.
- Targeted programmes to promote the private sector growth and development.

Some Fundamental Questions

Pessimists may wish to see NEEDS as another Nigerian wish document. We do not share such pessimism, although we are unwilling to predict that NEEDS will succeed. By the way of constructive criticism we raise the following general questions.

Given that the strategy of growing into employment and out of poverty is predicated on the materialisation of the appropriate private sector investment, will the necessary private investment be forthcoming?

This question is important, because the vehicle of **all** the transformations envisaged in NEEDS is this **growth** and value re-orientation. It is now a well-established fact that investment will go only to environments that are perceived to be safe. Safety in this context is defined in physical, legal, and political terms. One of the features of the present Nigeria is the progressive flight of private international capital because of the hostile environment and the cost of doing business. NEEDS courageously recognises this fact.

If the envisaged growth is to be financed by local private investment, given the self-reliant thrust of NEEDS, the following questions arise: Will the required level of local private investment materialise, given the nature of the distribution of wealth in the country and most importantly, the character of the Nigerian elite? Will the Nigerian elite display the level of nationalism that was part of the motivation of the elite in Japan, Korea, Malaysia, etc., in investing in their countries' development?

In addition, we draw attention to the fact that NEEDS also include strategies and instruments to fight corruption and money laundering. How will these impact on the willingness of the elite to repatriate and invest in Nigeria much of the stolen money that are currently outside the shores of Nigeria? If the required level of local private investment materialises, what will be the implications for wealth distribution, and the incidence of poverty in the country? Will the logic of such investment not be contradictory to the pro-poor intent stated in NEEDS?

We observe that agricultural production is to play a major role in the growth and transformation envisaged. This is a welcome thrust because

agricultural production is one of the potential areas of growth that has not been harnessed in Nigeria. However, given the established fact that the terms of trade are usually weighted heavily against primary producers, making it impossible for them to develop, it is not clear from NEEDS how Nigeria is to move from primary goods production into finished or semi-finished goods production as the Asian tigers have done. We observe also that much emphasis is placed on the development of SMEs as a vehicle for industrialisation. Here we draw attention to the historically established fact that the old Import Substitution Industrialisation (ISI) failed because of its dependence on more imports. In its SME and other industrialisation strategies, one is unable to see instruments by which NEEDS will overcome:

- Dependence on imports of production goods;
- Dependence on imports of foreign inputs (e.g. raw materials); and
- Dependence on foreign skills, know-how, and competences.

Comments on Specific Reforms

In this section, we shall examine some of the specific reform policies and comment on their feasibility and attempt some form of prognosis and indicate their implications for the Nigerian society.-

Reconciling the Strategies of Growing the Private Sector, Implementing a Social Charter and Value Re-orientation

As a main strategy, NEEDS sees the private sector as the engine for growth for wealth creation, employment generation, poverty reduction and empowerment of the people. Here, we recall the very crude but succinct summation of capitalism as:

“The extraordinary belief that the nastiest of men for the nastiest of motives will somehow work for the benefit of us all”

When we assume that the rich in Nigeria will be forthcoming on the investments to create the much needed jobs (a very tall assumption indeed!), there is still a fundamental contradiction in the logic of profit maximisation by Nigeria’s nasty men, with the logic of selfishness, nationalism and caring that is assumed for the NEEDS social charter to be actualised. The character of rich Nigerians, most of whom got their wealth for investment either by outright plundering/pillaging or sponging on the Nigerian State is that they are self-seeking, uncaring, and unpatriotic. Will a growth financed by these ‘characters’ include care for the people, provide access to health care, education, electricity, housing, adequately remunerate employment and hence result in poverty reduction and empowerment of the masses. NEEDS assumes an affirmative answer to this fundamental question. The practical answer is however, more complicated and variegated.

This brings us to the fourth strategy of value re-orientation. The aims of NEEDS under value re-orientation are extremely desirable. These are what we require to couple with the economic growth envisaged to achieve the social charter. NEEDS, in a nutshell, desires to produce a new Nigerian, a new man.

Can a new Nigerian be produced out of those who now compose the country?

The events at the recently concluded National Political Reform Conference that ended in disarray does not give one much hope on this score.

The extent to which the NEEDS strategy is able to produce the new Nigerian will determine whether NEEDS will produce in Nigeria, an African tiger, like the Asian tigers or another Brazil in Africa.

Some Specific Targets

As the NEEDS document recognises the ultimate acid test of the strategies is the implementation, we can, however, at this point, speculate about some of them.

Poverty Reduction Targets

The targets for poverty reduction were set at 5% per year for 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006 and 2007. One is not aware of any solid and reliable statistical indicators to show that these targets are being met. In fact, it appears, by indications, that during the periods of 2003 and 2004, poverty in terms of incidence levels and percentages seem to be increasing instead of reducing. This does not give room for one to hope that come the end of 2005, the set target will be met.

Job Creation Targets

NEEDS targets the creation of 1 million jobs in 2004, 2million in 2005, 2million in 2006 and 2million in 2007. This means that by the end of 2005, 3million jobs are expected to have been created in agriculture and other sectors of the economy, particularly the SME sector. There are no reliable statistics to show that the manufacturing sector, including SMEs is growing in any substantial manner and creating the number of jobs that are statistically significant.

The agricultural sector particularly commercial scale agriculture that is expected to create most of the jobs appears stagnant with peasant activities still dominating, even in cassava production. In non-agricultural production, there appears to be no noticeable improvement in installed capacity utilisation. Rather, retrenchment is looming in many sectors and unemployment, particularly in the urban areas, appears to be growing. This leaves little room for hope that the targets will be met. Solid minerals are expected to provide half a million jobs between 2003 and 2007. We are in the middle of 2005 and there is no evidence that this target will be met.

Cassava and related products are expected to earn 3 billion dollars (about N420billion) between 2003 and 2007. This appears too ambitious and probably not feasible, although it is clear that substantial foreign exchange is already being earned and more will be earned from cassava within the remaining period between 2005 and 2007.

Power generation is targeted to increase from 4000megawatts in 2005 to 7000 in 2006 and 10,000 in 2007. It is claimed (p.26 of the NEEDS document) that the 400megawatts generation for 2004 had been achieved but that there were problems with distribution and transmission. What is the use of generation when what is generated cannot be distributed. There are yet no indications of noticeable improvement in access to power across the country as at July 2005. Is there therefore any realistic hope that the targets will be achieved? The targets set are very critical to the success or failure of NEEDS. This is because power supply has become the most critical impediments to industrial production and development particularly for the SME sector which NEEDS is looking up to create most of the manufacturing jobs.

Reforming Government and Institutions

The NEEDS document courageously observed the crying need for reform of government when it observed as follows:

Until 1999, corruption was practically institutionalised as the foundation of governance. Societal institutions had decayed to an unprecedented extent as opportunities were colonised by the powerful. As could be expected this process was accompanied by intimidation of judiciary, the subversion of due process, the manipulation of existing laws and regulations, the suffocation of civil society and the containment of democratic values and institutions. Power became nothing but a means of accumulation and subversion as productive initiative were abandoned for purely administrative and transactional! Activities. The legitimacy and stability of the State became compromised as citizens began to devise extra-legal and informal ways to survive. (NEEDS, 2004: 45)

The scenario painted by the quotation above captured graphically the situation of governance in Nigeria. We hasten to add that it did not end in 1999. It has continued ever since with intermittent sporadic but unavailing efforts by the Obasanjo administration to intervene. These sporadic interventions have been largely unsuccessful in changing the situation. The systematic process spelt out in NEEDS have not been implemented to a level of having significant change impact on the situation. One of the reasons for the failure of the sporadic efforts, apart from their sporadic, unsustainable and unsystematic nature is that the operators of the change institutions and the agents of change are themselves products of the corrupt system they are expected to change.

As reform measures, NEEDS sets out to do the following:

- Right-size governance and eliminate ghost workers;
- Re-professionalise the public service;
- Rationalise, re-structure and strengthen institutions;
- Privatisise and liberalise areas that are amenable;
- Tackle corruption and improve transparency in government accounts;
- Reduce waste improve efficiency of government accounts;
- Reduce waste and improve efficiency of government expenditure.

The following institutional and structural measures have been put in place to achieve the above.

- Open and competitive tender arrangements for government contracts.
- The establishment of a 'due process' mechanism to vet and eliminate excess 'fat' from government contracts.

It is revealing to note that on an NTA programme in the first weeks of July, 2005, the government staff charged with ensuring that the due process monitoring units are established in all ministries and parastatals, reported that these anti-corruption units were either not established at all or where they have, they exist only on paper. Consequently, while one cannot find fault with the mechanism above, it is observed that the problem is not with mechanisms themselves, but with the operators. The operators are still the same persons brewed in the soup of corruption virus. How do we reform the operators? In a system where top operators take pride in being worshipped and addressed as '**fixers**' we confront a fundamental dialectical problem. Are these '**fixers**' ready to commit economic and class suicide? We doubt this very much. It is like expecting the leopard to change its spots. This why we fear that unless these 'fixers' are removed from being major operators, it is likely to be business as usual, in spite of the anti-corruption mechanisms in NEEDS.

Tackling Corruption and Promoting Transparency and Accountability

It is recognised by all commentators on the Nigerian situation the corruption is the one single factor that has contributed most to the creation of the paradox we call Nigeria. NEEDS also recognised this as clearly stated in the last quotation from the NEEDS document. NEEDS therefore set as one of its main tasks, the creation of a new transparent, accountable and low corruption Nigeria; a prosperous country that is both economical developed and infused with strong moral and ethical values (NEEDS, 20C 59). It set itself the task of infusing the under listed values, as a way fighting corruption:

- Integrity and good citizenship at individual and corporate levels.

- Discipline and strong work ethics.
- Excellences, competitiveness, creativity and innovation in service delivery.
- Perseverance and longer term thinking as opposed to short-term expediency.
- Thirst for knowledge, information and know-how.
- Commitment to the welfare of vulnerable groups.
- Pride in the spirit of Nigeria.

These are desirable values, which, if successfully infused by NEEDS, will actually be the foundation of a wonderful new Nigeria. On these, NEEDS is expressing the heart of the majority of Nigerians. But alas, as the saying goes, “if wishes were horses, all beggars would ride”. Nigerians look at this list of values wishfully, shake their heads and sigh:

‘We wish it can be done’

NEEDS intend to use massive anti-corruption campaigns involving public officials as well as the President himself to institute these values and fight corruption.

On this campaign, the President himself has performed well, particularly with the recent actions taken against corrupt officials. Nigerians have applauded the President. But Nigerians have also drawn attention to the suspicion of selectivity in implementation and persecution. This suspicion of selectivity in persecution of some and permissive treatment of other agents suspected of corruption has bred a level of skepticism among Nigerians about the anti-corruption campaigns. There is the belief that there are more officials around the President who are corrupt but have not been prosecuted. On this score, we are not unmindful of the difficulties of accessing evidence that can stand up in court at the point of prosecution. This could be a major handicap in the campaign.

Here we draw attention to the failure to pass the Freedom of Information Act. This is the act that can create the enabling environment for Nigerians to give information on which prosecution can be based. The failure to pass this act bring into focus our legislature. The image of the legislature in the eyes of the public is one that cares very little about what the public it claims to represent thinks about it. The public perception is of a legislature that came into office by corruption; which operates by corruption and is unserious about appropriate judicialization of anti-corruption instruments for fear that their corrupt practices may be prosecuted under these instruments. In this contest, the impeachment clause has become a veritable instrument to be abused to beat the executive into quiescence over the corrupt activities of the legislature. The recent display of cover-up of its members accused of corruption gives room for much concern that perhaps the legislature is out to scuttle and make impotent the entire anti-corruption

campaign. The travails of the Minister of FCT shows how far the legislature is willing to go to ensure that none blows the whistle on its corrupt practices.

The passing of the **Freedom of Information Act** is absolutely necessary. It would seem to us that until the act is passed, Nigerians cannot answer the often repeated defence by the President of the permissive handling of suspected corrupt officials. He has argued often that he has not been provided with evidence with which to prosecute suspects. But there are disturbing reports of alleged non-action on the part of government in cases of reported and documented evidence against public officials. In a document circulated in May 2004, ASUU drew attention to at least twelve (12) cases of corruption by public officials. It alleged that these had been documented and reported to the Federal Government, but that action had not been taken since 2001 (ASUU, 2005). Reports such as these, lend credence to the position of the pessimists.

In the case of 'due process', ASUU alleges in the same document that 'loud protests' alleging corruption in the 'due process' establishment have been ignored (ASUU, 2005: 4).

Other worrisome instances of covered up corruption include the case of the Akwa Ibom State Deputy Governor. He was found guilty of corruption, specifically for using public funds to acquire a property abroad in the name of his twelve (12) years old son. It is indeed a sad contradiction of NEEDS much publicized fight against corruption that the executive of the ruling PDP party forced the State Legislature to reverse the impeachment and allowed the Deputy Governor to resign with his loot and reputation (see Rueben Abati: Crossroad, Guardian, July 10th, 2005: 53).

All these show that although it is quite useful and feasible to put in place appropriate institutions to fight corruption, it is quite another matter to change the human actors. Herein lies the most intractable problem facing NEEDS and its fight against corruption; this is in fact the basic problem with NEEDS. It assumes that the actors and operators will exhibit the level of moral and ethical discipline envisaged in it. Alas, from the evidence so far that level of discipline does not yet exist nor does it appear to be forthcoming in the polity, the civil service and the leadership.

In relation to good governance and the fight against corruption, it is useful to recognise a number of publics. These are external governments; external enterprises, external cause groups, domestic elite and ordinary people. The concerns of these five publics are complementary but because of their locations, they are sufficiently different to produce different priorities. For the first four publics, national BMPIU, ICPC, EFCC, etc., are crucial. But to the ordinary Nigerian and the non-elite, although these are important as national indicators of more immediate relevance is what a local health unit did; how local government funds are applied relevantly to his immediate survival needs; how community contributions are used; how certain expenditure actions benefit the people directly; how police are taking care of their immediate security (e.g. against armed robber); whether

NEPA light is available after identified expenditure on it, etc. These are local level indices of good governance and accountability. It is hoped that the expected SEEDS and LEEDS will focus adequately on these.

Establishment of Independent Anti-Corruption Agency and Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC)

These are very welcome institutions in the fight against corruption. The major problem that has been identified with these two much needed institutions is inadequate judicialisation. It is feared that their legal instruments ensure that they are either are toothless as appears to be case with ICPC or when they go to prosecution, failure is assured, as is feared for EFCC. It would appear therefore that the laws establishing these two vital institutions need to be revised to make them effective. The fear, however, is whether the present national assembly is able and willing to do so, given their antecedents and attitude of its members against the logic of self-preservation.

Monetisation of Benefits of Public Officers

This is a public sector reform aimed at reducing the opportunity for corruption among public sector staff. On the facet of it, the reform appears seductively appropriate. However, the NEEDS document correctly identified three major challenges to implementation. These are:

- Mobilising the sizeable amount of resources required to fund it
- The need for equitable disposal of assets that would become available
- Re-orienting staff to change their work habits and ethics.

There is no indication that a solution has been found to the first challenge. The disposal of the assets will probably end inevitably in favour of those who have the wherewithal at the expense of poor but probably hardworking staff and members of the public. This will be directly contrary to the equity and pro-poor philosophy espoused in NEEDS. It will be a direct contradiction, as it will mean that NEEDS will be promoting inequity. The third challenge is even more formidable. Overcoming the third challenge means the creation of a new man, a new civil servant out of the old. USSR and other socialism pursuing nations attempted this. They failed largely probably because they tried to do it without God. In the Nigerian case, only divine miracle can reform the Nigerian civil servant.

Conclusions: Whither Nigeria?

In terms of where Nigeria is going, there are three possible scenarios.

Scenario 1

NEEDS fails to meet all or most of its objectives and targets. This will be a Nigeria that will sink deeper and deeper into underdevelopment, poverty, and become more paradoxical! NEEDS will become a mere wish list.

Scenario 2

NEEDS manages to meet all or most of its economic growth target but not in a pro-poor direction and the fight against corruption fails. This will lead to the replication of another Brazil-like nation; the nation without character that NEEDS is unwilling to create. This will be a nation where the few rich become predators over the vast poverty-ridden majority living in squalor.

Scenario 3

NEEDS succeeds in all or most of its economic, social, welfare, anti-corruption, transparency and accountability objective and targets. This will produce the African tiger of the dream of many Nigerians. This is our hope, this is our dream, this is our wish!

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