

Yoruba People: A Leech in Nigeria's Development?

In Ibadan, Southwest Nigeria, some Yoruba people picked up arms against their Hausa-Fulani internal migrants and, in the free-for-all that resulted, a few Hausa and Yoruba traders lost their lives and properties worth millions of Naira. The fracas cannot be dissociated from the wave of killings and assassinations, armed robberies and kidnaping-for-ransom syndrome that was alleged to have been perpetrated across Yorubaland by Fulani herdsmen. While this provided the backdrop for the fracas at Shasha, Ibadan, its immediate cause was a simple misunderstanding between a Republic of Nigerian national who fell and, in the process, littered and stained a pregnant Yoruba seamstress shop. The seamstress, undoubtedly mad at the situation, demanded that the hapless man wash the stains. The matter was reported on social media in an exaggerated manner, and before long, a free-for-all ensued, pitching the Yoruba against the Hausa in Shasha.

The fallout from this was not just the free-for-all but a whole lot of other events and actions meant to categorically make statements. In retaliation for the destruction of their kin's property in Ibadan, Hausas across Northern Nigeria asked for a boycott of Yorubaland. Food items, including livestock, were shipped elsewhere and price gauging followed across Southern Nigeria. In the event, a few questions arose. If Hausas could call for a boycott of Yorubaland and price of food items, including livestock, could jump in Yorubaland and Southern Nigeria in general, can we rightly describe Hausas and Northern Nigeria as parasites in the Nigerian project as many in Southern Nigeria have often done? What if the Niger-Delta people, inhabitants of the part of Nigeria where Nigeria derives crude oil, the mainstay of its economy, decide to boycott other parts of Nigeria? Is there anything the Yoruba

people can do in return to punish anyone in Nigeria?

Put differently, who are the main contributors to nation-building in the Nigerian project? To properly understand this issue, it is important to start by looking at the concept of development.

To begin with, what is Development?

Understood narrowly, development is a process that creates growth, which could be negative or positive, in the physical or non-physical state of a thing, event, or phenomenon. In relation to a nation, a community of persons, or an individual, it means a state of change, which could be economic, environmental, social, political, demographic, cultural, etc. in nature. For most people, there is a positive identification with development, as a concept. Hence, when we talk about development, we often talk about being better and more equitable political, economic, social and cultural conditions among others. Although most people conceive of development as being positive in nature, conceptually, development could be positive or negative in nature.

For a fact, both negative and positive development could help in attaining progress. One key element in development is that it must be sustainable. A development is considered sustainable when it can, by itself, retain the ability to reproduce the natural systems through which an individual, a community, or a nation depends. So, exploration and marketing of petroleum for instance, is a positive development. But it is not sustainable. The same could be said of gold and diamonds mining, bitumen extraction, etc. The complexity associated with non-sustainable materials like petroleum, gold, bitumen, etc. is that when astute management is brought into the mix, the proceeds from petroleum exploration and marketing, could be invested in other areas of society that are sustainable. In this way, what appears as non-sustainable could be made to not only meet our human development goals,

but also could be made simultaneously sustaining.

Nigeria is blessed with a host of natural resources, such as petroleum and gas, gold and diamonds, nickel and bitumen, etc. Many of these have been used to meet our national human development goals provision of education and health care, building of infrastructure such as roads, rails, harbors, and performing the day-to-day task of running a government. In themselves, natural resources are not inexhaustible; hence, a good and efficient management is required to make them simultaneously sustaining.

Land and people are two resources both renewable and self-replenishing that Nigeria, like many other countries, has in abundance. Farming and education are two ways through which values could be added to both land and people to make them contributors to positive and sustainable national development. Improved and modernized agricultural practices could increase food production while improved roads, rail and harbor could play important roles in moving farm products from the farm-gates to end-users. A problem-solving and functional education could turn a population into a reservoir of forward-looking and high-flying nation-builders.

In their current form can the Yoruba people of Southwest Nigeria be called a reservoir of forward-looking and high-flying nation-builders or a reservoir of loud-mouthed and parasitic leech? Undoubtedly, Yorubaland is blessed with abundant land, being mostly in the rainforest belt. Besides gold, diamonds, and marble, Yorubaland could also boast of abundant deposits of bitumen and crude oil.

From the above, it could be said that Yorubaland has the potential to be Nigeria's food basket. In addition, given recent development in the oil exploration area, most especially the establishment of new refineries in Lagos and other parts of Yorubaland, Yorubaland is at the cusp of becoming a major hub of oil exploration in Nigeria. When this

uncomfortable to answer these questions. Yes, given our latitude in trade, education, moviemaking, social media, etc., the fall out of the free-for-all at Shasha points to the fact that Yoruba people might consider themselves a critical part of the Nigeria's nation-building efforts, but they are, in truth, a leech that depends on others for its survival.

On the free-for-all and its fall-out, Alhaji Jelili Abdulrasaq, the leader of the Nigerian Butchers Association in Al esi ni oye market, Ibadan, said:

What is the most important lesson in this? There is a symbiotic relationship between the North and South and, in the blockade, no one gains. Both parties lost. This is a wake-up call.