



BOOK REVIEW

ELUSIVE SEARCH FOR NATION NIGERIA
WRITTEN BY AMBASSADOR AARE AFE BABALOLA
AFE BABALOLA UNIVERSITY PRESS
(ADO EKITI, 2019), ISBN: 978-978-56719-1-9

Reviewed by

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DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.4314/jsdlp.v10i2.9>

It was a great pleasure and honour for me to read through the 340-page manuscript of the book entitled the *Elusive Search for Nation Nigeria*, written by a prolific author, people's lawyer, astute farmer, philanthropist, relentless human rights crusader, cerebral legal scholar, Professor of the Practice of Law, a global citizen, and the Aare Bamofin of the Universe, Ambassador Aare Emmanuel Afe Babalola.

The book is about the big issue of the historical and contemporary threats facing the peace, unity and progress of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. There is no gainsaying that Nigeria is currently at a political, economic, social, and developmental crossroads. Poverty is at an alarming rate, several of our road, electricity, water, aviation and other infrastructure are time-worn, our educational systems keep nose diving, religious and ethnic intolerance are surging; criminality, insecurity,

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terrorism and kidnappings are at alarming levels. The future of the nation has never been so uncertain.

Owing to the complexity and multifaceted nature of the various issues, several of the existing studies have unpacked the problems from sectoral, one-discipline-at-a-time standpoint. This has not provided a robust, comprehensive and interdisciplinary understanding of the history, sources, causes and solutions to Nigeria's current socio-political challenges. This book made its aims clear from the outset, namely, to fill this huge gap in literature. I had an initial reaction. Why would the author volunteer to undertake such a monumental project? Second, was this indeed achievable?

Having read through all ten chapters of the book, I can say emphatically that the book over-delivered. I cannot resist the urge of calling it an *Encyclopedia of Constitutional Law and Comparative Global Politics*. The book provides the first comprehensive, authoritative, multi-sectoral and multi-dimensional examination of the history, nature, causes and potential solutions to the constitutional and existential challenges facing the Nigerian nation. The book is like an onion, each layer is filled with limitless value. Well contextualized in history, anthropology, law, economics, political philosophy, government, international affairs, environmental science, agriculture, and food science – this is not an ordinary book. It is a revolutionary compendium of facts, figures, analyses and exceptional insights on the foundations and inherent challenges facing Nigeria's attempt to form a cohesive nation out of the hundreds of nations, which inhabit the geographical enclave called Nigeria. This book documents the past, analyses the present and provides a template for reshaping the future. It is certainly a complete and masterful book that will undoubtedly remain relevant and useful for a very long time.

The book is clear, logical and well documented. It is divided into three parts, proceeding from general discussions to more specific topics. Part 1, containing two chapters, provides analytical examinations of the meaning of nation, nationhood and nationalism, as well as a detailed history of the emergence of the nation called Nigeria. The author made it exceedingly clear that it requires a strong desire, strong will and total commitment of different groups before a nation can emerge. According to him, sadly "the founding visions and strong will to remain a nation in Nigeria have been badly mutilated, defaced, and chipped away. The ideals of Nigerian nationhood have been eroded, while the feelings of nationalism and patriotism are at the lowest ebb in the country."

After providing such an explosive and thought-provoking theoretical background, Part 2 of the book, comprising six chapters, provides sector-by-sector diagnoses of the scale and intensity of the challenges facing Nigeria. Starting with the author's chief passion, farming and agriculture. Chapter 3 x-rays how the near abandonment of the agricultural sector, Nigeria's chief economic mainstay in the pre-oil-and-gas era, has created a mono-industry, oil-and-gas-dependent and undiversified economy. The end result is increased levels of hunger, poverty, and desperation across the land. The author's passion for education was fully unleashed in Chapter 4 where he, as a seasoned University administrator, provided a compelling account of how lack of sustained funding, infrastructural deficit, poor welfare, and inadequate level of government support for private institutions have, in his, led to "the stagnation and deterioration of Nigeria's education sector." Chapter 5 unpacks the fundamentals and contours of Nigeria's wavering economy. The author's background and degree in economics provided an analytical frame for him to demonstrate how overdependence on oil revenue, lack of sustained economic planning, ageing and time-worn infrastructure, insecurity and slowdown of foreign direct investments, among other things, have created interlocking structures of poor economic outcomes for the Nigerian people. Chapter 6 addresses the problem of insecurity and wanton disregard for fundamental human rights in Nigeria. The author's passion as a human rights crusader was on full display. The chapter provided a masterful account of how the failure of state security apparatus and mechanisms have resulted in institutional corruption, heightened insecurity, and human rights abuse in Nigeria. Still on the subject of institutional mechanisms, the author, a foremost election lawyer in Nigeria, unpacked in Chapter 7 how gaps in our electoral laws, over attractive political offices, duplication of public institutions, vote trading, lack of institutional independence, as reflected in the often-touted power of incumbency, have all combined to make free, fair and credible elections a mirage in Nigeria. In Chapter 8, the author returned to his original calling, his natural terrain as a pre-eminent and revered officer in the temple of justice. He provides an insider perspective on the problems facing the Nigerian judiciary. Drawing vastly from his experience as a member of the Lincoln's Inn in England, the author provides a comparative and philosophical analyses of how Nigerian judiciary, unlike in England, face multifaceted challenges that hinder their independence. These problems range from poor infrastructure, poor remuneration, corruption, political pressure and the erosion of the judiciary's independence. The author warned that a weak judiciary is a

danger to Nigeria's stability and prosperity as a nation.

Part 3 of the book unwraps a monumental gift to current and future generations of Nigerians. It documents innovative and well-thought-out solutions to the flashing bright red problems highlighted in Part 2. As the author notes, "In my view, Nigeria currently faces two options: *restructure or reconfigure*." After analysing the import of each of these, the author noted as follows:

Restructuring Nigeria's socio-political foundations now and with utmost priority is a time sensitive step that is required to save the nation from looming perdition. Based on current realities, it is hard to see how Nigeria will survive as one nation without restructuring. It is now a clear case of either we restructure now or we may face unplanned reconfiguration in the not too distant future.²

After providing a robust elaboration of the "what, why, when and how of political restructuring", the author warned that Nigeria is in desperate need for transformational leaders who have the courage, determination and will to lead Nigeria to a path of restructuring. Many of the greatest thinkers of all times do not just identify a problem, like oracles and seers, they provide a way forward. The author, a distinguished oracle and statesman, did so by providing the first comprehensive and authoritative *Manifesto for Transformational Leadership* by any individual in this country. The 10 principles of transformational leadership in this chapter provide penetrating and thought-provoking guidelines that should naturally be adopted by any progressive, forward thinking and well-meaning political party and politician in Nigeria and Africa. As the author rightly warned:

Anyone seeking elective office that is not ready to uphold and commit to these 10 principles of transformational leadership and a robust restructuring process is a hazard to the nation and should be condemned to electoral failure.

The concluding chapter of the book emphasizes that without political restructuring, through an immediate sovereign national conference, Nigeria may never know peace. Rather than another round of constitutional or national dialogues and conferences, the author called

2 A Babalola, *Elusive Search for Nation Nigeria*, p. 332.

for an immediate sovereign national conference, made up of two to three delegates per state, elected on a zero-party basis, and other distinguished personalities from diverse backgrounds. He called on all Nigerians to wake up, speak up, and act in the best interest of Nigeria's rebirth by consistently making restructuring and SNC the crux of the next election cycles in this country.

Having taught law as a Professor of Law in different parts of the world – Africa, Asia, Europe, North America and the Middle East – I can say with all emphasis and temerity at my disposal that this is the most ingenious, compelling and extensively well researched book that I have ever read. The book is a breadth of fresh air. What is perhaps most powerful about it is that its problematization of the Nigerian challenges are achieved, not at some high level of abstraction, but through practical and real-life accounts that recognize the day-to-day realities and complexities of Nigerian politics.

The author has brought his uncommon expertise and experience in diverse fields of human endeavour to provide a useful compendium for all current and future generations of students, academics, researchers, administrators, lawyers, economists, farmers, judges, advocates, and civil society. I think the author can confidently say as Henry Barlow wrote in his often-quoted poem, "I have done my part in building the nation."

The author has done his part and posterity will forever be kind to him. I recommend this book to all and sundry for their reading and application. I wish every reader an enjoyable and rewarding study of the *Elusive Search for Nation Nigeria* written by our Founder, Father, Inspiration, and Oracle.