

Elite brigandage and Tinubu's class suicide

BY HASSAN GIMBA

Elite – Let us face it and tell ourselves the truth, bitter as it is: all patriotic Nigerians conversant with happenings among our elite class will be disappointed with the sordid behaviour of most of them. And the elite behaviour is further putting a strain on the fabric that holds the country together. In the first place, they never consider justice or fair play. Many of them have a grandiloquent idea of being chosen, especially by God, and blessed above everyone else. Their regard and consideration are, therefore, only to their ilk. This is why they never think it is the right thing to do to respect even the laws and the constitution from which they derive their privileges. Some of them see it as doing the masses a favour when they use government funds to deliver some services.

A few years ago, we had one governor who christened himself Chief Servant, and whatever the state government did, he had no qualms claiming it was "donated by Chief Servant"! Cheeky! And to think that he went to school and rose to the apex of the civil service before switching to political office. He once publicly said that those who cannot lie have no business being politicians. Fancy that!

Some of the political leaders paint public structures in their image, affixing their unofficial names to them. This personalization of governance and appropriation of the commonwealth is so brazen because they have already taken the people they govern for granted. And this is so because the people themselves do not seem to know their rights or, if they did, cannot demand them. And the people have so ceded their constitutionally given power over the so-called powerful men that they have become toothless. They will spend four years complaining, wailing, crying, and gnashing of teeth over their poor choice, but lo and behold, a packet of noodles is enough to make them "re-choose" their tormentors over better candidates who could not 'shake body'.

Sometimes, the elite are no better than the bandits terrorizing the people. The differences are only that they may speak better English than the bandits because they had the opportunity to go to school. They have also found themselves in a position of leadership because our political leadership recruitment processes often give preference to political bandits over political 'saints.'

Or how else would one explain the erstwhile strong man of Kogi State, the 'White Lion' himself, doing hide-and-seek with the operatives of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC)? This was a

man, codenamed "Tatatata" (mimicking the sound of gunfire) in the 2019 election, under whose watch thugs terrorized Kogites, even burning alive an opposition party's women leader. Now, like Turji or Dogo Gide, he is hiding from the law. Turji and Dogo Gide did not have the privilege of running to the courts, but hey, a bandit is a bandit. One Igbo proverb says that when the mother goat is eating grass, the kid will be watching its mouth. Now even the children of the elite are treading their path. Just recently, the son of El-Rufa'i was cautioned by the Speaker of the Kaduna State House of Assembly, Yusuf Liman, for sending him threatening messages via WhatsApp just because his father, who loaded debt on the state, is being probed. But if the sins of el-Rufa'i's son can be overlooked, what of that of a sitting governor who is the chief security officer of his state? To be part of a conspiracy to whisk away a fugitive from justice is not a small infraction of the Constitution. In a saner nation, that act alone would cause him to lose his office. But then, we live in Nigeria, where anything can happen. Then we also see a state House of Assembly, some newspaper houses, lawyers, organizations, and associations

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all rooting for someone who should know better but chose to be no better than those hiding from the law in the bushes. And you cry for Nigeria and wonder if there is any hope for her.

However, if what has been going on under President Bola Ahmed Tinubu is any indicator, then Yahaya Bello can only run for now but cannot hide; the eagle claws of the law will clamp him. We have seen what befell the erstwhile Central Bank of Nigeria Governor, Godwin Emeziele, minister of Humanitarian Affairs and Poverty Alleviation, Betta Edu (for how long will they remain suspended?), and many others, the latest of which is former minister Hadi Sirika of the Nigerian Air Debacle. President Tinubu has shown that he is not a tiger who is being waged by its tail. In the last administration, the lawbreakers-in-office largely went scot-free, with the principal adopting a hear-no-evil, see-no-evil posture, ensconced in his Aso Villa cocoon. But not this president, who is committing class suicide by dealing with brigands in his social class. The Hausa man said, "Ba yabon dan kuturu sai ya kai arba'in." It is early days yet, and there is no hurra until we see the end, whether this is just a red herring or something serious.

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The ephemerality of power and Nigeria's democratic system

By Musa Bakare

Power in Nigeria's democratic space is most unequally distributed among individuals and groups, leading to disparities in access to resources and opportunities. This unequal distribution of power reinforces existing inequalities, giving rise to all forms of marginalization corruption and cheating. In saner climes, those with greater power have a greater responsibility to shape the social, political, and economic fabric of their society. In Nigeria's democratic system however, the doctrine of immunity, some see as a special grace giving by section 308 of the 1999 Constitution (as amended) allows a Governor or President in power to arrogate to themselves those powers that ought to be an exclusive prerogative of Heavens, hence the subjugation and pauperization of their subjects

Some with power rule over others for self destruction. Those Nigerians of Emefiele's stock are good examples of this. Such power can involve brute coercion or manipulation to corruption outcomes. The limitations of immunity for government officials, is essential for addressing the challenges of power transiency in Nigeria Immunity confers an unreal air of, "I am above the law, I can do and undo "No one can catch me" (Kos'eni tole mumi – in Yoruba)" on an incumbent governor. It gives them a make belief sense that they are untouchable. The law protects the governor from prosecution for actions taken only when in office. This limitation can be both positive, a lure and negative. It can prevent frivolous lawsuits that distract them. It can also shield them from accountability and the tendency to corrupt along with other unethical behaviors. Immunity had led many undiscerning leaders to Kuje. Immunity is not enshrined in the law by the framers of Nigeria's constitution to confer absolute power to choose between been pristine or corrupt in office on the Governors. However, in Nigeria, governors hardly realize that the "IMU NI TI" honeymoon lasts only for eight years of unbridled power show after which karmic law of retributive justice come calling. As a matter of reality, only the President or governor that is pristine in the conduct of his responsibilities, honest, ruled and governed with an absolute fear of God and left office with clean an incorruptible standard that can be said to truly have immunity. Some people have used power over others for self edification. They impact people's confidence, boost their self-esteem with a sense of humility in shaping lives and empowering individuals to recognize and assert their rights, a transformative governor that enables their people advocate for their wellbeing, and effect positive changes in the management of men and resources. These are some the attributes that the people of Lagos State and I need Nigeria remember with nostalgia of Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu when he was the Executive Governor of Lagos State. The very strong factors he

won the Nigerian Presidential election with landslide victory and become the President and Commander in chief of the Armed Forces of Nigerian today, several years after his stewardship in Lagos The ephemeral nature of power and authority is tied to the concept of legitimacy.

Without the support and respect of those they governor lead, individuals in positions of power can quickly find themselves marginalized and stripped of their authority, especially after office. This is particularly true in democratic societies where leaders continually earn the trust and confidence of their constituents by happenstance or as it is in Nigeria submits to the invitation of EFCC or IPCC after office.

Meanwhile, as an elected President or Governor in Nigeria, the fear of what happens at the expiration of your term in office, with or without EFCC, IPCC and the law of the land ought to be the beginning of wisdom. It is essential for anyone in the position of power in Nigeria at whatever level to recognize the impermanent nature of their power and authority and continuously work to maintain and strengthen his integrity in and out of office. The speed with which those people that encourages them towards despotic tendencies abandon them, leaving them to their fate after office should act as checks to them. By understanding the factors that contribute to the transiency and aftermath of power and authority in the Nigeria context, those in power today ought to better navigate the landscape of power, leadership and governance and be friends with EFCC, ICPC while in office as a guide, a pointer to what would happen after office. The personal qualities and characteristics of individuals with power play a significant role in determining the stability of their power and authority before during and at the expiration of their term. The arrogant, tyrannical, or incompetent ones are more likely to face self infected challenges after office, little wonder the lure to the desperation to install their successor for fear of unknown. The behaviors of an incumbent Governor while in office inspires or alienates people and would determine to a great extend their retirement status. The Governor or a president who demonstrated humility, empathy, and competence while wielding power are more likely to maintain honour, respect and still wields power even after office, and would be able to walk freely to EFCC or ICPC headquarters and say, good morning gentlemen and ladies, here I am.

