

The Signs of the Times

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This may not be the best of times to live in Nigeria, a land of opportunities, full of potentials, promising peace, unity in strength and progress for all. In today's Nigeria, the signs are evident in everyday life—visible in the markets, workplaces, government institutions, and even in the conversations of ordinary citizens. They reflect a nation grappling with serious economic hardship and political uncertainty. Nigeria, once regarded as the “Giant of Africa,” is richly endowed with human and natural resources. However, and despite this potential, the current realities suggest deep structural challenges. This piece seeks to examine the economic and political signs of the times in Nigeria and what they mean for the nation's future. The Preamble to the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as Amended) states clearly that we are 'to live in unity and harmony as one indivisible and indissoluble Sovereign Nation under God', whereas from all clear indications, we seem to have left God out of the picture of both the leadership and the followership. It was also resolved that the Constitution will be for the 'purpose of promoting the good government and welfare of all persons in our country on the principles of Freedom, Equality and Justice.' The questions arising from this are many. Are we free, in our own land? Can you move around in every part of Nigeria, either to visit, reside or carry on business any and everywhere? Are we equal before the law and before the government? Can we boast of equal opportunities for all to attain their inherent potentials? Are the scales tilted in favour of some and against others, as a matter of deliberate policy? How can there be so much money in circulation yet the people are poorer, the suffering is increasing and capacity is dwindling? Is there justice in the land, officially in the temple of justice or unofficially in our dealings with one another? From section 15 (1) of the Constitution, the motto of the Federal Republic of Nigeria shall be Unity and Faith, Peace and Progress. From all indications, we have never been so divided as we are now, with every policy, action or declaration viewed from the limited prisms of religion and ethnicity. Many have lost faith in the Republic, given the way the leaders have mismanaged its affairs, leading to mass exodus of people to other climes, where they are treated as second



class citizens and at times deprived of their investments and assets through xenophobic attacks. Peace has become elusive in so many regions across the land, with people being chased away from their native land and heritage by strangers. Whether or not we are making progress will be determined by whose interest you are serving, as the propagandists will readily swear that we have never had it so good as a nation, even in the face of mass hunger, unemployment, inflation, struggling economy and dwindling resources. Government must galvanize the people to have faith in the nation through transparent leadership, visible infrastructure that will affect the people positively and directly and initiate welfare programmes for the upliftment of the plight of the masses.

INSECURITY; Various forms of insecurity—such as insurgency, banditry, kidnapping, and communal clashes—continue to threaten lives and property. These challenges not only create fear but also hinder economic activities and national development. Government must be bold to confront this monster. It is totally unacceptable that our people continue to dwell in the land of death and violence. With the human and material resources at our disposal collectively, terrorists should not overwhelm us in

such a way as to suggest that we have lost our identity and status as a nation. The facts are very scary and worrisome that terrorists hoist their flags in many locations across Northern Nigeria and some state governments have come to the reality of partnering with terrorists in order to enjoy peace in their respective domains. They know the terrorists and they equally know their locations but in the absence of needed capacity, they have resigned to their fate. In very disturbing cases, the government is involved in the payment of ransom to terrorists, bandits and kidnappers, who have become so daring and empowered that they claim to have the wherewithal to shoot down fighter jets. Additionally, there is an increase in crime rate, often linked to economic hardship and unemployment. As people struggle to survive, some resort to unlawful means, further complicating the nation's security challenges. With the financial resources

at the disposal of the government and available human capital of millions of vibrant youths desiring positive engagement, terrorism should not have the upper hand in our land, unless there are other factors fueling it. The introduction of state police is part of the ideal solution to tackle this ugly menace across the land but this must be based on constructive partnership with all stakeholders, involving the government, the private sector, civil society and indeed the legal community.

ECONOMY; One of the most visible signs is the rising and unpredictable cost of living. Prices of essential goods such as food, transportation, rent, and healthcare have increased dramatically. For many families, survival has become a daily struggle, as incomes remain stagnant while expenses continue to rise. Inflation has eroded purchasing power, making it difficult for even middle-income earners to maintain a decent standard of living. Closely related is the issue of unemployment and underemployment, particularly among the youth. Every year, thousands of graduates enter the labor market with limited opportunities available. This has led to frustration, loss of hope, and in some cases, engagement in illegal activities as a means of survival. Another significant indicator is the instability of the national currency (the Naira). The continuous depreciation of the Naira against major foreign currencies has made imports more expensive, affecting businesses and consumers alike. You can hardly plan effectively and many small and medium enterprises struggle to stay afloat due to high production costs and reduced consumer demand. Some have folded up altogether. The removal of fuel subsidy has also had far-reaching consequences. While intended as an economic reform, it has led to higher transportation and energy costs, which has in turn affected the prices of goods and services. For the average Nigerian, this policy has translated into increased financial hardship. The absence of stable electricity has a crippling effect on the survival of all businesses to the extent that even the government has declared a vote of no confidence in the national grid by opting for solar power, leaving the people stranded. The ruling All Progressives Congress has a manifesto which it adopted as its policy manual. If the thirty-one governors implement that manifesto with sincerity and determination, there surely will be a turning point for the nation.

POLITICS;

Without any doubt political power is significant in the determination of other indices of nationhood. Beyond the economy, Nigeria's political landscape presents its own set of challenges. A major concern is leadership and governance. Many citizens' express dissatisfaction with the level of transparency, accountability, and responsiveness from those in power. This has contributed to a growing trust deficit between the government and the people. Electoral processes have also raised concerns. Questions about the credibility and fairness of elections have weakened public confidence in democratic

institutions. When citizens begin to doubt the integrity of elections, it undermines the foundation of democracy itself. The deliberate annihilation of any form of viable opposition does not speak well for our progress and development. The Labour Party has been decimated while the African Democratic Congress has been thoroughly weakened and polarized through policy inconsistencies of the regulatory institution. The People's Democratic Party is waging war against itself by itself, leaving its members frustrated and directionless. In their various states of survival, the opposition political parties can hardly play their role of constant appraisal and monitoring of government policies and actions. In response to these conditions, there has been an increase in public protests and civic engagement. Citizens, especially young people, are becoming more vocal about their dissatisfaction. While this reflects a growing awareness and desire for change, it also highlights the depth of frustration within the society, dictating the urgent need for unity of action from the opposition to make a meaningful impact.

HOPE AND OPPORTUNITIES;

Despite these challenges, there are also positive signs that should not be overlooked. Nigeria's youth population remains a powerful force for change. Many young Nigerians are innovating, particularly in the technology and entrepreneurship sectors, creating solutions to local and global problems. The entertainment industry has experienced significant leaps across its various sectors, all of which must be galvanized for greater performance. There is also a growing level of political awareness and activism. Citizens are becoming more informed and engaged, demanding accountability and better governance. Efforts toward economic diversification—especially in agriculture, technology, and creative industries—offer hope for reducing dependence on oil and building a more resilient economy. Furthermore, the role of the media and civil society organizations in promoting transparency and accountability continues to be crucial. These institutions must continue to serve as watchdogs, ensuring that leaders are held responsible for their actions, without fear of persecution or witch hunting.

CONCLUSION;

The economic hardship and political instability in Nigeria are clear “signs of the times.” They reveal a nation at the crossroads—facing serious challenges but also possessing immense potential for transformation. While the current situation may seem daunting, it also presents an opportunity for reflection, reform, and renewal. With responsible leadership, active citizen participation, and a commitment to national development, Nigeria can and should overcome these challenges.