



Tinubu's Nepotistic Appointments Unconstitutional, undemocratic

With President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's recent approval of the nomination of Olayemi Cardoso to serve as the substantive new Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), some 48 hours after appointing Zachaeus Adedeji as the acting chairman of the Federal Inland Revenue Service, FIRS, the strong perception that the President is pushing an unseemly pro-ethnic agenda became worryingly stronger. Adedeji is to "serve in an acting capacity for 90 days before his subsequent confirmation as the substantive chairman of FIRS for a term of four years in the first instance." With a little over 100 days on the saddle, the President's appointments have shown he appears to have special consideration for people from his South-West region, especially those with links to Lagos State. If President Tinubu's appointment of new services sparked new hope and drew deserved plaudits in that it recognised the nation's diversity, his subsequent appointments curiously depart from that template. That the disastrous, previous administration of General Muhammadu Buhari, rtd, towed a visionless, divisive path, in the overwhelming tribalistic appointments it made, should never excuse this course that fundamentally degrades the legitimate dream of a new, progressive, inclusive Nigerian state. Today, the stakes are extremely high, and Nigerians are mindful that a failure to achieve democratic stability, through a meritorious, transparent, inclusive governance process may imperil the country's future as a coherent state. Mere political rewards and seeming ethnic nationalism should not drive the national journey. It is a perilous, avoidable option.

We strongly believe that this is the wrong path to thread, especially against the background of deep mistrust, misery, political and economic dislocations brazenly birthed by the predecessor administration. We believe that like Caesar's Wife, the Tinubu administration ought to be above suspicion. We recall here that the central driving mantra and foundational philosophy on which the ruling All Progressives Congress sold its presidential candidate Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu, now President, to Nigerians, was "Renewed Hope." Some Nigerians bought into it and voted the Asiwaju and APC to power because it deeply resonated with the populace.

But what is the reality? Key appointments traversing the nation's crucial security, judicial and economic sectors are now unabashedly cornered by the South-West region. A quick, non-exhaustive checklist would include: Petroleum Minister: Bola Tinubu; Chief of Staff: Femi Gbajabamila; Minister of Justice: Lateef Fagbemi; Minister of Finance and the Coordinating Minister of the Economy, Mr. Wale Edun; Acting Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), Mr. Folashodun Shonubi who now gives way to a substantive CBN boss Olayemi Cardoso. Others include: Minister of Marine & Blue Economy: Bunmi Tunji-Ojo; Minister of Communication, Innovation & Digital Economy: Bosun Tijan; simultaneously, the Chairman of Senate Committee on ICT, Afolabi Salisu, and that of House of Representatives, Adedeji Olajide Odidiomo are both from the South-West; Minister of Power: Adebayo Adedun; Minister of Transport: Adegboyega Oyetola; Minister of Solid Minerals: Dele Alake; Chief of Army Staff: General Taoreed Lagbaja; Police IG: Kayode Egbetokun; Comptroller-General Customs: Adewale Adeniyi; Comptroller-General Immigration: Adepoju Carol Wura-Ola; FIRS Chairman: Zachaeus. Adedeji, et cetera. With the unveiling of the second batch of President Tinubu's ministerial list and addition of more names the President finally assembled 48 persons that would serve in his cabinet. The President 'selected' his men and women from across the length and breadth of Nigeria. But there's no cause for cheer in the South-east geopolitical zone

because, once again, the zone was shortchanged. An analysis of the president's ministerial spread shows that the South-east is the only zone without a zonal representation in the ministerial appointments. President Tinubu barely accommodated the South-east in his cabinet to satisfy the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria which made it mandatory that each of the 36 states and Abuja must have a minister each. After complying with the constitutional provision, Tinubu has additional 12 ministerial slots to allocate because of the size of his cabinet, which of course, was his own making. That is where the zonal allocation of ministers comes in. North-west, the zone with the largest number of states, got seven ministerial slots while North-east, North-central, South-west and South-south received six slots each. The South-east was left with five ministers, just to fulfill constitutional righteousness. Yet, in his distribution of the extra ministerial slots, Tinubu gave additional three ministers each to North-west and South-west zones, making it a total of 10 and nine ministers for the zones, respectively. Each of North-east, North-central and South-south were given two extra ministers, making it a total of eight for each of these favoured zones. In fact, the South-south zone received yet another additional ministerial slot when the name of the immediate past Minister of State for Labour, Festus Keyamo, surfaced in Tinubu's ministerial list.

Sadly, the South-east was stuck with its five constitutionally mandatory numbers of ministers. No addition. No zonal representation. Just a paltry 10.4 per cent of the 48 names in Tinubu's prospective ministers. Though Tinubu did not get the quantum of votes he had expected in the South-east, his party, the All Progressives Congress (APC) controls two states - Ebonyi and Imo out of five states in the zone, representing 40 per cent. This should have provided for Tinubu a source of comfort and renewed hope for high yielding political outing in future - certainly not a shabby treatment for a zone with equal stake like others, in the Nigeria project. Strangely, against all logic of national inclusiveness and the imperative of taking the right first steps of building a promised new Nigeria anchored on "Renewed Hope," the President Tinubu administration is threading the old, dodgy path, in violation of the constitutionally guaranteed principle of federal character, however craftily shrouded in subterfuge. This unfolding pro-ethnic gambit is not surprisingly provoking pushbacks from regional organisations, including the 'favoured' South-West. Some S/West APC stakeholders under the aegis of South West APC Support Groups (SASG) earlier in the day alleged that states in the zone are being sidelined in the appointments of presidential aides announced so far, as only the 'Lagos boys' are snatching the slots. Besides Ohanaeze Ndigbo's shrill objections against its zone's alleged peripheralization by the Tinubu administration, the Arewa Economic Forum also recently accused President Tinubu of ethnic bias in the selection of appointees into crucial economic sectors. "We are afraid to state that a situation whereby the appointees in crucial economic sectors are not only from the Southwest but also connected to the Lagos axis suggests a deliberate 'Yorubanisation' and 'Lagosisation' of the polity," chairman of the forum Ibrahim Shehu Yahaya, recently said.

We believe that the time to backtrack from his pro-ethnic appointments, embrace an emergent new Nigeria and hence, Renewed Hope, is now. Nigeria belong to all ethnic nationalities that makes up this entity called Nigeria and not some self-acclaimed feudal lords and opportunists.