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The Future of the Nigerian Federation, Public Accountability and the Rule of Law.

**Valedictory Lecture.
Honouring the Hon Chief Judge of Borno State,
Justice Mohammed Kaumi Kolo.
On the Occasion of His Retirement.
The International Conference Centre,
Musa Usman Secretariat, Maiduguri,
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by

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It is an honour to be invited to give a valedictory lecture to mark the occasion of the retirement from judicial service of a distinguished jurist in the person of Justice Kaumi Mohammed Kolo, the Chief Judge of Borno State, of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. As someone whom I have held in high regards, since we met forty-one years ago, at the British Council students hostel at Hans Crescent, Knightsbridge, London, I promptly accepted the open invitation to give this lecture in his honour.

But, then, I was not sure what sort of subject one should address on such an occasion. For, I am going to address, what is bound to be a formidable audience of judges, barristers, solicitors, and other professionals, of our, law enforcement and judicial, systems. These are serious people trained, and experienced, in scrutinising, examining and

dissecting, every comma, every word, every phrase, every sentence and every paragraph, of every statement, in every document, taking nothing for granted. The intelligence of the legal profession is dissective. It is an intelligence professionally trained to identify, recover and dissect evidence, in order to get as close to the truth as is humanly possible.

Fortunately, however the type of history we have been taught, and the type we have been trying to teach, is one in which you start with evidence, you assess and analyse evidence, and you conclude on the basis of evidence. In this process, the more you grapple with, and dissect, evidence about the past, and the complex choices of opportunities, and alternatives, that past generations faced, the more you realise the necessity to also grasp and grapple with the possibilities and options in the present and in the future.

The Future

The present is only meaningful against the background of the past, even the past of only a few minutes ago. It also gets its meaning only as a prelude to the future. Presently, one of the most prominent political issues in Nigeria is about the future of the Nigerian Federation. Since there are, increasingly vocal demands from a number of political parties and groups opposed to President Olusegun Obasanjo, for a national conference of delegates, exercising sovereign powers, drawn, somehow, from the ethnic nationalities of Nigeria, to decide on whether or, not to dismember the Federal Republic of Nigeria, this issue seems to be a reasonable choice of a subject for a lecture to mark this occasion.

This is particularly so, because, this demand to hand over the power to decide on the whole future of Nigeria, its corporate existence, its sovereignty and its territorial integrity, to a conference of delegates of ethnic nationalities, self-appointed or, chosen somehow, with, or, without a nominal referendum, has far-reaching implications to a very wide range of national problems and issues. Public accountability and the rule of

law, which are two of the main pillars of the democratic system the overwhelming majority of Nigerian citizens are now committed to building in this country, are two of these main problems and issues.

The Invalid Premises

① In the first place, the basic premise of this demand, that, the Federal Republic of Nigeria has being constituted by the coming together of the various ethnic nationalities that are now found within it, is false. This premise has no basis in the primary sources of the historical evidence on the formation of Nigeria and of the emergence of the ethnic nationalities now constituting it.

② Secondly, the premise that, the Federal Republic of Nigeria is made up of distinct ethnic nationalities, which are made up of ethnic citizens, who, as ethnic citizens, share common political and economic interests that can be validly represented at a national conference, is false. The evidence is that the identity, and the cultural, psychological, political and territorial boundaries, and even the traditions of origins, of these ethnic nationalities of contemporary Nigeria, are so inter-mixed, so intermeshed, so fluid, and always in the process of being reconstituted, that ethnicity in Nigeria today, does not at all, provide the basis of definable and tangible units which can be validly and rationally represented by delegates at a national conference, no matter how they are appointed, or, chosen.

③ Thirdly, the premise that, building a polity on the foundations of institutionalised ethnic, racial, and religious, differences can lead to democracy, peace and harmony, and economic development, is false. The evidence from the historical and contemporary experience in Africa, and in all parts of the world, has proved, time without number, that attempts to institutionalise and operationalise ethnic, racial and religious differences within a country, are totally opposed to democracy and are in fact destructive of democratic, public, accountability and the rule of law.

The direct consequences of institutionalising ethnic and racial differences in any modern polity, are, that, these two pillars of, stable, democratic, and accountable, constitutional rule, shall be replaced by ethnicist and racist intimidation, secret cult and gerontocratic terrorism, militarism and chronic civil wars. Let us, therefore, take up these premises of this demand for this sovereign national conference, against the evidence available to us.

The Example of the Igbo

Professor Kenneth Dike, one of the founders of the modern study of African history, one of the scholars who has shaped university teaching and research in the 20th century, for example, brought this out on the formation of the Igbo ethnic nationality, in the study he conducted with Felicia Ekejiuba, at the universities of Ibadan and Harvard. In a book titled, **The Aro of South-Eastern Nigeria, 1650-1980: A Study of Socio-Economic Formation and Transformation in Nigeria**, published in 1980, they brought out that:

*“...it is often forgotten, or merely mentioned in the footnote, that Igbo is a modern ethnic category, which many of the constituent groups have only recently and often reluctantly accepted as their ethnic identity, often on political and administrative grounds. During the period covered by our study, the now twelve million or more ‘Igbo’ distributed over 30,000 square miles of territory east and west of the Niger were variously referred to either as cultural groups (e.g. the **Nri**, **Isuama**, **Ezza**, or **Otanzu**), or by the ecological zones in which they are found (e.g. **Olu** or **Oru** i.e. the riverain people or **Adagbe**, people of the flood plain); Enugu, people who live on the hills, **Aniocha**, people who live on heavily leached and eroded solids; **Ohozara**, people of the savannah; or as occupational groups such as **Opi egbe** (people who fashion guns).”*

And in calling for detailed, empirically well - grounded historical studies, Dike and Ekejiuba, pointed that:

“The historical process by which these various groups have become ethnically Igbo during the past eighty years can be highlighted, the shared traits and common traditions abstracted and the problem of using Igbo as an ethnographic entity demonstrated by such studies. Such studies will also demonstratate the problem posed by the use of single entities as Igbo religion or political system.”

It is such concrete historical processes, so succinctly brought out in the, the case of the Igbo, in the scholarship of Dike and Ekejiuba, that so many Nigerian politicians and intellectuals, nowadays, are trying to run away from. This is all in order to fabricate, for, very selfish personal reasons, “Races” and “Nations,” where none have existed. When the rest of the world is combating racism, they are embracing and promoting racism in Nigeria, so that they can, as a perpetual ruling elite, corner power and wealth in this country, for themselves, their children, grandchildren, and great grand-children, forever, and ever, reducing Nigerian citizens to ethnic serfdom, in sovereign ethnic republics, or, ethnic confederating units of a Nigerian Confederation.

The Example of the Yoruba

As for the political fiction, and the racist obsessions, about “the Yoruba Race,” there is no historical evidence of a “Yoruba” entity before the 19th century. There was not a common Yoruba language before the dissemination of the written form of Standard Yoruba, derived from the Oyo dialect, from the second half of the 19th century. Even the inception of this language at Abeoukuta, hardly predated Nigeria.

The modern ethnic nationality, formed within Nigeria, now known as Yoruba, had most of its roots in people speaking about twenty different dialects. Some of these dialects were barely mutually intelligible. The twenty dialects, and actually some dialect clusters, were, Bunu, Ife,

Ijesha, Ondo, Owo, Igbena, Gbedde, Akono, Ilaje, Awori, Ila, Ijebu, Oyo, Yagba, Egba, Ekiti, Aworo, Ijumu, Kalae, and Owe.

The historical evidence in the primary sources is very clear about the formation of the Yoruba ethnic nationality. Like almost all the other, ethnic nationalities in contemporary Nigeria, it is not any race, or, nation, but a Nigerian ethnic nationality formed in Nigeria in the 19th and in the 20th century. This process was not simply one of the integration of communities speaking Yoruboid, dialects, which, of course have formed and transformed over thousands of years. It was a process, which involved the incorporation of a diversity of people including those speaking completely different languages, who have now come to constitute the ethnic nationality known as the Yoruba of the Federal Republic of Nigeria

Many of the inhabitants of the huge metropolis of Lagos, for example, who are identified, and identify themselves, as Yoruba, are made up of people of Awori, Benin, Egun, Ilaje, Egbema-Ijo, Olodiana-Ijo, Nupe, Hausa, Fanti, Egbado, Fulbe, Igala, Ketu, Urhobo and other origins. This is the case, not just in Ikeja and Ajegunle, but, also, in Isale-Eko and in the oldest parts of Lagos, Badagry and Mahin. As Babatunde Agiri and Sandra Barnes point out, in their study of the history of Lagos before 1603, in the book, **History of the Peoples of Lagos State**, published in 1987:

“... the migrant fisher folk who frequented the lagoon and camped on the shores of Lagos and Iddo Islands no doubt stemmed from many sources, spreading their way of life in the course of their movements. After them the Awori and the Benin peoples added new layers to the population. These influences were neither a beginning, nor an end. The hallmark of Lagos was and still is its ability to absorb many peoples, many languages and many cultural influences. It has done so from time immemorial and it is a process to which there is no predictable end”.

What Agiri and Barnes have cogently identified as happening in the historical process of the formation and transformations of Lagos, has been happening, and has happened, and continues to happen, in all the major urban centres, and economically productive rural areas, of the Nigerian Federation.

The Example of the Hausa

As for the Hausa ethnic nationality of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, it is only in the 20th century that the name "Hausa" took on the ethnic connotation it has in contemporary affairs. In the areas of the Sokoto Caliphate, around the City of Sokoto, the term "Hausa" was applied only to the metropolitan districts around the capital, to the exclusion of Kano, Katsina, and Zazzau, for example. These areas also had their own notions of what "Hausa" meant, while retaining the more substantial identity of Kanawa, Katsinawa, and Zagegi, applied to people originating from the immense variety of ethnic groups from all over West and North Africa, who came to inhabit these territorially based polities, known as *kasashe*, meaning land/ territories, over the centuries.

An important dimension of this process of incorporation in the formation of these polities, is perhaps best illustrated in the very name of the famous seventeenth century Katsina scholar, and saint, Wali Dan Masanih (1595-1667), who was known as, Abu Abdullah Muhammad b. Masanih b. Ghumehu b. Muhammad b. Nuh al - Barnawi al - Kashinawi. The first Dan Masanih belonged to both Borno and to Katsina. That is why he identified himself, and was known to his contemporaries, and to us, as, *al - Barnawi and al-Kashinawi*. That is a Bornoan and also a Bakatsine, at one and the same time, without any of the twisted complexes of 19th and 20th century, European racist outlooks and ideologies, which rejected, and even punished, with pogroms and genocides, the pluralism natural in all human identities, social, political, and cultural.

The evidence available shows that there was no Hausa ethnic nationality before the 19th and 20th centuries. Standard Hausa, which is now regarded as the "Hausa Language," as spread from the print and electronic media centres of Gaskiya, Norla, NBC and BCNN, in Zaria and Kaduna, was essentially, a 20th century development, which took place within the Nigerian polity. This Standard Hausa, which is now known as the "Hausa Language", did not predate Nigeria, it came after it and there was no Hausa ethnic nationality which sat down with others before 1900, before 1914, or, in the constitutional conferences of the 1950s to agree to join Nigeria.

The Example of the Fulbe

As for the Fulbe, the historical evidence of the existence of the "Fulani" in the emirates of Hausaland, the "Fellata" in Borno, and the Fulbe, the "Fula," and the "Peul," all over West and Central Africa, demonstrates that there existed no Fulbe ethnic nationality, which agreed to join Nigeria in 1900, 1914, or, later. In fact, one of the most authoritative, recent, international academic conference on them, was held about fifteen years ago in Osaka, Japan, and was significantly titled, **Unity and Diversity of a People: The Search for a Fulbe Identity.**

One of the papers in a book with that title, published in 1993, edited by Paul Eguchi and Victor Azarya, is a study of the ethnic and cultural characteristics of the Fulbe across West Africa, including Nigeria, by Galina Zubko of Moscow University, It concluded that,

"Therefore, on the modern level one may speak of considerable differences among the Fulbe, both horizontal (in various areas and different groups) and vertical ones (within the framework of a comprehensive Fulbe ethnos). Moreover, the accumulation of divergent phenomenon is noted in all the spheres of the representation of the ethnic and cultural characteristics. It is not out of question that in the predictable

future the Fulbe people jointly retaining its identity at the present time will split into different ethnoses.”

This process has already occurred in Nigeria, with Fulbe pastoralists, the apparently most ethnically distinct Fulbes, living in Kwara and Oyo States, who are said to be, entirely Yoruba – speaking. To separate a distinct Fulbe ethnic nationality from the vast number of people who regard themselves, and are regarded by others, as Fulbe, in, for example, Adamawa, Taraba and Gombe States, is impossible and shall be destructive of the process, of the formation of a modern Nigerian Fulbe identity, which took place largely in the 19th and 20th centuries.

The Example of the Kanuri

Right here in Borno, the book edited by Norbert Cyffer and Thomas Geider, titled, **Advances in Kanuri Scholarship**, published in 1997, and the more recent book edited by Rupert Kawka, titled, **From Bulamari to Yerwa to Metropolitan Maiduguri**, published in 2002, contain empirically well grounded studies of the process of incorporation and transformation that has produced the Kanuri ethnic nationality of contemporary Nigeria. In the Maiduguri metropolis, a survey published in 2000, referred to in one of these studies, reveals that, the inhabitant of this city, spoke thirty-eight languages. The immense ethnic diversity of this city, alone, further knocks the bottom out of any irrational attempt to reduce the Nigerian Federation to a collection of distinct ethnic nationalities, who can have leaders who can legitimately and rationally, sit down around a conference table with powers to decide to dismantle it.

The Fairy Tales

I pointed out in the Dike Memorial Lecture, which I had the honour to deliver to the 44th Annual Congress of the Historical Society of Nigeria, at the University of Abuja, on Monday, 22nd November, 1999, that, in the particular case of our country, Nigeria, those who go around

asserting that distinct, races, nations, and, ethnic nationalities, which are supposed to have basic component units of the Nigerian Federation, like Wole Soyinka, should know, and their audiences should realise, that these assertions have no basis in history, but are recently concocted fairy-tales, and politically convenient fiction.

In the first place, the evidence we have from the primary sources shows that the sovereign polities of the pre-colonial Nigerian area were not each made up of distinct nations, nationalities, or, ethnic groups.

Virtually none of the nationalities, and ethnic groups, which have come to be formed in 20th century Nigeria, was to be found within a single sovereign polity, or, even a confederation of sovereign polities. We had

the Alafinate of Oyo and its successor states; the various Lower Niger Kingdoms, and hinterland village confederations; the City-States of the Niger and the Cross-River Deltas; and the Aro State, in the southeastern Nigerian area. We had the Akuship of Wukari, the Obaship of Benin, the *tor Agbande* of the Tiv and *Ako* of the Igbirra Tao. We had the Sheikhdome of Borno and its principalities; and the Sokoto Caliphate and its emirates; and many other polities. These sovereign polities emerged and were established on territorially-based economic and geopolitical imperatives, and geographically specific, linguistic, cultural, religious and ideological roots and networks. From their foundations, they were marked by considerable ethnic heterogeneity.

Significant ecological, demographic, economic and technological changes, going back to the fifteenth century, had by the eighteenth century created even greater heterogeneity in the composition of the population of these polities.

The Colonial Conquest

This heterogeneity challenged the political order at a very fundamental level, particularly where claims to autochthony were significant in the political system. Most of these polities could not

effectively and quickly enough, develop new social and political institutions to cope with the challenge posed by their much more heterogeneous populations. They were unable to move the political order forward, to create a broader basis for incorporating most of the free migrant, and servile, inhabitants of the polities as citizens. Attempts to do this, in the form of the Jihad movements and in the establishment of new and more meritocratic political institutions, and trading systems, was part of the upheavals that characterized our history here in the late 18th and in most of the 19th century.

The British conquered these polities and destroyed their sovereignty, turning their citizens into colonial subjects, largely because of their debilitating failure to forge new, and more incorporative, and economically progressive political orders. Their sovereignties which were lost to the British, were not recovered by any of the successor entities of these pre-colonial sovereign polities, or, by the new ethnic nationalities which have come to identify with them, formed in colonial Nigeria. This sovereignty was fought for and recovered by organisations and movements whose identities and aspirations were Pan-Nigerian and Pan-African.

The Struggle for Independence

It was the Universal Negro Improvement Association and the *Negro World* of Marcus Garvey; *The West African Pilot* of the great Zik of Africa; and the West African Students Union led by Folake Solanke; the Nigerian Trade Union Congress, galvanised by Michael Imoudu; the Nigerian Students Union, and the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons, who fought and recovered this sovereignty and independence, not any ethnic, or, tribal organisation. These ethnic and regionalist organisations largely worked on the side of the British against the struggle for independence, led by the NCNC, in the crucial years of 1944-1951.

* The component units of the Nigerian Federation in the period leading up to the independence, and at independence, won effectively by 1951 by these pan-Nigerian organisations, were the three Regions and one Capital Territory. Even for the Ibadan Constitutional Conference of 1950, when the British deliberately refused to allow the NCNC to contest the series of elections leading up to the conference, as a political party, the representation was not ethnic in any form. These indirect elections were based on districts, provinces and regions. They were based on territorial units, and any Nigerian living within these could participate in them. *

At subsequent Constitutional Conferences, after 1950, the representation was based on political parties, some of which were national and some regional. They went and negotiated at these conferences as NCNC, NPC, AG, NEPU, UMBC, NDC, etc, etc, and not as representatives of regions, or, of ethnic groups.

The Component Units

The sovereign rights lost to the British conquerors was recovered by Nigerian national political movements and mass organisations and restored to a sovereign Nigerian Federation, whose federating units at independence were four territorial units; the Northern Region, the Western Region, the Eastern Region and the Lagos Capital Territory, and not any ethnic nationalities. Now, in the early the 21st century we have a Nigerian Federation, whose federating units are thirty six territorial states and a Federal Capital Territory, established not by any ethnic nationality, or, religious group, but, by the Federal Government of the sovereign Nigerian nation-state. The governments of these states are elected by Nigerian citizens, who live and have registered to vote in each state, irrespective of their ethnic origin, or, religion. These governments are constitutionally and lawfully accountable to all the Nigerian citizens,

living in their states and are responsible for their security and welfare, irrespective of their ethnic origin, or, religion.

The land in these states is by law, as enshrined in the Land Use Act entrenched in the Constitution, belongs to the people of Nigeria and is held in trust by the Governor of the State. Sovereignty over this land and its mineral resources, belongs to the people of Nigeria and is exercised by the Federal Government as a result of the actual historical process which recovered that sovereignty from the British conquerors, through the, the nationalist, and not any ethnicist, racist, or, theocratic, independence struggle. This achievement was the result of a broader, world-wide, struggle for national liberation by the peoples of Africa, Asia, the Americas and the Pacific. This sovereignty was not recovered from the British by negotiations with any tribal, or, religious tin - gods on behalf of any ethnic, or, religious, group.

Within and across these regions and states of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, ethnic nationalities were and are forming, unforming, reforming and transforming. A Nigerian citizen belonging to Lagos State, is a Lagosian, who speaks Yoruba, but may not be of Yoruba origin and does not necessarily belong to the Yoruba ethnic nationality. A Nigerian citizen of Kano State is *Dan Kano*, who speaks Hausa, but may not be of Hausa or Fulani origin and is not necessarily a *Bahaushe* or a *Bafulatani*. These Nigerian citizens are already a substantial proportion of the electorate among the younger generations and the more economically active and productive sectors of the population.

The Ethno-Geographic Realities

Those who are advocating the restructuring of the Nigerian Federation into a confederation of ethnic nationalities, or, its complete dissolution, have failed to grasp the substance of the historical process, which has produced our ethnic nationalities and the Nigerian nation - state. Not only do they repeat blatant falsehoods about how Nigeria came

into being, but also seem oblivious of the impossibility of demarcating the boundary between almost all the ethnic nationalities of contemporary Nigeria. These nationalities have actually no boundaries, as they intermesh into one another at the level of language culture,, reliogion,genealogy, identity and territory. Any attempt to carve out the territories of Nigerian ethnic nationalities, or even sub-ethnic groups, to create new sovereign states, or, ethnically based confederating units, will lead to violent conflicts and sustained civil wars, because there is no basis for these boundaries at the ethnic level, given the mosaic nature of the ethnic and cultural geography of Nigeria and, of most of Africa.

Those asking for the dismantling of Nigeria, or its restructuring into a confederation of ethnic regional units, are ignorant of the ethno-geographical realities on the grounds, in the farmsteads, the hamlets, the villages, the hunting grounds, the fishing grounds, the creeks, the pastures, the marshlands, the markets, the town and cities of this country. Or they are irrationally destructive, for some political or psychological reasons. Where do you mark as the territorial boundary between the Igbo and the Igala, or, the Idoma? Where do you mark, the territorial boundary between the Nupe and the Yoruba, or, the Nupe and the Edo, or, the Edo and the Yoruba, for example? What about the boundaries between the Kanuri and the Hausa? Or, that between the Yoruba and the Ijaw; or, between the Jukun and the Tiv, or the Jukun and the Chamba and Kuteb? Where do you set as the limits of the territory of the Edo in relationship to the Urhobo, the Ijaw and the Itsekiri; that is leaving aside the insoluble problem of demarcation on the ground, and on water, the boundaries, between these three ethnic groups on their own? Where do you mark the territorial boundary between the Fulbe and the Bata, and the Kanuri and the Fulbe, or, the Kanuri and the Bura? Or the Jarawa the Berom and the Hausa? Or, the Tarokh, the Hausa and the Jukun? What about the Efik and the

Ejagham and the Ogoni and Andoni? Or, do you set the historical base of the demarcation such that those who migrated into the Nigerian area only in the second millennium, like the Fulbe started doing from the 11th century, shall have no regional federating units, since they are not supposed to have any territory?

Where do you set the historical baseline, with regards to the demarcation of the boundaries in order to sort out the conflicting territorial claims? Do you take the present ethno-geographic mosaic as given and work on that? Or do you go back to an earlier period? Which year should be the historical baseline? 2000 A.D? 1960 A.D? 1900 A.D? 1,800 A.D? 1,500 A.D? Or 1,000 A.D? Or even earlier?

How do you stop pogroms and ethnic cleansing to change the ethno-geographic situation before the ethnic regional units have their boundaries demarcated? How much disruption, devastation and dislocation of the lives of Nigerians are we going to accept in order to attain this "final solution" of the Nigerian problem-the restructuring of the country on the basis of ethnic regional units?

The application of this ethnic principle for the political and administrative organisation of the country will not stop at the boundaries of the new ethnic regional units. Whatever the amended constitution, or constitutions, provide, local political groups will forcefully demand its application right down to the local government, district and village levels. We have already experienced the intensity of the disputes over the demarcation of local governments and districts boundaries and the location of their headquarters, when operating largely on the territorial principle. This intensity and confusion will multiply one-hundred-fold when any attempt is made to dismember, or, restructure the whole country on an ethnic basis. Is this the way we want to start in the 21st century, driving each other around, and killing one another, fighting over ancient, dubious claims, over land going back to the 1st, the 5th, the 11th, the 18th, and the 19th centuries? Is the agitation for this, what it now

means to be a progressive in Nigeria in the 21st century? Is this what pro – democracy and human rights agitation in Nigeria has degenerated into?

Then, there is the question of disinheritance and disenfranchising tens of millions of Nigerians who have made other parts of Nigeria their homes, and who will clearly become second-class, or, non-citizens, in these ethnically constituted confederating regions. The economic and social costs caused by the issue of defining indigeneity over access to land, education and other economic and social assets are already high and disruptive. One can only imagine what will happen to the millions of Nigerian citizens who have made Kaduna, Kano, Jos, Port Harcourt and Lagos, their homes who will automatically have their national citizenship, status destroyed, once the Nigerian Federation ceases to be composed of a territorially based states and is restructured into a federation, or confederation, ethnically-based regions, as is being advocated by some parochial, vested interests. These retrogressive individuals and interest groups mortally fear the challenges of the likely transformations of society and politics 21st century, particularly at the level of the social, economic and demographic patterns, which will finish off with their type of opportunist, psuedo-democratic, racist and ethnic politics.

If the goal is the welfare and dignity of the people, and their capability to fully exercise their democratic rights, and also exercise a measure of control over their destiny, then it is necessary to recognize that these ethnic nationalities were never monolithic, fixed and separate entities. They are each, unique, complex, multifaceted and interconnected and intermeshed at various levels and always changing, at various levels, and at different paces. Therefore, while ethnic identity exists and will continue to exist and play a role in the organisation of political systems, it is only one out of several dimensions of human existence and human political activity.

Public Accountability

Where does all this leave public accountability? Public accountability in modern economy, society and politics is incompatible with the entrenchment of the ethnic principle in the organisation of government and public affairs.

Public accountability basically means the ability of the public, made up of citizens, coming together to defend their public interest by making those responsible for public affairs to account on how they have carried out this responsibility. This can only be done effectively if their common interest on public affairs and the management of public resources are primary and dominant over and above any issue of genealogical origin.

We all know that, in our polygamous families, greedy and dishonest senior brothers and uncles, are in the habit of cornering the inheritance of legitimate heirs by setting them against one another, on the basis of origin, setting the children from one mother against the children of another, all from the same father.

The campaign to entrench ethnic nationalities as the building blocks of the Nigerian Federation has, in my view, the same dishonest intentions. It comes from those who want to divide Nigerian citizens, through the manipulation of their ethnic origin, in order to be able to corner public funds and public resource, without being made to render any account to the public. Once the public, which is entitled to make public officers give public account of their stewardship, is reduced to an ethnic nationality, there shall not be any public accounting, because the indeterminate and amorphous nature of ethnic origin, particularly in a country like Nigeria, with such extensive and perpetual migrations, rural – rural, rural – urban, urban – urban, the very legitimacy of any citizen demanding accounting will be questionable on racist, genealogical grounds. In any case, in any ethnically – based confederal region, or

sovereign state, carved out of Nigeria, the public will just fragment into sub-ethnic and sub-sub-ethnic units, and will have no capacity to hold anyone public officer to account, beyond staging theatrical ritual shows to cover up the plunder which these public officers are engaged in.

It is obvious, what will happen. It is this: *"You want me to tell you how I spend Government money? Who are you? What is your origin? Who is your father? Who is your mother? Are you from Kano? Are you Hausa? Are you a Yoruba? Are you Urhobo? Who was your grandfather? Where did he come from? Who are you to ask me about our money? Go and find your people and cause trouble there?"*

This is the sort of destructive political mess, and racist dead-end, the advocates of the ethnic principle as the basis for restructuring the Nigerian Federation, are dragging Nigeria into. That is why it is necessary to firmly expose and oppose them.

The Rule of Law

Like public accountability, the rule of law shall have its foundation in universal human values destroyed, once you dismantle the Nigerian Federation and fragment into separate ethnic sovereign states or a confederation of ethnic regions. First of all the huge number of Nigerians living all over the country will cease to be citizens, and become aliens, and their livelihood will be threatened. Secondly, ethnic parochialists and religious bigots, in order to disenfranchise, restrict and drive away these millions of Nigerians from where they are living now, will impose all sorts of laws and legal enactments, which will legitimise out rightly violent pogroms, for this ethnic cleansing.

The application of the law, and the law itself will be discriminatory and the rule of law thrown out of the window. The security and the freedom of movement, employment, and enterprise, provided by the present Nigerian Constitution and sets of laws subjected to it shall be

destroyed and be replaced by, insecurity, fear, and chaos arising from dubious constitutions falsely claiming ethnic and religious legitimacy.

Conclusion

The agenda of those demanding the break-up of Nigeria or, the institutionalisation of ethnicity in Nigerian politics through a sovereign national conference of ethnic nationalities, is promoting the throwing out of, public accountability and the rule of law and therefore of democracy. Democracy will be replaced with tribalist, racist, and religiously bigoted, dictatorships, which shall corner public resources with impunity, under convenient cover of parochial politics, constitutions and laws. That is the only reasonable explanation for the demand that the ethnic nationalities of Nigeria are now made to constitute the basis of the constitutional structure of the country and of its politics.

The task before the rest of us, committed to the growth of democracy in the Nigerian Federation, and the growth of Nigeria into a nation - state, which becomes a, major, independent, player in world affairs, with a cohesive national citizenry and a strong, self-reliant economy, is very clear. It is to come out and oppose and expose all those with such retrogressive, destructive, and basically suicidal, agenda. #