

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

HASSAN A. SALIU, Ph. D,

Department of Political Science,
University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria.

Preamble

No community can ever be an island onto itself. It must necessarily be affected by the vagaries of the existence of other communities both far and near. In most cases, developments and pressures in one community can either have slight or fundamental effects on other communities to the extent that the feeling of indifference or aloofness would not be possible and if possible, it would not be rewarding to the community. Also, developments and actions can be generated in other communities that once nursed a feeling of aloofness about occurrences in a community which may also affect them in a fundamental way that they too may not be encouraged to be on-lookers in the events happening in the affected community. A combination of strategies may be necessitated in responding to the pressures and twists in the community which may be positive or negative, depending on their understanding of the issues and the motivations they have in responding. One other consideration that tends to bind the communities together has to do with the history of migration. Peoples have moved and are still moving across borders, paying little attention to institutional restrictions.

Technically, all peoples of the world are migrants at one point or the other. The African migratory factor takes a unique characteristic. Africans, even after several years of moving to their new abode, still maintain a strong relationship with their family members who live in their

previous places of abode. The intractable conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo can be viewed from this perspective. Also, the whole episode of genocide in Rwanda was rooted in the peculiar African migratory pattern and failure to successfully manage inter-group relations in the deeply divided country. There is also the dimension of competitive spirit that has even eliminated the contemplation of a fooling of indifference to the happenings in other communities. Desirable attainments and a higher level of development taking place in some communities can be admired and even replicated in other communities. The urge to develop and surpass other communities' attainments often encourages healthy inter-group relations.

This is why inter-group rotations has become a notable area of focus to some disciplines notably political science, history, sociology and others. The understanding is that the goal of political stability and social cohesion can be better served when social formations, at least in the liberal sense or at best, social groups, relate with one another and in the process, develop both the cooperative and competitive spirits in a way that the nation that warehouses them can experience peace which is the bedrock of development across ages. A nation must, therefore, pay attention to relations among the social group and where signs of uneasy relationship or even declining economic fortune begin to set in, it must have the opacity to rise to the occasion by confronting them. By responding to the threats especially in an efficient and effective manner, the nation-state would be promoting unity, nationalism and patriotism among the citizens who come from different communities and social backgrounds.

Across the globe, the economic health of a community is assuming extreme importance to governments and the indigenes of the community. Where the layers of government as we have in Nigeria play their springboard roles and are in a position to continue to do so, the economic health of such a community will show all the characteristics of buoyancy and if otherwise, such a community will be the opposite of a well-performing economy. The ability of the second layer of administration in the Nigerian Federal structure, the state, is increasingly

being made to be dependent on the Federal Government which controls more than half of the federally collectable revenue that is shared among the three constitutionally recognized levels of government in the country - Federal, States and Local Government Councils.

A consensus seems to be reached among Nigerians on the need to review the unlegislated and therefore controversial revenue allocation formula currently in existence to allocate more money to States and Local Government Councils. There are, however, those who have expressed doubts on the ability of the States and Local Councils to behave and discharge their duties more efficiently, transparently and effectively to correspond with the clamour for more financial allocations to them.

The fact known to Nigerians, however, is that the national economy is not responding fast enough to the economic blueprints that have been prepared to turn Nigeria into a kind of Eldorado. Perhaps this is due to the historical emphasis on sharing at the expense of more production promoted by, the massive oil receipts. Opinions differ among the experts and captains of industry on why Nigeria is not yet an economic giant in the world. Some have held the pervasive corrupt environment responsible while others have put their searchlight on the oil sector and the attendant easy money environment that it has engendered. A few of our compatriots have blamed imperialism for the downturn in the economy of Nigeria.

Notwithstanding the cause, Nigeria and her citizens want the economy to be revamped and transformed so that the country will soon cease to be referred to as a potentially great country. This desire to quickly catch-up with the BRICS countries - Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa and even be one of them has, in a way, promoted the concept of partnership with communities through Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and Public-Private-Partnership (PPP) which are now being presented as desirable pathways to development.

Background to the Economic Summit

The Ilorin Emirate Descendants' Progressive Union (IEDPU) is a Civil Society Organization established about seventy years ago with the aim of promoting unity among the people of the Emirate who are found in five Local Government Councils - Ilorin-West, Ilorin-East, Ilorin-South, Moro and Asa. It equally aims at contributing to the rapid development of the Emirate. The Union has, however, made its greatest impact in the area of education as some schools though now under the Kwara State Government control, were established by her. And among those established by the State government were schools influenced and campaigned for by the Union. She currently runs some schools on her own.

On the 8th of December 2012, the IEDPU broke a new ground. Worried by the high unemployment level in Nigeria and particularly in the Emirate and the deepening poverty level, the Union held her maiden Economic Summit to draw attention to the loss of economic power by indigenes of the Emirate over even sectors that were formerly under their firm control. Industries are fast disappearing and the Emirate which was rated as number three after Kano and Kaduna, especially in the immediate years of independence in terms of industries owned by the indigenes, is no longer an investment haven. The Summit was also intended to encourage the well-to-do members and friends of the community to come and invest in the Emirate. The idea of raising money to complement the efforts of the State Government in giving technical training to the budding youths of the Emirate in some trades as a way of preparing them adequately for the future was another consideration.

A Committee was immediately set up after the 2011 Conference to review all the speeches and advise the Union on the best way to actualize the main recommendations that came out of the Conference. This Committee, under the Chairmanship of Dr. Toyin Akanbi, former Provost of the Kwara State College of Education, Ilorin, at the end of its deliberations, advised the IEDPU to organize an Economic Summit and establish a Development Fund for the Emirate.

A Feasibility Committee was set-up to examine the report of Dr Akanbi's Committee, which later metamorphosed into the Implementation Committee under Alhaji Abdulhamid Adi by the National Executive Committee of the Union. After some months of planning and two postponements, the Summit convened with Justice Mustapha Akanbi, CFR, retired President of the Court of Appeal and the Wakili of Ilorin as the Chairman, playing the role of the Co-chairman, Alhaji A.G.F Abdulrazaq, SAN, OFR, Mutawali of Ilorin, who was unable to attend.

Summary of the papers

There are six chapters in this book though four papers were originally chosen for discourse at the occasion. The other two chapters were written after the Summit. The first chapter contributed by Hassan A. Saliu sets the agenda for the book. It is a mixture of theoretical exposition, background to the Summit and an overview of the chapters. In terms of papers presented at the Summit, Alhaji L.A.K Jimoh opened the floor with his stimulating and well-received paper on "Survey of the Ilorin Emirate Economy: Past, Present and Future." The highlights of the paper are that Ilorin started as a flourishing economic and commercial centre, which later boasted of some companies and industries, where the indigenes of the Emirate played major roles. In particular, Alhaji Jimoh reminded the audience that the naming of compounds or houses in Ilorin was done to reflect the trades and vocations that the various compounds were famous for. The names of the earliest industrialists or investors are also given to show that the current economic landscape of the Emirate calls for a concerted effort of all to revamp it. Land as a major factor of production engages the attention of the paper and the historical battles associated with it in the Emirate are also highlighted.

Ibrahim Yinka Yahaya presented the second paper on "Generating Capital for Business". In this educative paper, Yahaya makes the point that there are two basic sources of capital to fund businesses. These are: equity capital and debt capital. He also goes ahead to identify agencies of government such as the Bank of Industry,

Small and Medium Enterprise Development Agency of Nigeria and others that can be approached for financial assistance to augment personal savings and funds raised through family members.

Professor Shehu A. Jimoh, OON, contributed the third paper and devoted it to "Harnessing Human Capital of the Emirate." The main submissions of the paper are; (a) all the fields of specialization have Emirate experts (b) lack of unity and parochial interests have always prevented the Emirate from putting forward its best materials for appointments both at State and Federal levels (c) all the leaders of the Emirate should double their efforts in assisting in placing qualified Emirate indigenes in Federal positions because of their multiplier effects on the community.

After knowing the history of the Emirate economy, taken through the sources of funding for businesses and the state of human capital in the Emirate, the fourth paper by Tunde Salami wrapped up the session on "Available Business Opportunities in Ilorin Emirate." After noting the traditional businesses which the community is known for, which are unfortunately dying, Salami, borrowing from the experiences of other states and communities in Nigeria, identifies abundant business opportunities in property development, money and capital market, waste management, ICT, construction, textiles, hospitality industry, etc. Although the business climate in the Emirate and elsewhere is not a bed of roses, potential investors need not to be deterred by the turbulence of the business environment. With consistency, perseverance and astute management of human and capital resources, the Emirate will soon produce successful businessmen such as Bill Gates, Aliko Dangote, Mike Adenuga, Isiaku Rabiu, Rasaq Okoya, Thomas Okoya, Adekunle Ojora, etc.

The last chapter contains the report of the rapporteurs on the Economic Summit. Convinced that good points can come from the floor and deriving from the nature of the programme as interactive, the last chapter captured the contributions, comments, observations and questions of the other participants in the confab, which are quite useful

and re-assuring for the continued growth and development of the Ilorin community. The Union felt that some of the views should also be presented in the chapter for the overall benefit of the Ilorin Emirate community.