



NIGERIA FLASH-NOTE [REV]

The Ship of State Is Rudderless

*Even without factoring in the devastating impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, **the situation in Naija has deteriorated significantly since our dyspeptic update last February**¹.*

- ① It is noteworthy that the first concrete initiative unveiled in response to the pandemic-induced slowdown was the **N2.3 trillion stimulus programme** that Osinbanjo's Economic Sustainability Committee (sic)² presented last week. The fact that it recommends fast-tracking the establishment of a national airline³ is **more suggestive of the proverbial pork-barrel than economic revival**.
- ② The Buhari administration has responded with astonishing passivity to a surge in devastating attacks⁴ over the last few weeks - shortly after the military had issued yet another empty boast that it had degraded the enemy's capacity to inflict further damage. This virtual abdication of responsibility has since **drawn sharp rebukes from key members of Buhari's base**, including the Coalition of Northern Groups and even the **Sultan of Sokoto**⁵.
- ③ As if to underscore the impression of a ship of state with no-one at the helm, Aso Villa was recently the scene of a fracas⁶ in which **a presidential aide** – and nephew of the President - **was beaten up by the First Lady's security detail**⁷. His offence was that he had failed to self-quarantine on returning from a visit to Lagos (a Covid hotspot) - to the considerable annoyance of the First Lady.
- ④ The chaos in the Villa has been mirrored by the **turmoil in the ruling party**⁸. With the national chairman suspended by court order (and three rival contenders⁹ each claiming to hold the fort), the **party's headquarters building was placed under lock and key**¹⁰ by the police earlier this week.
- ⑤ It therefore speaks volumes that in this *season of anomie*¹¹, **Buhari should have chosen to focus his limited energy on the most frivolous of issues**, viz.:
 - **defending AfDB president Adesina** from the highly credible allegations made by a group of whistleblowers;
 - pushing the **hopeless candidature**¹² of **Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala** for the Director-General of the WTO;
 - weighing in on **the proposed redesignation of the CFA** currency as the Eco - arguably a strictly academic question for the foreseeable future.

Na wa, o ...

¹ See "[When It Rains, It Pours](#)", Feb. 19, 2020.

² Chaired by V.P. Yemi Osinbajo, the ESC is only one of the alphabet soup of bodies established to advise Mr. Buhari on how to revive Nigeria's moribund economy.

³ This would be Nigeria's third attempt at operating a flag-carrier, its two prior ventures having ended in bankruptcy.

⁴ I.e. by Boko Haram and ISWAP (the Islamic state affiliate), in Borno state, and by criminal gangs in the North-West, including Buhari's home state of Katsina.

⁵ Viz.: "*These repeated calamitous scenarios would have been avoided had the government risen to the occasion.*"

⁶ The incident is even reported to have involved the discharge of a firearm.

⁷ Until recently Sabiu "Tunde" Yousef, a humble vendor of top-up cards for mobile phones in Daura (Katsina state), now holds the title of private secretary' and has assumed the role of presidential gate-keeper formerly played by the late Abba Kyari.

⁸ This week has seen the defection of a fourth APC governor, Godwin Obaseki of Edo state, to the opposition PDP.

⁹ One of whom, Abiola Ajimobi (former governor of Oyo state) has been in the intensive care ward for weeks. He actually died yesterday.

¹⁰ This is why yesterday's emergency meeting of the APC national executive committee was actually held in the presidential Villa.

¹¹ With acknowledgment to Wole Soyinka.

¹² The name of the former finance minister was put forward for endorsement by the African Union well after the deadline for submission – a point promptly confirmed by the organization's legal counsel.