

Our
Nigeria



Nigeria

Out of Many, One (e pluribus unum)

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**ALHAJI UMARU
ABDUL MUTALLAB:**

**A LEGACY OF INTEGRITY IN
LEADERSHIP AND BUSINESS**

ISSN 2756-5521





Image: Jaiz Bank logo/Banking Hall Experience Banking with a Difference Jaiz Bank: Nigeria's Premier Non-Interest Bank
Ethical banking that aligns with your values, Competitive returns on investments, Wide range of products and services.

Jaiz Bank Plc, the leading non-interest bank in Nigeria has relocated its Head Office to its own building, Jaiz Bank House, Plot 1073 J.S Tarka Street, Area 3, Garki, Abuja.

The movement is coinciding with the 10th anniversary of the Bank, which commenced operations in 2012, with three branches in Abuja, Kano and Kaduna. The Bank currently has 46 branches across Nigeria.

The new Head Office would provide the Bank with more visibility, enlarged space and enhanced capacity to deliver excellent service to its stakeholders.

The Management is thankful to its esteemed customers and shareholders who have continued to support the Bank all along and appreciates the hardworking staff for their dedication to duty.

In the non-interest banking space in Nigeria, Jaiz Bank controls over 62% assets, which is supported by its robust gross income of N23.74 billion as at end of September 2022 from N18.78 billion at the end of September 2021, representing 26.34% increment.



Jaiz Bank Relocates Head Office



From the Editor's Desk



Welcome to **OurNigeria**! We are a vibrant print and online news magazine that started in 2019. Our mission is to explore and celebrate contemporary Nigeria—highlighting its exciting stories, cultural narratives, and the amazing individuals who are making a difference. As an independent platform, we're proud to be unaffiliated with any particular news group, social, religious, or political movement, and we focus on being non-partisan.

At **OurNigeria**, we truly value the important work of investigative reporters, literary editors, and photojournalists in bringing crucial stories to light. Our goal is to showcase the best of Nigeria by creating content that informs national discussions, shapes opinions and decisions, encourages entrepreneurship, promotes tolerance, and celebrates creativity. We welcome Nigerians aged 16 and older to join our community!

We see **OurNigeria** as a vital space to thoughtfully explore our society—looking at leadership, the rich diversity of our population, and the challenges we face. We are dedicated to contributing to nation-building, fostering a sense of national identity, promoting peace, and encouraging philosophical conversations and social ideas.

Our aim is to provide a narrative that resonates with a wide audience,

including those interested in current events and commerce, both in Nigeria and around the world. We create our content with you, the diverse perspectives of our readers in mind.

In this edition, we're excited to feature a special interview with Alhaji Umar Abdul Mutallab. This conversation offers fascinating insights into what key stakeholders think about important Nigerian issues. Mutallab shares his views on topics like identity, the economy, political independence, security, the electoral process, and mass participation. His thoughts shed light on the truths of governance in Nigeria and show how individual voices can shape our collective stories. This connection between personal experiences and larger narratives is something we are passionate about, and we believe it highlights the richness of both leadership and followership in our society. Enjoy the read!

What sets **OurNigeria** apart from other standard news platforms are its unique features and articles that resonate deeply with the heart of Nigerian society. The themes and issues we explore enhance the reader's experience and perspective. Our compelling articles delve into important topics such as politics, nationalism, political consciousness, history, cultural diplomacy, emerging crises, international migration, state security, and ethnic national agitations. We also address vital subjects like health, human rights, societal issues, environmental

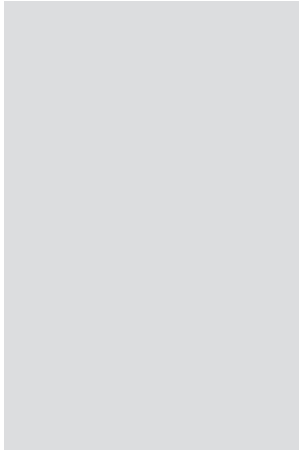
concerns, diverse viewpoints, critiques, and the enforcement of established legal procedures and rights.

Our magazine is organized into interconnected sections, where narrative storytelling breathes life into our messages. Thoughtfully crafted, our articles adopt a dialectical approach. While they are not overly argumentative, they aim to enlighten and resonate with the humanistic, ethical, and emotional dimensions of our audience. Some pieces employ an intellectual style, presenting arguments that challenge opposing viewpoints and appeal to logical reasoning.

This edition features contributions from both emerging and established writers who bring diverse skills to the table. Some articles offer opinions, while others provide insightful information or analysis. **OurNigeria** serves as a vibrant platform for expressing various perspectives on contemporary Nigeria, inspiring intellectual and ideological discussions for academic purposes. The articles reflect both classical English and the distinctive styles of our authors.

The opinion pieces in this issue celebrate the rich and diverse perspectives that have flourished over the past five years.

We warmly invite our readers and the general public to immerse themselves in **OurNigeria**! Your support through advertisements and your valuable thoughts and feedback are greatly appreciated. Your input inspires us!



FEBRUARY 2014

invest
in cities

Nullam facilisis, lectus non
bibendum commodo, neque
turpis facilisis metus, eget
faucibus lectus mi id enim.

Content

03. Big City Life

Vitae turpis. Nam ac egestas augue, sed hendrerit
risus. Nulla imperdiet, est sed ullamco

08. Exterior's Tips

Egestas augue, sed hendrerit risus. Nulla imperdiet,
est sed ullamcorper Nam ac

12. Survive In Stone Jungle

Nitae turpis. Nam ac egestas augue, sed hendrerit
risus. Nulla imperdiet, est sed

18. Architecture Nonsense

Nam ac egestas augue, sed hendrerit risus. Nulla
imperdiet, est sed

21. Point Of View

Nitae turpis. Nam ac egestas augue, sed hendrerit
risus. Nulla imperdiet, est sed ullamcor



03

FOR THE RECORD

N11 billion

The Taraba State Internal Revenue Service, TSIRS, says it has improved internally generated revenue, IGR, from the N10 billion in 2023 to over N11 billion as at September 2024. Brig. Gen. Jeremiah Faransa (rtd), Chairman of the TSIRS, made the disclosure on Thursday in Jalingo, while speaking to newsmen in his office on the activities of the service since he assumed office in June 2024.

11 months

Nigerian Military kills 8,034 terrorists, apprehends 11,623 suspects in 11 months

11 November 2024

At least 35 people have died and 45 others were injured in a car attack in Zhuhai, southern China, which is considered the deadliest act of public violence in decades. A 62-year-old man, identified as Mr. Fan, crashed his car into

a stadium and ran over people exercising on the track. Authorities believe he was motivated by dissatisfaction with a divorce settlement.

“Not one inch eastward”

Not once, but three times, Baker tried out the “not one inch eastward” formula with Gorbachev in the February 9, 1990, meeting. He agreed with Gorbachev’s statement in response to the assurances that “NATO expansion is unacceptable.” Baker assured Gorbachev that “neither the President nor I intend to extract any unilateral advantages from the processes that are taking place,” and that the Americans understood that “not only for the Soviet Union but for other European countries as well it is important to have guarantees that if the United States keeps its presence in Germany within the framework of NATO, not an inch of NATO’s present military jurisdiction will spread in an eastern direction.”

Jeffrey Sachs verdict on Russian-Ukrainian War in 2022

“All of Biden’s tough talk -- about Putin leaving power, genocide and war crimes -- will not save Ukraine. The best chance to save Ukraine is through negotiations that bring the world onside. By prioritizing peace instead of NATO enlargement, the US would rally the support of much more of the world and thereby help to bring peace to Ukraine and security and stability for the entire world.”

1,704,000

Total military personnel of Pakistan. The country is ranked 9 out of 145 countries considered for the annual Global Firepower Review. Nigeria is ranked 39. With a population of 230,842,743, Nigeria has a total military personnel of 280,000.

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Tukur Buratai Research Centre

Invites

RESEARCHERS AND ACADEMICIANS
TO SHARE THEIR KNOWLEDGE ON THE
SOCIAL - ECONOMIC , CULTURAL, AND
POLITICAL LANDSCAPE.

2025

Topic

THE SOCIAL-ECONOMIC ,CULTURAL
AND POLITICAL LANDSCAPE .

REQUIREMENTS

■ Submit a well researched proposal of any areas mentioned below that addresses the solutions to the multiple complex, social, economic, cultural and political challenges faced by the geopolitical zones in Nigeria.

■ Submit a comprehensive curriculum vitae (CV).

■ The research must be type written, single -spaced and in 12fs Times New Roman Font.

DEADLINE:

25TH JANUARY
2025

- Publishing of the selected research work for the emerged winners
- Winners will be opportuned to participate in collaborative discussion with TBRC
- The research opportunity is open to all upcoming staff in Nigerian Universities, Colleges of Education, Polytechnics and Research Centres.
- Preference will be given to researchers who plan to carry out the research in their area of residence.

For more enquiries, please call: Brig Sk Usman on 08153535351 or MS Abubakar on 08032385008.

Submissions should be made via info@trbc.com.ng.

**IT TAKES GUTS.
AND HEART.
AND HANDS.
AND SUPPLIES.
AND YOUR HELP.**



KALTHUM
FOUNDATION FOR PEACE

The Brief

Zulum Boosts
Education in
Borno: Hands Over
Revamped FCE
Gwoza to Federal
Ministry



INSIDE

ZULUM BOOSTS EDUCATION
IN BORNO: HANDS OVER
REVAMPED FCE GWOZA TO
FEDERAL MINISTR

A BOLD NEW ERA: NIGERIA
WELCOMES LT-GEN OLUFEMI
OLATUBOSUN OLUYEDE AS
CHIEF OF ARMY STAFF



ZULUM BOOSTS EDUCATION IN BORNO: HANDS OVER REVAMPED FCE GWOZA TO FEDERAL MINISTRY

In a landmark move to bolster education in Borno State, Governor Babagana Umara Zulum officially handed over the newly remodelled Federal College of Education (FCE) in Gwoza to the Federal Ministry of Education. The handover ceremony, held at the Government House in Maiduguri on Wednesday, marks a significant milestone for the state, which had previously lacked a federal college of education.

The institution, formerly known as Teachers College Gwoza, underwent an extensive upgrade, now boasting over 100 modern classrooms, state-of-the-art laboratories, staff quarters for principal officers, and enhanced administrative facilities. Governor Zulum also announced a N200 million take-off grant to support the smooth establishment of the college.

At the ceremony, Zulum emphasized the importance of quality education and the role of the college in producing competent graduates. “We must ensure this institution sets the standard for excellence,” he said. “It’s not about the number of graduates but the quality of their education. We need to focus on subjects that foster innovation, wealth creation, and development—such as sciences and technical education.”

The governor also urged the college’s management to prioritize disciplines like English, Mathematics, and technical and vocational education while de-emphasizing immediate focus on local language studies. “Kanuri or Hausa can be learned at home and on the streets. Our priority must be on areas that accelerate development,” Zulum stated.

Dr. Nasir Sani Gwarzo, Permanent Secretary of the Federal Ministry of

Education, commended Zulum for his visionary leadership and unwavering commitment to education. Represented by Dr. Ejeh Usman, Director of Polytechnic, Education, and Allied Institutions, Gwarzo praised the N200 million donation as a testament to the governor’s dedication to the growth of education in Borno.

Also present were senior officials, including the Executive Secretary of the National Commission for Colleges of Education, Prof. Paulinus Chijioke Okwelle, and the Governing Council Chairman of the College, Prof. Sule Tagi.

The Federal College of Education, Gwoza, is expected to play a pivotal role in bridging educational gaps in the region, providing opportunities for citizens to acquire skills crucial for teaching and national development.

A BOLD NEW ERA: NIGERIA WELCOMES LT-GEN OLUFEMI OLATUBOSUN OLUYEDE AS CHIEF OF ARMY STAFF

In a significant milestone in Nigerian military leadership President Ahmad Bola Tinubu has appointed Lt-Gen Olufemi Olatubosun Oluyede as Chief of Army Staff (COAS).

With an extensive career that spans decades of dedicated service, Oluyede brings a wealth of experience, strategic insight, and a commitment to addressing Nigeria's complex security challenges.

Born in 1968 in Ikere, Ekiti State, Oluyede embarked on his military journey as a cadet at the Nigerian Defence Academy (NDA) in 1987. His rigorous training and passion for service culminated in his commission as a second lieutenant in 1992. A member of the 39th Regular Course at the NDA, he shared training experiences with notable military figures, including Lt-Gen Taoreed Abiodun Lagbaja, the substantive COAS currently on medical leave.

Gen. Oluyede's career is a testament to his adaptability and expertise in diverse military operations. Rising through the ranks, he achieved the position of Major General in 2020. His command roles have included serving as a platoon commander, company commander, and adjutant, as well as leading elite units such as the 65 Battalion and 177 Guards Battalion. Notably, Oluyede has contributed significantly to Nigeria's international peacekeeping efforts. He played a key role in the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) mission in Liberia and led operations in conflict zones such as Bakassi and the North East under Operation HADIN KAI.

Before his current appointment, he served as the 56th Commander of the Infantry Corps in Jaji, Kaduna. His leadership in this role emphasized

strengthening infantry capabilities and enhancing operational readiness.

Challenges and Expectations as COAS
As Nigeria grapples with multifaceted security issues ranging from insurgency in the Northeast to communal conflicts



LT GEN OO OLUYEDE NAM CMH GSS psc mni FCM FCMH TSM GOM CCA
CHIEF OF ARMY STAFF

and banditry in other regions, Oluyede's appointment comes at a critical juncture. His operational experience and deep understanding of military strategy are expected to bolster efforts to stabilize affected areas.

Oluyede's immediate focus includes enhancing the army's operational capacity, improving morale among troops, and fostering cooperation with other branches of the armed forces. Additionally, his leadership will be instrumental in addressing logistics challenges, modernizing equipment, and strengthening community-military relations to restore public confidence in the Nigerian Army.

Speaking with our Reporter, Dr. MS Abubakar, a renowned security expert, has advised the newly appointed Chief of Army Staff (COAS) to adopt a hands-

on approach by engaging directly with troops on the battlefield.

Drawing lessons from the operational style of former COAS Lt-General Tukur Yusufu Buratai, Dr. Abubakar emphasised the need for visible leadership in addressing the ongoing security challenges in the country.

He praised Buratai's legacy of leading from the front, noting that his presence in conflict zones not only boosted troop morale but also inspired confidence among Nigerians in the military's capacity to combat insurgency and other threats.

"The new COAS must learn from the successes and strategies of his predecessors, particularly Buratai's approach of being physically present in the theatre of operations," Abubakar stated.

"Such leadership fosters unity, motivates the soldiers, and enhances operational effectiveness."

Dr. Abubakar also urged the COAS to prioritise the welfare and training of personnel, ensuring they are well-equipped to counter evolving threats. He highlighted the importance of fostering trust and communication within the ranks, stressing that a leader who engages with his troops can better understand their challenges and needs. The security expert reaffirmed his confidence in the new leadership, urging Nigerians to support the military's efforts in safeguarding national security. The call for active engagement by the new COAS resonates with ongoing efforts to reinvigorate the fight against insurgency and restore peace across Nigeria.

As the nation anticipates a fresh approach, the leadership of the Nigerian Army will be critical in shaping the security landscape in the coming years.

UNDER THE NEEM TREE

Security Challenges in the Sahel Region and Mitigation Strategies

Introduction to the Sahel Region and its Security Challenges

The Sahel is a geographically and culturally diverse semi-arid zone in Africa that extends from the Atlantic Ocean to the Red Sea. Yet, according to the classical approach of this area as a solely 'transition zone', it is a backward periphery of the Arab world. The discussion of the deep self-penetration of forces from outside African culture, however, can lead to a regional bias. The Sahel region is so abstract and devoid of identity that it is a suitable place of refuge for external influences. The Sahel is, despite its desolation, of great global strategic importance and, unfortunately, also of extreme importance for organized crime because of its weak statehood. The situation in the Sahel can best be described by the politics of scarcity: 'There is not enough to go around.' Nevertheless, social life in the Sahel, with a few interruptions, has coped with climate change circuits that are unique to this region of the world. Now and in the future, climate change is seen as a risk multiplier. This is because climate change has the potential to exacerbate drivers of fragility such as poverty, social inequities, and weakness of government. The population of the Sahel is officially 'majority-Muslim' and one of the fastest growing societies in the world; it ought to reach 340 million by 2050. The Sahel has a high level of poverty and has international attention because of its group of youth who are more prone to disenfranchisement and radicalization. The region is also a global supplier of radical, ideologically driven jihadists, including a few of the deadliest operators and 'foreign

fighters'. The jihadist groups in the Sahel continue to kill African and Western troops and terrorize civilians. Moreover, the presence of the jihadist groups is preventing effective health care in the area.

Key Security Threats in the Sahel Region

The Sahel is one of the world's poorest and most unstable regions. As such, it has largely failed to meet the development needs of its fast-growing population, and it is now suffering the direct consequences of this state of affairs as well as those arising from other security challenges. The Sahel has long been characterized by a dire security situation worsened by the proliferation of violent extremism, of which the most notable is a group that inherited the leadership of a prominent terrorist organization. More recently, however, raiding has been increasingly characterized by episodes of intercommunal violence in which more people have been killed than in terrorist attacks. The Sahel has also emerged as a platform for activities that are both typical and atypical of organized crime. In particular, the smuggling of various goods and illegal cross-border trafficking have both made a significant contribution to the lowering of fundamental security standards across parts of the region. Eastwards, terrorism has spread across the borders, showing its ability to adapt, and, despite recent heavy losses, eventually becoming part of the Sahel security climate. Governance in the Sahel is, in general, weak. It is further hindered by confrontations between police and gendarmerie on the one hand and various paramilitary forces on the other. While the police, the gendarmerie, and other forces are supposed to enforce the law, in some instances they are

reportedly complicit with terrorists. In any case, they are ultimately unable to effectively protect the local population. Socioeconomic drivers of unrest are also at work. In particular, a combination of high unemployment rates and the proliferation of small and light weapons has given rise to criminality. This is in turn a source of employment as well as a potential instrument for terrorists.

Existing Efforts and Initiatives to Address Security Challenges

In response to the growing security challenges in the region, various international organizations and non-governmental organizations have initiated efforts to provide security. National and local actors, as well as the international community, have undertaken several initiatives to promote security and stability within the Liptako-Gourma region. These initiatives range from national military operations against terrorist groups to community-level counter-violent extremist programs. The security situation in Liptako-Gourma is likely to remain challenging in the foreseeable future.

The efforts and initiatives that have been started in response to the crises afflicting the region tend to have had the effect of siloization, with the different affected countries adopting various strategies and operating within different institutional frameworks. Initiatives in one region may have little impact if those across the border suffer from serious governance failures. The mission is providing capacity building with partners based on a regional comprehensive approach that takes account of the nature and evolution of the threats and aims to reduce differences between the states of the region. The different regional response

mechanisms also tend to deal with disparate, non-comprehensive issues. National efforts with limited resources allocated by governments have been initiated; the gaps in policy alignment among member countries hinder the implementation of current strategies at the regional level. Some of the current initiatives underway are practical approaches that adapt to crises on the ground and are likely here to stay. It is probable that such methods used by weak states will continue as the security landscape evolves.

Effective Mitigation Strategies for Enhancing Security in the Sahel Region

Currently, the Sahel region is characterized by numerous problems, including transnational drug and human trafficking, cattle rustling, kidnapping, and arms smuggling. It is therefore important to propose and implement effective strategies tailored to mitigate these shortcomings and advocate for peace and stability in the area. There is a need to adopt a multi-faceted approach that encompasses the military, social, and economic dimensions. In our view, such an approach should be based on good governance that strengthens democratic institutions to enable the people's voices to be heard whenever required. Since the Sahel region is affected by the incompleteness of state-building processes—especially the lack of law enforcement capacity—it is vital to work closely with national institutions and develop strategies that help improve these capacities.

One key area of focus is to work with law enforcement agencies and empower them to provide their services to the people of the area. It is also imperative to make an effort to remove corruption from these institutions. Emphasis should be placed on the promotion of sustainable development, which would address the root causes of the multiple problems in the region. Several actors have addressed sustainable development issues within the Sahel with an approach that focuses on bringing water to the desert. Yet measures to remove governance impediments to sustainable development, as well as corruption, constitute the glue that holds the embattled governance processes

together and enables the crafting of peace between the erstwhile warring constituencies. It is also imperative to develop a mechanism that gets people involved at the local level to propose solutions to their problems. A few years back, the establishment of a community-directed development cooperation approach whereby the people themselves drive development and, hence, stabilize their environment was suggested. In this way, it is believed that security will gradually return to the area. Moreover, a dual emphasis on faith-based organizations and women in the area is critical. Efforts should be made to involve the area's religious elite in peace-making processes, for religion is crucial to the Sahel's inhabitants. Women, who are in touch with their local communities, can also help in peace-making processes by building trust at the grassroots level.

Support for creating avenues for education and employment, especially for the youth, is similarly attractive. Such measures address the psychological consequences of the conflicts, reduce group grievances, and lower the population's tolerance for complicity with armed groups. Given the cross-border nature of the area's security problems, an approach based on sub-regional integration may prove successful. The regional market should be further developed, and free access to nearer member-state markets should be negotiated for Sahel products. Such measures will promote trade and employment in the area and could constitute a basis for revitalizing local economies. Furthermore, sub-regional cooperation also opens up possibilities for cross-border cooperation in the area of security. Information flows should include the exchange of border-procedure information, passport/visa forgeries, and transnational crime. Finally, it is important to adopt a holistic approach that includes human rights, development, and security. Both addressing the local root causes of violence and liberating them is vital. We need only to be wary of efforts to bake these necessary ingredients into systematic human behavior with a view to defeating the impetus to pick up arms.

Conclusion

Research on the ground in the Sahel demonstrates some of the critical challenges to stabilizing the situation in the region. Politically, Mali remains divided, and the broader complexities of national sovereignty and territorial integrity continue to muddle the situation in the Sahel. Terrorism is a highly resilient and adaptable set of social relations; it has been defeated many times, but it generally returns because the social conditions of its populace remain unresolved. The jihadist-oriented groups in the Sahel will similarly be highly difficult to fully dislodge if the underlying political condition remains unchanged. Economically, the only people making money in the region currently outside the areas of crude oil production are the jihadists, criminal gangs, and those that protect them, often one and the same. News on further offshore oil discoveries in Senegal have buoyed many international observers, but the benefits most likely to accrue from these major resource finds will only be seen in the next generation, with little for the populace of the region today.

The northward desertification strife of farmers and ethnic groups is a long-standing issue in the Sahel, and a defining one. The changing and drying climate, and demand on more fertile southern lands for more and more resources and homes, is only going to increase conflict. Strategies that seek to pacify the situation will never work, as the sentinels of Islamist reform will remain.

To sum up, future strategies to attempt to secure the Sahel need to be adaptive and extensive. Solutions to the problems of the insurgents and terrorists need to be an inclusive concern and, as such, a pragmatic approach that involves holding one's nose and extending invitations to talks rather than 'the will to exclude' seems to be the only approach in relation to such a fractious and emotional set of circumstances. The problem of insurgents and terrorists is one of the longer term and will probably be best approached in an indirect and tacit way by concentrating on the day-to-day lives of the rural poor. For the latter, eradication is simply impossible.

President Bassirou Faye's UAE Visit: Strengthening Ties Through Culture and Heritage

President Bassirou Diomaye Faye of Senegal embarked on a historic official visit to the United Arab Emirates on Thursday, December 5, 2024, focusing on deepening bilateral relations and fostering shared development.

The visit was marked by two iconic moments that underscored cultural and architectural marvels unique to the UAE.

The Senegalese leader first toured the Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque, a globally renowned masterpiece of Islamic architecture. The mosque, celebrated for its stunning white marble domes and intricate mosaics, is one of the country's most cherished landmarks and a symbol of spiritual unity.

In another remarkable highlight, President Faye visited the Louvre Abu Dhabi, a cutting-edge cultural institution that celebrates universal heritage and artistic brilliance.

The museum's diverse collection, ranging from ancient artifacts to contemporary masterpieces, reflects the UAE's commitment to being a global hub for art and culture.

This high-profile visit not only underscores the strong cultural connection between Senegal and the UAE but also signals both nations' aspirations for shared prosperity. It is anticipated that the trip will pave the way for strategic partnerships in areas such as tourism, culture, and sustainable development.

President Faye's engagements in the UAE continue as he seeks to further enhance cooperation between the two nations, highlighting their mutual commitment to growth and progress on a global scale.





Gabon's coup leaders have changed the constitution to entrench their power – it's a growing trend in west Africa



Brice Oligui Nguema, Gabon's coup leader. Wilfred Mabinah/Getty Images



More than a year after a military coup, Gabonese citizens have held a referendum in which they approved a new draft constitution. The constitutional revisions targeted dynastic rule by introducing presidential term limits and banning family members of a sitting president from running for the office.

A controversial aspect of the new constitution is that it allows coup leader General Brice Oligui Nguema to run for president in the country's general presidential election slated for August 2025.

Civil society and opposition figures have expressed concerns about the possibility of the general's candidacy. They argue that it would contradict the military's earlier promises of civilian rule. And that it would entrench the armed forces' role in politics. This is a country that has suffered 56 years – 1967 to 2023 – of authoritarian rule by the Bongo family.

Gabon's case is no exception. After a notable decline in coups in the last two decades, compared to the cold war period, there has been a wave of military coups in recent years in west Africa.

CÉRÉMONIE DE CLÔTURE
DU DIALOGUE NATIONAL INCLUSIF
30 AVRIL 2024

OBASANJO Meets Evariste in Burundi BI.

Présidence - République du Burundi

President of Burundi Republic, His Excellency Evariste Ndayishimiye received in audience at Ntare House Former President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria H.E OLUSEGUN OBASANJO leading a strong delegation of Nigerian investors to attend the round table scheduled for December 5th-6th, 2024 in Bujumbura.





Future Of Africa With Prof. Sachs – OpEd

By Lily Ong

Jeffrey Sachs is known for many accolades; among them, he was a special advisor to three consecutive UN secretaries-general, once hailed as the most important economist in the world by the New York Times, a co-recipient of the Blue Planet Prize for environmental leadership, and a recipient of the Tang Prize for Sustainable Development. Resting on his laurels, however, is the

last thing anyone expects Sachs to do. On Aug 10, Prof. Sach's tireless service to humanity – as he navigated the streets of Stintino, Sardinia in 30-degrees-Celsius heat – can be seen in the generous sharing of his time and expertise with a multitude of online participants from over 35 countries, who had gathered to hear him at the launch of Prof. Anis H. Bajrektarevic's Certified Economic Diplomat program

at the Institute of Economic and Finance in Ghana.

Professor Sachs kicked off his astute talk by disclosing what he has recently been up to for Africa's development. Together with the Chief Economist at the African Development Bank, Kevin Urama, the multi-skilled Sachs has been developing a strategy for breaking the poverty cycle in Africa. The team led by

the AfDB is set to present their proposal for Africa's rapid growth at the African Union Summit in February 2025.

In sharing the core strategy, Sachs explicated how Africa can achieve very rapid development in the next 40 years – in the same way China did so during 1980 – 2020 and India is doing so today, starting around 2000.

“Back in 1980, China was impoverished and not even on the world's radar screen economically. In fact, its poverty rate was higher than in Africa today. However, China opened up and took important policy measures. Over the next 40 years, not only has it become a high-income economy, but also the world's largest economy in total GDP measured at purchasing-power parity (PPP),” Sachs explained as he held China up as a good model for Africa.

Sachs went on to state that Africa could achieve the same thing that China did. “Africa has 1.4 billion people, roughly the same population as that of China and India. While India is about 15 to 20 years behind China in its economic trajectory, it has also been experiencing very high growth. China started emerging in 1980 and India around 2000. For Africa, that time is now.”

However, Sachs understood it would take more than a big population to drive rapid growth and was careful to highlight the significant distinction between the three entities. “There is one big difference. Following the colonial period, India remained one large country (actually, British India became three countries: India, Pakistan, and later Bangladesh). China, of course, remained one unified state despite encountering Japan's imperialistic ambitions and the century of reckless behavior by the European powers. Africa, on the other hand, has to deal with the ongoing difficulties associated with its colonial legacy, notably Europe's division of Africa into 55 states.”

Sachs proceeded to explain that the 55 individual African states are too small on their own to achieve the kind of global role and competitiveness they need. However, if Africa truly creates a political, economic, financial, and

eventually monetary union, then it will be able to emulate the great successes of China and India. With a single market, a unified financial system, and increasing monetary integration, Africa will be well positioned to create a truly unified economic space, also deeply interconnected by trans-boundary infrastructure (for power, fiber, roads, rail, shipping, and ecosystem management). Moreover, with a strong union, Africa will be positioned to play a global diplomatic role as well, helping to lead global decision-making in key international forums.

It would serve well at this point, to recall that in Delhi last year, with India's G20 Presidency, the African Union was made a permanent member of the G20. None could be happier than the 1.4 billion Africans who have finally been given a major voice in deliberations on major global economic issues – and Sachs, who for years, has been advocating indefatigably for the AU to be given a seat at the table.

“An integrated and ambitious African Union (AU) can achieve the kind of growth that China and India have experienced,” Sachs paused before adding determinedly, “I want the AU to be a giant in the same way.”

Like other global leaders, Sachs is a visionary man with ambitious goals, but this is where their similarity ends. Sachs actually knows the roadmap from A to Z and is keenly aware of what Africa needs to achieve this high sustained growth that he wholly believes to be present in the region's potential.

Sachs explained that Africa needs a large internal market and diplomatic presence, the latter made possible now with its representation at the G20 (which he hopes will soon be relabeled appropriately as the G21) and the UN. Africa also needs high investments across all major classes of capital, with human capital being the most important, hence the need to provide universal quality education. Sachs also indicated that Africa needs rapid electrification and digital access, so that every household can get lit up and online.

Last but hardly least, Sachs said that Africa needs international loan financing with interest rates comparable to those granted to the US. “The irony here is, the US actually has a higher debt-GDP ratio than most African countries (and other G7 countries such as Italy and Japan have even higher debt-GDP ratios), yet the credit rating agencies have assigned African sovereign borrowers very bad credit ratings. However, Africa has higher growth potential than the high-income countries, and typically lower ratios of debt to GDP. The rating agencies are wrong in their methodology, and the methodology and ratings need to be fixed. If Africa cannot borrow on reasonable terms – meaning low interest rates and long-term maturities – then Africa will remain poor,” he advised.

Another trait that distinguishes Sachs from other leaders lies in the consistency of his messaging. Time and again, he has advocated for a multipolar world where parameters for honest dialogues between developing and developed countries could be established, and meaningful strides towards a more prosperous, inclusive and sustainable world could be made.

“I want a world of regions dealing with one another. We are one world, interconnected, and we ought to make peace. The mindset of the US is such that it has to be number one and everyone has to follow what it says – that creates a lot of friction,” Sachs lamented.

“I like the BRICS. Now expanded to ten countries, it comprises around 46% of the world population and 36% of the world GDP (PPP). It's a very good group that has come about because its members do not want to be bossed around by the US,” he added.

As Sachs brought his talk to a conclusion, a smile beamed widely across his face, with illuminating rays of hope for Africa to match, in a way that could only be described as contagious and inspiring. Sachs left the audience with an earnest and heartening reminder: The world is much safer if we cooperate with one another.

ALHAJI UMARU ABDUL MUTALLAB: A LEGACY OF INTEGRITY IN LEADERSHIP AND BUSINESS

Jerry Adesewo

In 2011, I shared a photograph I took with a prominent Nigerian politician on my Facebook page. Shortly after, my ever-monitoring father of blessed memory saw the post and called me. He didn't mince words in expressing his displeasure, questioning my association with the politician and demanding to know the nature of our relationship. He argued passionately that aligning oneself with individuals of questionable integrity could cast doubt on one's own character.

Knowing how strongly opinionated my father is, I responded lightly, "Baba Jerry, okay, tell me—who in this country can you confidently vouch for as a person of integrity?" Without a moment's hesitation, he listed four names, with the first being Alhaji Umaru Mutallab.

As for the other three, I'll keep those under wraps for now.

In a world often clouded by the pursuit of wealth and influence at the expense of core values, Alhaji Umaru Abdul Mutallab stands out as a beacon of integrity. His life story, spanning decades of impactful contributions to banking, governance, and philanthropy, is a testament to the transformative power of ethical leadership. From his humble beginnings to becoming one of Nigeria's most respected statesmen, Alhaji Mutallab's unwavering commitment to honesty, accountability, and fairness has shaped not only his illustrious career but also the institutions and communities he has served.

Early Life and Foundations of Integrity

Born in 1939 in Katsina State, Northern Nigeria, Alhaji Mutallab grew up in a family that valued discipline, education, and ethical conduct. These foundational principles were instilled in him from an early age, laying the groundwork for his future endeavors. As a young man, he displayed a keen sense of responsibility and an unyielding belief in hard work and sincerity—qualities that would later define his career.

He pursued his education with vigor, attending prestigious institutions like Barewa College, which exposed him to a diverse community of Nigerians. The collaborative and meritocratic environment reinforced his values of tolerance, fairness, and the importance



of national unity—values that would guide his professional decisions.

Professional Journey: Leadership Rooted in Integrity

Alhaji Mutallab's foray into accountancy and finance marked the beginning of a career steeped in honesty and competence. After qualifying as a Chartered Accountant in the United Kingdom, he returned to Nigeria with a clear vision: to contribute to the nation's economic development while upholding the highest ethical standards.

He began his career at the Defense Industries Corporation of Nigeria before moving to the Nigerian Mining Corporation, where he held senior roles. His meteoric rise to prominence came when he was appointed Commissioner for Economic Development and Reconstruction in the Northern Region, a role that demanded strategic thinking and moral fortitude, especially in post-civil war Nigeria.

In the 1970s, Alhaji Mutallab transitioned into banking, joining United Bank for Africa (UBA) as Executive Vice Chairman and later serving as Managing Director. Under his leadership, UBA expanded its operations, cementing its reputation as one of Africa's leading financial institutions. His tenure was characterized by transparent governance, employee empowerment, and a relentless focus on customer satisfaction—principles that aligned with his steadfast commitment to integrity.

The Value of Integrity in Business

For Alhaji Mutallab, integrity has never been a negotiable trait. Throughout his career, he has demonstrated that success is best achieved when built on a foundation of trust and ethical conduct. At UBA, he prioritized accountability, ensuring that the bank's operations adhered to regulatory standards while also fostering innovation. His leadership style was marked by inclusivity and collaboration, earning him the respect of colleagues and competitors alike.

As Chairman of Jaiz Bank, the pioneer Islamic bank in Nigeria, Alhaji Mutallab further exemplified the value of integrity in finance. Islamic banking, rooted in ethical practices and the prohibition of interest, resonated deeply with his personal and professional values. Under his stewardship, Jaiz Bank grew from a nascent institution to a leader

in ethical banking, offering Nigerians an alternative financial system that aligns with moral principles.

Impact on Governance and Public Service

Beyond the corporate world, Alhaji Mutallab's integrity shone brightly in his public service roles, first as a Federal Commissioner (Economic Development) and later as Federal Minister (Cooperatives and Supplies), under the regime of the late General Murtala Mohammed, and his successor, General Olusegun Obasanjo respectively. As a Commissioner and later as a statesman, he consistently advocated for policies that promoted equity, transparency, and sustainable development. His ability to navigate complex political and economic landscapes without compromising his principles set him apart as a leader who prioritized the common good over personal gain.

His tenure as a board member of the Nigerian Industrial Development Bank (now Bank of Industry) and other key institutions further underscored his commitment to nation-building. In every role, he championed initiatives that fostered economic empowerment, particularly for marginalized communities, and ensured that public resources were managed responsibly.

Philanthropy: Giving Back with Purpose

Alhaji Mutallab's legacy is incomplete without highlighting his philanthropic efforts. Believing that true success is measured by one's ability to uplift others, he has dedicated significant resources to education, healthcare, and community development. Through scholarships, endowments, and infrastructural projects, he has improved the lives of countless Nigerians.

One of his notable contributions is his support for Islamic education, where he has funded institutions that provide quality learning opportunities for young people. His philanthropic philosophy is deeply rooted in his faith and his belief in the transformative power of education and empowerment.

A Role Model for Generations

Alhaji Mutallab's life offers valuable lessons for aspiring leaders and professionals. His journey illustrates that integrity is not just a moral obligation but a practical tool for



achieving lasting success. In a society where ethical shortcuts often appear tempting, his unwavering stance on honesty and fairness serves as a powerful reminder that true greatness is built on trust and respect.

As a mentor, Alhaji Mutallab has inspired many young professionals to pursue excellence without compromising their values. His ability to balance ambition with humility and wealth with generosity makes him a role model for individuals across different fields.

Recognition and Legacy

Alhaji Mutallab's contributions have not gone unnoticed. Over the years, he has received numerous accolades, including national honours, for his service to Nigeria. Yet, he remains a humble and grounded individual,

continually emphasizing the importance of collective progress over personal accolades.

His work at UBA, First Bank and Jaiz Bank has left an indelible mark on Nigeria's financial sector, while his public service record continues to inspire confidence in the potential of ethical governance. For Alhaji Mutallab, success is not measured by titles or material wealth but by the positive impact one leaves on others.

Celebrating a Life of Integrity

In an era where ethical leadership is in short supply, Alhaji Umaru Abdul Mutallab stands tall as a testament to the enduring power of integrity. His life story is a celebration of honesty, hard work, and a commitment to the greater good. From his early days in Katsina

to his roles in banking, governance, and philanthropy, he has consistently demonstrated that success built on integrity is not only possible but also sustainable.

As Nigeria and the world grapple with complex social and economic challenges, the legacy of Alhaji Mutallab offers a guiding light. His life reminds us that integrity is not just a personal virtue but a critical ingredient for building trust, fostering innovation, and creating a better future for all. In celebrating his achievements, we also celebrate the timeless value of doing what is right, no matter the circumstances.

Alhaji Umaru Abdul Mutallab's journey is more than just a success story—it is a call to action for all of us to lead with integrity and strive for a world where values and vision go hand in hand.



UMARU ABDULMUTALLAB: SHAPING NIGERIA'S ECONOMIC FUTURE THROUGH ETHICAL FINANCE AND LEADERSHIP

Abdulmutallab. I was born in Katsina in 1939. Shortly after my birth, my father, who worked in the public sector, was transferred to Funtua. It was in Funtua that I began my elementary education. After completing four years of elementary school, I proceeded to Katsina Modern School, which was a pivotal institution for students from various provinces in Nigeria at the time.

After three years at Katsina Modern School, I took an exam to gain admission to a college in Zaria. I was fortunate to pass the exam, along with some of my colleagues, and we started at the college in January 1954. This college was later renamed, and my cohort was the last to complete the six-year program, as subsequent groups spent only five years. Upon completion, we took the West African Examination Council (WAEC) exams, and many of us achieved excellent results.

Initially, I aspired to study engineering due to my father's influence—he was involved in construction and worked with the Ministry of Works. However, a close friend convinced me to consider accountancy, which he described as a bold and promising field. With strong results in my school certificate exams, I qualified for both engineering and accountancy programs. Ultimately, I chose accountancy and pursued my studies at Achimota College of Business Management in Ghana, where I vividly remember our principal as an inspiring figure.

Alhami Umaru Abdulmutallab is a revered figure in Nigeria's financial and public sectors, celebrated for his exceptional contributions to accountancy, banking, and economic development. Born in Katsina in 1939, his life has been a testament to perseverance, education, and innovation, culminating in a distinguished career that significantly shaped Nigeria's economic trajectory. In this insightful interview with the *OurNigeria* team of **Dr. Abubakar**

Sani and **Jerry Adesewo**, the soon-to-be 84-year-old business magnate reflects on his remarkable journey—from humble beginnings to his current status as a respected elder statesman. Abdulmutallab shares personal anecdotes, professional milestones, and the principles that have guided his impactful career, offering an inspiring narrative of resilience and leadership.

OurNigeria: Can you share some insights about your early life and education?

Umar Mutallab: My name is Umaru

OurNigeria: What inspired your venture into finance and banking? Can you walk us through your journey?

Umar Muttallab: Accounting is an incredibly versatile profession. Many people are unaware of the extensive programs and courses one undergoes to qualify as a chartered accountant. It's a rigorous training that covers diverse areas such as economics, international banking, and trade. These foundational skills prepare accountants to excel in various industries, whether in government, private corporations, or multinational organizations. However, the credit to my decision to study accountancy is one I reserved for my very good friend, Hamza Zayyad, who advised me to study accountancy, and till date, I have had no reason to regret that decision.

After completing my studies in Ghana, I continued my education in London, where I gained practical experience in the city for 13 months. This period was instrumental in shaping my professional skills. Upon returning to Nigeria, I joined the Defence Industries Corporation in Kaduna as a Chief Accountant. My performance there led to an offer to work with the Northern Nigeria Development Corporation (NNDC), where I served as a Financial Controller.

During the military era, I was appointed Commissioner of Economic Development and Reconstruction, later redeployed to Cooperative and Supply, which was akin to being Minister of Trade. This role allowed me to travel extensively across Nigeria, promoting cooperative movements in the country's 12 states.

Later, I transitioned into the banking sector and joined the United Bank for Africa (UBA) as the first Executive Chairman and Managing Director. My tenure at UBA lasted over a decade, during which I helped steer the bank to greater heights. Eventually, I stepped down from my role and nominated a successor.

My journey into Islamic banking began during a trip with the late General Sani Abacha to an international Islamic conference. Inspired by the speakers'

insights into Sharia-compliant banking, I started advocating for Islamic banking in Nigeria. Despite regulatory hurdles, I promoted the concept widely, working to establish a framework for non-interest banking in the country.

OurNigeria: I'd like to pick a quick cue from something you mentioned earlier about how your friend encouraged you to pursue accountancy. This seems to have influenced your journey into finance and banking. Could you tell us more about your banking journey?

Umar Mutalaba: Certainly. Accountancy is a fascinating profession, and it played a significant role in shaping my career. Many people may not realize the breadth of knowledge required to qualify as a Chartered Accountant. During my training, I studied not just



accountancy but also economics, auditing, taxation, international trade, and even international banking. It's a comprehensive program that equips you with diverse skills, making you adaptable to roles in government, private companies, or large corporations.

I began my accountancy studies in the early 1960s. At the time, Chartered Accountants were highly respected, with many serving as chief executives in major organizations. I am forever grateful to my friend who advised me to pursue this path—it opened doors I could never have imagined.

After completing my studies in London and successfully passing all stages on the first attempt, I stayed in the UK to gain practical experience. I worked at an office in the City of London, at 65 Moorgate, for about 30 months. During this time, I was invited for an interview to join the Defense Industries Corporation

of Nigeria as Chief Accountant.

Upon returning to Nigeria, I began my career there but soon transitioned to other roles, including Chief Accountant at the Nigerian Mining Corporation. I later held positions as Financial Controller and eventually Commissioner for Economic Development and Reconstruction. This was during a turbulent period in Nigeria's history, marked by political instability, including an attempted coup.

My role evolved as I was redeployed to the Ministry of Cooperatives and Supply, which was akin to a treasury ministry. I traveled extensively across Nigeria to promote cooperative movements, which were pivotal for economic development at the time.

Later, I was invited by the Board of the United Bank for Africa (UBA) to join as Executive Vice Chairman. After an interview in Paris with Banque Nationale de Paris (the French bank that had a stake in UBA), I accepted the role. I served as Executive Vice Chairman and later as Managing Director of UBA, a tenure that lasted about 11 years.

During my time at UBA, I focused on strengthening the bank's operations and governance. Eventually, I felt it was time to move on, having served both in government and corporate roles extensively. After much deliberation and lobbying, I resigned from UBA. I recommended my successor, the late Suleiman Barau, of blessed memory.

Looking back, I consider my journey a fulfilling one. The foundation in accountancy provided me with the skills and opportunities to navigate roles in both public service and corporate leadership. It's a career path I have never regretted, and I am deeply grateful for the experiences and lessons it afforded me.

OurNigeria: What are some of the challenges you've encountered in governance and corporate life, and how you overcame them?

Umar Mutalab: Certainly! Life is a blend of opportunities and challenges. In corporate governance, one major

challenge was related to liquidity management when we started as Jaiz Bank. We couldn't invest in traditional interest-bearing bonds due to compliance with Islamic finance principles. To address this, we appealed to the government to create investment avenues suitable for us, leading to the introduction of *Sukuk*, which is similar to bonds but comes with its own terms, rules, and regulations. It's an ethical investment tool under Islamic finance. Over time, it has become a valuable resource, benefiting various state governments and fostering economic growth.

OurNigeria: That's fascinating. What leadership principles have guided you throughout your career?

Umar Mutallab: Leadership, to me, is about fostering cooperation, tolerance, and understanding. I was fortunate to attend institutions that emphasised these values. For instance, the unity and collaboration I witnessed at Barewa College, which brought together people from diverse backgrounds across Nigeria, taught me the importance of working together despite differences. These principles have guided me in both public and corporate governance. Nigeria is a diverse country, and I firmly believe that mutual understanding and cooperation are vital for progress. No matter our religious or cultural differences, we can live and work together to build a stronger nation.

OurNigeria: You've mentioned opportunities and challenges. Can you elaborate on how you overcame obstacles in your career?

Umar Mutallab: Challenges are inevitable, but they can be managed through dedication, prayers, meaningful dialogue, and understanding. In corporate life, maintaining compliance with ethical principles while addressing economic realities has required constant innovation and adaptability. For example, the rise of fintech and microfinance institutions offers new ways to support ethical financial practices without relying on interest.

OurNigeria: Can you explain further, the principles of Islamic banking and its

significance?

Umar Mutallab: Islamic banking is rooted in ethical principles that are inclusive and open to everyone, regardless of their religious beliefs. It emphasises fairness, transparency, and the avoidance of interest-based transactions. These principles create a system that is not only compliant with religious tenets but also promotes social responsibility and equity.

We actively promoted these principles and worked to position Nigeria as a member of global Islamic financial institutions. Today, Islamic banking has grown significantly and operates widely across the world. Institutions have developed frameworks for Takaful (Islamic insurance) to complement banking services, ensuring compliance with these ethical standards.

The essence of Islamic finance lies in providing an alternative financial system that aligns with ethical considerations, fostering trust and collaboration. It's a model designed for inclusivity and sustainability, benefiting individuals and businesses alike.

OurNigeria: What is your view on Nigeria's economic challenges,

Umar Mutallab: Nigeria faces significant economic challenges, but we have the resources and resilience to overcome them. Leadership is critical to navigating these challenges. Leaders must prioritize national interests, foster unity, and act decisively to create opportunities for growth.

Nigeria's economy is indeed facing challenges, including rising interest rates, now around 27.5%. This creates a tough environment for businesses and individuals. My advice is to focus on fostering innovative financial solutions that align with our unique needs. Strengthening ethical and inclusive financial models, like *Sukuk* and *Takaful*, can provide alternative avenues for growth while addressing the broader socio-economic needs of the population.

Insurance is another area undergoing transformation. Conventional insurance often feels exploitative to many people.

However, Islamic insurance, known as *Takaful*, offers a more inclusive model. Here, participants contribute premiums and are treated almost like shareholders. If no claims are made during the year, participants receive a portion of the surplus. This model has gained global traction, with more *Takaful* companies emerging.

OurNigeria: What role does Halal certification play in global trade?

Umar Mutallab: Halal certification ensures that goods and services comply with ethical and religious standards. It goes beyond food to include other sectors such as tourism and lifestyle, creating opportunities for global trade. Countries without Muslim-majority populations have embraced Halal certification to access broader markets, underscoring its universal appeal.

Halal signifies quality and ethical compliance, enhancing trust among consumers. For Nigeria, promoting Halal-certified products can open new trade avenues and boost economic growth.

OurNigeria: What advice do you have for Nigeria, and Nigerians?

Umar Mutallab: Historically, Nigeria played a prominent role in African diplomacy and unity, often bridging divides to achieve progress. This legacy should inspire our current leaders to focus on pragmatic solutions that address unemployment, economic disparity, and governance issues.

My advice to Nigerians is simple: be your brother's keeper. In times of hardship, unity and mutual support are essential. The spirit of cooperation and ethical governance will lead us to a more prosperous and stable future.

OurNigeria: What would you like to be remembered for?

Umar Mutallab: I would like to be remembered as someone who championed ethical financial practices and promoted unity among people. My focus has always been on fostering inclusive systems that empower individuals and communities while adhering to ethical principles.

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Introduction

In an era where financial literacy is increasingly recognized as a vital skill for navigating the complexities of modern life, “Taxation: Essential Knowledge for Children” by Arabinrin Aderonke and Ejura Haruna emerges as a significant contribution to educational literature. This book, which comprises thirteen meticulously crafted chapters, aims to demystify the often intimidating subject of taxation for younger

audiences. With a foreword penned by Dr. Zacch Adedeji, the Chairman of the Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS), the book not only underscores the importance of understanding taxation but also serves as a foundational resource for children to grasp essential concepts that will shape their financial futures.

Understanding Taxation: A Child’s Perspective

Aderonke and Haruna’s book begins with a thoughtful introduction to the concept

of taxation, tailored specifically for children. The author employs simple language and relatable examples to explain what taxes are, why they are collected, and how they contribute to society. This foundational knowledge is crucial, as it sets the stage for deeper exploration in subsequent chapters. By framing taxation as a civic duty rather than a burden, Aderonke and Haruna encourage young readers to view taxes as a means of contributing to their communities and supporting public services.

The book's approach is particularly effective in engaging children's curiosity. Aderonke and Haruna utilize illustrations and anecdotes that resonate with a younger audience, making complex ideas accessible. For instance, the author might compare taxes to contributions made by family members for a shared outing, thereby helping children relate to the concept on a personal level. This strategy not only fosters understanding but also instills a sense of responsibility and civic pride.

The Structure and Content of the Book

The ten chapters of "Taxation: Essential Knowledge for Children" are thoughtfully organized, each building upon the last to create a comprehensive overview of taxation. The chapters cover a range of topics, including the history of taxation, different types of taxes, and the role of government in tax collection and allocation. The authors' methodical progression ensures that readers can follow along without feeling overwhelmed.

One notable chapter delves into the various types of taxes—income tax, sales tax, property tax, and others—providing clear definitions and examples for each. This section is particularly valuable as it highlights the diversity within the tax system and helps children understand that taxes are not a monolithic concept. Furthermore, Aderonke and Haruna

address common misconceptions about taxes, such as the belief that they are solely punitive measures imposed by governments. Instead, she emphasizes their role in funding essential services like education, healthcare, and infrastructure.

The inclusion of real-world scenarios enhances the learning experience. For example, Aderonke and Haruna might illustrate how tax revenues are used to build parks or schools in a community, thereby making the information relevant and tangible. This practical application not only aids comprehension but also encourages children to think critically about their role in society.

Engagement Through Interactive Learning

One of the standout features of Aderonke and Haruna's book is its emphasis on interactive learning. Each chapter concludes with questions and activities designed to reinforce key concepts and encourage further exploration. These exercises range from simple quizzes to creative projects that prompt children to think about taxation in their own lives. For instance, readers may be asked to create a budget that includes hypothetical tax contributions or to discuss how they would allocate tax funds if given the opportunity.

This interactive approach is particularly beneficial in fostering a sense of agency among young readers. By engaging them in discussions about taxation and its implications, Haruna empowers children to take ownership of their understanding and encourages them to become informed citizens. The inclusion of activities also makes the learning process enjoyable, transforming what could be perceived as a dry subject into an engaging experience.

The Foreword: A Professional Endorsement

Dr. Zacch Adedeji's foreword adds significant weight to the book's credibility. As the Chairman of FIRS, his insights into the importance of tax education resonate strongly with the book's objectives. He emphasizes that understanding taxation is not merely an academic exercise but a crucial life skill that will benefit

children as they grow into adulthood. Dr. Adedeji's endorsement serves as a powerful reminder of the broader societal implications of tax education, reinforcing Haruna's message that informed citizens are essential for a thriving democracy.

Moreover, Dr. Adedeji's professional perspective highlights the urgent need for tax literacy among younger generations, particularly in developing countries where financial education is often lacking. His support underscores the book's relevance and positions it as an essential resource for parents, educators, and policymakers alike.

Conclusion

In conclusion, "Taxation: Essential Knowledge for Children" by Aderonke and Ejura Haruna is an invaluable resource that successfully bridges the gap between complex financial concepts and young learners. Through its engaging content, structured approach, and interactive elements, the book equips children with essential knowledge about taxation while fostering a sense of civic responsibility. With Dr. Zacch Adedeji's authoritative foreword reinforcing its significance, this book stands out as an essential tool for nurturing informed future citizens who will navigate the financial landscape with confidence and integrity.

Under the editorial guidance of Dr. MS Abubakar, this children's book has been released by Sprezzatura Publishing Limited. It is strongly advised that this book be disseminated to educational institutions nationwide, as it aims to engage young learners in understanding taxation, ensuring a smooth transition into responsible taxpayers as they mature. Overall, I would like to commend the exemplary use of English throughout the text, as well as the outstanding artwork and production quality. I wholeheartedly recommend this book for children and young adults in Nigeria.

Matilda Georgewell Samuel writes from Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria

Tax Reform: Open Letter to Northern Governors

By Arabinrin Aderonke



Your Excellencies, Governors of Northern Nigeria states,

I write to you with a vision we all share: building a prosperous, fair, and united Nigeria. It's understandable to have concerns about the recent Tax Reform Bill, especially regarding the proposed shift to a derivation-based model for VAT distribution and how it might impact Northern states.

However, looking more closely at this reform reveals opportunities to benefit not only Northern states but also the entire nation. I believe that with your leadership and support, this reform could unlock opportunities that advance the North's growth and empower its communities. I wish to share some perspectives on the vision and benefits of this reform.

The purpose of this reform, according to Dr. Zacch Adedeji, Executive Chairman, Federal Inland Revenue Service, backed by the Federal Government, is not to create new taxes or burden the everyday citizen. He states, and I quote, "This reform is about taxing prosperity, not poverty." In clearer terms, the reform is designed to ensure that those with greater means and profits contribute fairly while also reducing redundant taxes that impact small businesses and local communities.

This streamlined approach offers simplicity, making tax compliance easier and more efficient for businesses, farmers, and traders alike, thereby allowing our local enterprises to grow without unnecessary hindrances.

What does this mean for Northern Nigeria? In practical terms, a derivation-based VAT model would redirect funds from goods and services generated

locally back into the communities that produce them. It also means resources collected in the North would be reinvested directly into Northern infrastructure like roads, schools, hospitals, and other development projects. Such reinvestment has the power to create a real impact: stimulating local businesses, attracting new industries, and generating more wealth within the region over time. This model is an opportunity for sustained growth that benefits both communities and the local economy in a meaningful way.

In the past, VAT revenue has been centralized, but this reform offers a new direction, allowing each state to gain more from its own economic activities. A localized VAT model values the strengths and contributions each region brings to the country and ensures that these efforts benefit local communities directly. It's a way to support each state's growth and allow funds collected within a state to have a greater impact on its residents. I understand your concern but the new bill will help in developing the region into a prosperous North if you look inward in line with the following: One, it will strengthen North the more to focus on some of the things they have comparative advantage of and make them stronger. Two, it will make the North to be more creative in developing what they have, instead of relying on other section of the country

for progress and development. Third, it will also make the North look inwards into their ability and capability to develop themselves.

Additionally, the reform seeks to establish transparency and accountability in tax administration, addressing past inefficiencies that have created distrust in the system. A more transparent framework assures that taxpayers can see tangible improvements from their contributions. Dr. Zacch, again, has said, and I quote, "This is about a fairer, simpler tax system that not only empowers businesses but also respects and values taxpayers' contributions."

Let's not forget, the Renewed Hope Agenda of President Bola Tinubu seeks to bring transformation that empowers every region. The proposed tax reforms align with this vision by creating a tax system that is efficient, transparent, and geared toward prosperity.

So, as trusted leaders, I encourage you to consider these reforms not only for the present but for the potential they unlock for a prosperous Northern Nigeria. Together, with your guidance and influence, we can pave the way for a Nigeria where all regions feel seen, valued, and fairly treated. This bill offers a foundation on which to build a stronger North and a unified Nigeria.

Thank you.

With respect and hope for a brighter tomorrow,

Arabinrin Aderonke Atoyebi.

Arabinrin Aderonke, award-winning investigative, is the Technical Assistant, Broadcast Media to the Executive Chairman of the Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS). She writes from Abuja



Tax Reform in Nigeria: A Promise of Transformation or a Burden on the Economy?

By Matthew Eloyi

The transmission of four tax reform bills to the National Assembly by President Bola Tinubu on October 3, 2024, has sparked heated debates across political, economic, and social circles. The bills — Nigeria Tax Bill 2024, Nigeria Tax Administration Bill, Nigeria Revenue Service Establishment Bill, and Joint Revenue Board Establishment Bill — propose a significant overhaul of the country's tax administration and revenue generation processes. These reforms aim to simplify tax laws, increase efficiency, and broaden the tax net. However, critics argue that the timing and implementation strategies could have profound implications for businesses, individuals, and the overall economy.

The proposed reforms are the culmination of over a year of intensive work led by the Taiwo Oyedele-led Presidential Committee on Fiscal Policy and Tax Reforms. Inaugurated in August 2023, the committee's mandate was clear: overhaul Nigeria's complex and outdated tax system to align with President Tinubu's vision for a robust economic foundation, as outlined in his Renewed Hope manifesto.

The Nigeria Tax Bill (NTB) 2024, a cornerstone of these reforms, consolidates a myriad of tax laws into a single, streamlined framework. By centralising the collection of national taxes under the proposed Nigeria Revenue Service, the bill aims to enhance efficiency and transparency. Moreover, it includes provisions to repeal or amend numerous existing laws, thereby addressing redundancies and conflicts that have plagued the tax system.

Despite the technical merits of the reforms, public discourse has largely focused on the perceived implications for individuals and businesses. Critics, including Senator Ali Ndume and some state governors, especially northern state governors, have labeled the bills as instruments of increased taxation,

citing the gradual rise in Value Added Tax (VAT) rates from 7.5% to 15% by 2030 as evidence. However, proponents argue that the reforms are designed to be pro-poor and pro-business, with significant reductions in personal income tax (PIT) and corporate tax rates.

For instance, under the NTB, individuals earning less than ₦800,000 annually will be exempt from PIT, a relief that covers over 70% of Nigerians. Similarly, the progressive corporate tax structure aims to reduce the burden on small and medium enterprises, exempting those with annual turnovers below ₦25 million and gradually lowering rates for larger companies.

At the heart of the controversy lies the tension between Nigeria's urgent need for increased revenue and the potential impact on economic growth. The NTB's emphasis on progressive taxation—shifting more of the burden to high-income earners and large corporations—is a departure from traditional approaches that disproportionately affected low-income earners and smaller businesses.

Additionally, the harmonisation of special levies into a single development levy is expected to simplify compliance for businesses while funding critical

sectors such as education and technology. Critics, however, worry that the gradual VAT increases may dampen consumer spending and widen inequality if not carefully managed.

The tax reform bills reflect a bold vision for a more equitable and efficient fiscal system. However, their success hinges on effective implementation and transparent communication. Public trust will be crucial, especially in dispelling misconceptions and ensuring that the benefits of the reforms—such as improved public services and a more stable economy—are felt across all segments of society.

As the National Assembly deliberates on these landmark bills, the challenge for policymakers will be to strike a balance between fiscal sustainability and public acceptance, ensuring that Nigeria's tax system evolves to meet the demands of a dynamic and diverse economy. For now, the proposed reforms remain a double-edged sword — a promise of progress intertwined with challenges that could define the trajectory of Nigeria's economy for decades to come. As debates continue in the National Assembly, the nation watches, hopeful yet cautious, awaiting the dawn of a new era in tax administration.

TO MY PRINCIPAL!!

By Maj. Garba Bukar

Tribute by the ADC
to the late General
Taoheed Lagbaja.



Sir, I do not know where to start from, because all my thoughts are that I would in the future be writing your biography, and not epitaph. I first met you 10 years ago, on 1st of December 2014, as my Commanding Officer in 72 Special Forces Battalion. It was then that you started instilling in me the warrior ethos and leadership spirit which eventually prepared me for my sojourn in the NE operation.

I consider myself lucky – and privileged – to have worked with you closely from

2019, and tapped from your sterling virtues of leadership, compassion, and humility. From you, I learned a lot, I must say. From seemingly trivial things which many might ignore, like making your bed before checking out of a hotel room, ensuring you tip the housekeeper before leaving, and many more. You always thanked your driver whenever he took you home safely from a journey. Your generosity, also, was next to none.

You also taught me that as a leader, one needed to think and plan for subordinates. For instance, you knew when I was due for courses, and you ensured I went for them when the time came. You never denied or reduced anyone's application for pass or leave when such applications were brought to you, and you would say 'Go for your pass, the work will be done'.

In terms of getting things done, you did not rest until things were done, and done properly. As General Officer Commanding 82 and 1 Divisions, you ensured that you kept construction engineers on their toes by constantly checking on them at the site to ensure they worked with quality and precision. The projects you executed in the two divisions you served as GOC speak for themselves.

You were also a doting father, and you once told me that you wanted to be your daughter's personal chauffeur when you retire. 'I will take her to school, come back, read the dailies and cycle a little and wait for time to pick her up from school,' you said.

Operationally, you showed your subordinate commanders how it was done, as you led from the front all the time. On my first day as your ADC in 82

Division, I was sitting in my office trying to acclimatise, when you suddenly sent coordinates to my phone, followed by a message 'Prepare the escorts, we are going to this place'. It turned out to be a full-fledged operation that lasted all night. You loved your Special Forces helmet and frag jacket, which were always in your vehicle. When you yelled 'Give me my frag', we all knew it was on!

On many occasions, a normal visit to other formations would turn into a full-blown operation. I recall in December 2021, we were at a burial ceremony when you received a report of an incident on Enugu-PH highway. You did not wait for the nearest formation to respond, you excused yourself and we found ourselves

conducting a rescue operation. As for 1 Division Kaduna, when your posting came out in August, you vowed to stabilise the area before December, and you did.

Sir, another important thing I learn from you, is simplicity. You always reminded me not to get carried away by any position or appointment. You said: 'Learn to live a simple life, so that you will find it easy.' A case in point was when as a GOC in Enugu, you decided to drive down to the airport in your personal vehicle to pick your family up. I asked why you did not send us to do that, and you replied: 'I want my children to have these memories of me when I'm gone.'

While I promise to apply all these excellent virtues I have learn from you, I feel are lots more left to learn, but you left too soon, Sir. I will miss you dearly, you will be missed by all. May God Almighty grant you eternal rest.

“ Forces helmet and frag jacket, which were always in your vehicle. When you yelled 'Give me my frag', we all knew it was on! ”

Lagos Strategic to Nigeria's National Security, Defence Architecture - Ambassador Buratai

By Lawrence Bilal Audu

Lagos, Nigeria's economic capital, has been identified for its vital role in the country's national security and defence architecture. Former Chief of Army Staff and Nigeria's former Ambassador to the Republic of Benin, Lieutenant General Tukur Yusufu Buratai (RTD) CFR, provided this valuable insight while delivering a keynote address at the Security Summit of the Lagos State University of Education on November 20, 2024.

In his paper titled: "Lagos in Nigeria's National Security and Defence Architecture: An Analysis." Ambassador averred that, as Nigeria's economic powerhouse, Lagos contributes significantly to the national economy, accounting for 26.7% of Nigeria's total GDP and over 50% of non-oil GDP. The city's strategic Atlantic coast positioning makes it essential for maritime security operations, trade routes, and critical infrastructure protection.

"The presence of strategic military installations, the verse Atlantic Ocean and extensive coastline has placed Lagos State on the strategic defense map of the Armed Forces of Nigeria", He said further that, " While the sea provides a strategic economic status it could also be vulnerable to external attacks across the ocean". He adds.

However, Lagos faces numerous security challenges, including urban crimes such as armed robbery, cultism, and kidnapping. The city is also vulnerable to terrorism and separatist movements, as well as illegal migration through its porous land borders and coastal waters. These internal and external threats necessitate proactive measures to ensure the city's stability.

He noted further that, Lagos' stability has a colossal impact on national security, given its influence beyond economic significance. The city's proximity to countries impacts Nigeria's security

dynamics, making it a crucial factor in regional stability.

As Nigeria's commercial nerve center, Lagos serves as the country's economic hub, a major port for international shipping and trade routes, and home to key military installations. The city's cultural significance as a melting pot for diverse ethnic groups further underscores its importance.

To address these challenges, Ambassador Buratai recommended establishing a waterfront authority to manage coastal security. He also advocated for bolstering troop levels to 800,000 to address emerging threats and creating a Marine Corps for the Nigerian Navy to enhance coastal security.

Ambassador Buratai who who holds the traditional title of Garkuwan Keffi and the Betara of Biu, praised Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu's security strategy in Lagos, citing it as a shining example for governors across Nigeria. He noted that Governor Sanwo-Olu understands that true security goes beyond just physical presence or reactive measures, instead requiring a more comprehensive approach. This innovative strategy has not only redefined urban governance but also set a benchmark for other states to follow.

Buratai, drawing from his experience as Chief of Army Staff, highlighted the successful collaboration between the Nigerian Army and Lagos State under the leadership of Former Governor Ambode and now Governor Sanwo-Olu. He commended the Lagos State Government's impressive infrastructural development, particularly the Red and Blue Railway lines, which demonstrate the state's commitment to progress.

Governor Sanwo-Olu's forward-thinking approach to security Buratai said, has earned recognition, showcasing Lagos as a model for effective gov-

ernance.

Professor B.B. Lafiaji-Okuneye, the Vice Chancellor of Lagos State University of Education, warmly welcomed Ambassador Tukur Buratai to the institution, praising his commitment to a peaceful and safe Nigeria. "The great warlord and global peace ambassador is visiting our great institution for the first time," she said. "Sir, we appreciate you and what you stand for. Your desire for a Nigeria where citizens and residents are free and have every opportunity to prove their worth and contribute to the nation's growth and development is evident".

During the summit, Commissioner of Tertiary Education, Barr Tolani Sule, commended Ambassador Buratai for his valuable contributions to the security summit and the university. He highlighted Buratai's emphasis on social inclusiveness as a strategy to curb insecurity, rather than relying solely on force. As a token of appreciation, Barr Tolani Sule presented Ambassador Buratai with a Plaque of Honour for his nation-building efforts.

The summit featured esteemed discussants, including HRM Oba Kamorudeen Animashaun, HRM Oba Momodu Afolabi Ashafa, HRM Oba (Dr) Aina Josiah Olanrewaju, and HRH Oba Babatunde Ogunlaja JP, who shared insights on "Insecurity, Cost of Living, and Good Governance in the 21st Century". The event drew a diverse audience, comprising traditional rulers, governing council and senate members, security and paramilitary chiefs, invited guests, and students.

Ambassador Buratai was accompanied by a distinguished delegation, including Lt General Lamidi Adeosun (rtd), Colonel Emmanuel Adegbola (rtd), Comrade Oladimeji Odeyemi, Alhaja Toyiyibat Adeosun, and Alhaji Isa Dogo, among others.

UNICEF Reinforces Commitment to Women and Children in Nigeria, Develops 2025-2027 Work Plan

By Auwal Ahmad Umar

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has reaffirmed its unwavering commitment to enhancing the lives of women and children in Nigeria. According to UNICEF, empowering these vulnerable groups is critical to driving the nation's overall development.

This assertion was made by Dr. Nuzhat Rafique, Chief of Field Office (CFO), UNICEF Bauchi Field Office (BFO), during her opening remarks at the 2024 Annual Programme Review and 2025-2027 Workplan Consultation. The consultation brought together stakeholders from Bauchi, Plateau, Gombe, Adamawa, and Taraba States to assess progress and map out strategies for the future.

"Women and Children Must Be Rescued"

Dr. Rafique emphasized the importance of supporting women and children, who are often the most vulnerable members of society. She highlighted UNICEF's efforts to complement state plans in service delivery, stressing that their interventions are tailored to align with the priorities identified by state governments.

"UNICEF cannot achieve anything meaningful without the inputs and collaboration of the states we work with. Our goal is to provide critical support to ensure that women and children have access to healthcare, education, and protection," Dr. Rafique said.

The CFO expressed concern about the persistent challenges in accessing quality healthcare and education for women and children, calling for intensified efforts to address these pressing issues.

Dr. Rafique commended the five states under the Bauchi Field Office for their dedication to implementing UNICEF-supported activities. She noted that such collaboration has positively impacted the well-being of

the population and paved the way for sustainable development.

In response, Aminu Hammayo, Commissioner of Budget, Economic Planning, and Multilateral Coordination in Bauchi State, lauded UNICEF for its robust support in various interventions.

Represented by Jibrin Mohammed Yusuf, the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry, Hammayo assured stakeholders of the state government's commitment to fulfilling its financial obligations through prompt release of counterpart funding.

"With this review, we aim to identify and incorporate additional issues not captured in the 2025 budget estimate submitted to the House of Assembly," Yusuf stated.

Dr. Raymond Juryit, Executive Secretary of Plateau State Primary Healthcare Development Board, also praised UNICEF's role in strengthening healthcare systems across the state. Represented by Dr. Yakubu Dauda Izang, Director of Disease Control and Immunization, Juryit stressed that UNICEF's contributions have significantly complemented government efforts in providing effective healthcare services.

"The review process allows us to reflect on achievements in 2024 and strategize for the next phase of implementation. We are confident that continuous support from UNICEF will lead to better health outcomes for our people," Juryit remarked.

In Adamawa State, UNICEF collaborated with government agencies and implementation partners to develop a 2025-2027 work plan focused on child-responsive sectors. At a similar review meeting in Yola, Dr. Rafique reiterated UNICEF's dedication to improving the lives of vulnerable children through strategic interventions in education, healthcare, and social protection. She urged partners to redouble their

efforts, emphasizing the need for sustainable solutions that align with local needs.

"We must work together to ensure that every child has access to quality education, healthcare, and protection from harm," Dr. Rafique said.

Dr. Stanley Garuba, Planning and Monitoring Specialist at UNICEF Bauchi Field Office, underscored the importance of ownership and accountability in ensuring the sustainability of UNICEF's interventions.

"Our objectives for this consultation are clear: to endorse the work plan, strengthen ownership, and ensure accountability at all levels. Participants must take full ownership of these programs to guarantee long-term success," Garuba stated.

Dr. Mary Paninga, Executive Chairman of the Adamawa State Planning Commission, commended UNICEF for its strategic support in critical areas such as health, education, nutrition, water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH). Represented by the commission's Permanent Secretary, Hassan Modibbo, Paninga affirmed that the 2025 work plan aligns with the state's developmental goals.

"Our focus moving forward is to build on these gains and champion children's rights by ensuring access to quality education, healthcare, and protection, especially for vulnerable populations," Modibbo added.

In Taraba State, Dr. Tukura Nyigwa, Executive Secretary of the State Primary Healthcare Development Agency, appreciated UNICEF's interventions in addressing child malnutrition and healthcare challenges. He revealed that the state governor has issued a directive prioritizing child survival, declaring that no child should die due to malnutrition.

A composite image featuring a man's profile, a missile, and a fiery explosion. The man's face is in profile, looking towards the left. To his right is a large, green missile. The background is a fiery explosion with orange and yellow flames.

Russia-Ukraine War:

What Started In Ukraine May Not Stay In Ukraine; Here Is Why Russia Will Want More: OPED

“Geography means destiny” is a famous quote by 14th-century Tunisian-born Arab philosopher Ibn Khaldun. Khaldun was, in many ways, acutely placed to make this observation. Not only had he traveled widely in the known world and met many sultans and kings, but in 1401 AD, he also had a frank and open chat with world conqueror Tamerlane about his place in history.

In the late 14th century, after bursting out of the Central Asian steppes, Tamerlane created one of the world’s largest contiguous empires, stretching from Anatolia to Damascus to Jerusalem in West Asia, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, and Delhi in the East, Central Asia up to the Aral Sea, and Crimea in the North.

In sheer size, his vast empire was humbled only by the 13th-century Mongol Empire, which also included China, Korea, southern Russia, and Eastern Europe.

Khaldun must have keenly observed how, in a span of two centuries, two nomadic, pastoralist hordes burst out of what is variously described as

the southern European grasslands, or central Asian steppes, or simply the Eurasian wastelands, and become the world conquerors, creating in quick succession, two of the largest contiguous land-empires the world has ever seen.

It was no coincidence that Tamerlane and Chengiz Khan before him had first united the southern European grasslands with the central Asian steppe and then gone on to become the undefeatable force that trampled on everything that came along their way.

In other words, once you unite southern Europe and Central Asia, you’re destined to become a world conqueror or, at the least, a world dominator.

Notwithstanding their nomadic origins and pastoralist economies, central Asian tribes have

dominated and controlled much of Asia and Eastern Europe for much of the medieval centuries, including the much more civilized and advanced economies of India, Iran, and Egypt in Asia-Africa and Anatolia, Serbia, and Kyiv in Europe. Be it the Khiljis and Tughlaqs of the Delhi Sultanate, the later Mughals, the Mamluks of Egypt, the Ghaznavids, Seljuks, and Safavids of Iran, or the Ottomans, they all had their origin in the expanse of the central Asian steppe. And herein lies the crucial lesson from history that Khaldun, given his extraordinary intellect, was able to read—“Geography means destiny.”

This brings us to the Ukraine war. Although Russia's invasion of Ukraine began in 2022, or 2014 as some would say, the seeds of this conflict lie much deeper in their history and geography and were theorized into a neat thesis at least 120 years ago by a British geographer Sir Halford J. Mackinder, also known as the founder of modern geopolitics.

The Pivot Area Of History

In 1904, Mackinder conceptually divided the world into three parts: the 'pivot area of history' or 'the Heartland' comprising Eastern Europe and central Eurasia, stretching up to the Himalayas in the south and Anatolia in the West. The surrounding area of an inner crescent of remaining Eurasian and North African territories, also comprising the British Isles, Madagascar, Sri Lanka, the Malay Archipelago, Taiwan, and the Japanese Archipelago—which Mackinder called

the Offshore Islands—comprised the World Island. Together, these two areas comprised the World Island.

The conjoined continents of North and South America, as well as Oceania, were named the Outlying Islands.

Mackinder proposed: "He who rules the Heartland, commands the World Island, and he who rules the World Island, commands the world."

In short, dominating the heartland is the stepping stone to dominating the world.

Notwithstanding the deceptive simplicity of Mackinder's thesis, history has borne witness to its validity. The Mongol empire and Tamerlane first united the heartland and then dominated the World Island.

For much of the 20th century, the Soviet

Union commanded the heartland. Despite its semi-agricultural and backward economy, it dominated the world in a bipolar world and even challenged American supremacy in space and military technology.

Eastern Europe: Key To World Domination?

In Mackinder's view, Eastern Europe is the critical region that empowers the Heartland. In his 1904 thesis – 'The Geographic Pivot of History,' Mackinder highlighted the geo-strategic advantages and the vast economic potential that Eastern Europe offers. Eastern European plains provide limitless opportunities for wheat and other food grains to grow, ores to mine, and fuel and natural gas to extract. In other words, there are sufficient resources to support a formidable workforce and large-scale industries.

Entertainment

David Rise and Rise of Nigerian Artiste as a Global Icon



On 2 February 2025 most of the world's high profile entertainers will gather at the Crypto.com Arena in Los Angeles for the 67th Grammy Awards. Considered the Nobel of world music, this year's edition will recognize and reward artistes for musical excellence and creativity, as it has in previous star-studded gala nights. Up for grabs are awards for songwriting, performances, musical video promos, talented aspiring musicians and directorial debuts in different genres of music: Pop, Hip-Hop, jazz, r&b, country, classical, rock.



Past winners and habitués like Beyoncé will be a sure presence. Hubby Jay-Z and his bejeweled entourage are sure to command front row seats. Producers, music label owners in tuxedos and black ties will have their place as very important guests. Beyoncé's contemporaries and rivals Jennifer Lopez, Shakira, Lady Gaga along with a cast of prominent musicians and other big dogs in the entertainment industry on both sides of the Atlantic will walk the red carpet, flashing a seductive, well-tanned thigh here, a perfect midriff there, perpetual smile in place for paparazzi, and generally creating a media frenzy during and after the eagerly-awaited annual event.

Sharing the spotlight with this list of the rich and famous in the night of a thousand stars at Crypto.com Arena early next February will be half a dozen or so Nigerian musicians with an increasing fan base beyond the borders of their own country. Asake, Burna Boy, Davido, Rema, Tems, Wizkid and Yemi Alade have all been nominated for Grammy 2025. Rema and Tems were nominated for Best Global Music Album while their compatriots will contest for Best African Music Performance category.

For Davido, the experience will seem almost like *déjà vu*, having being nominated three or so times in the past although he did not win. What will clearly be a novel experience to him this time is if he wins. An almost three times before, holding the Grammy plaque aloft for Davido this time will be historic, making him the eleventh Nigerian to have won the most prestigious prize in the world music industry. Preceding him are compatriots Burna Boy, Rema and Tems. Though claiming dual citizenship of Britain and Germany, Sade Adu and Seal have also won. If Davido wins, he will join an impressive list of musicians officially endorsed by Grammy as deserving of their places among highly rated artistes globally. It will also transform Davido from a national celebrity in Nigeria to a global music icon.

"Davido's rise to fame in the Nigerian music industry has been a phenomenal success story," a commentator has written in The Guardian of November 2023. "He has contributed immensely to the growth and development of Nigerian music, and has also become a global music sensation, collaborating with several international acts."

Trinidadian rapper, songwriter Nicki Minaj counts among those Davido has had collabos with, not to mention Chris Brown, Summer Walker and Popcaan. Davido's collabo with Minaj has rocked the entertainment industry positively for both the Nigerian and West Indian. It was recently rekindled with Minaj's playful tweet about Davido trying to outdo her in her own song. "AH! @davido dey try win me for my own song eh?" Minaj wrote in Pidgin English meant solely for Davido's Nigerian audience. "No worry, my own de come soon for una pikin and the Barbz worldwide." "I come in peace," Davido tweeted back.

Such mutual respect and understanding, Minaj admitted, drew her towards her Nigerian counterpart. Davido, in her words, was "an ideal choice for this incredible masterpiece "If it's okay." She also wanted to "infuse Afrobeats feeling" into the song, insisting that working with Davido was an "enjoyable experience because of the mutual respect," plus the fact that he is an "incredible writer and melody maker."

When Davido's musical career took off fully in 2011, there were more than a dozen artistes ruling the airwaves: Wizkid, Phyno, Naeto C, Nice, Tu Baba were solidly on the ground. But being the "incredible writer and melody maker" he is, Davido soon got a phalanx of followers behind him, listening intently to hit song after hit song from one of the most creative artistes in contemporary Nigerian music. From the get-go, he made a big splash in the entertainment industry with his very first song "Back When" in 2011, featuring Naeto C. It got him

a place among the reigning acts of the time. While many of them have fallen by the way side, Davido has moved on and up, with no hint of ever stopping the show.

"Dami Duro" which came almost immediately after was even more of a success, adopted by fans as something close to a national anthem. It also kind of presaged the Nigerian star's commitment to music and his road to stardom. "Ema dami duro, emi omo baba olowo," Davido sings in the opening, insinuating that nobody can stop his relentless march on his chosen path and the fame that would follow.

Since then, he has been on a steady rise in the musical ladder in Nigeria, showing a consistency his teeming fans are proud of. With such consistency, producers home and away courted him. Nor is the man himself averse to artistic collabos with some of his contemporaries. The 2025 Grammy nomination is nothing but confirmation and endorsement of his creative prowess by the number one oracle in the entertainment industry, and it goes a long way in not only enhancing the reputation of artistes, especially musically, but also opening doors for product endorsements.

In the same potted bio by The Guardian on Davido's birthday last year, the author enthused thusly about the Nigerian star: "Despite his fame and success, he remains grounded and committed to his philanthropic work, using his platform to make a positive impact in Nigeria and around the world."

What else do you expect from someone with 56.1 million followers on social media, as of December 2023? Even now, Davido remains the most followed Nigerian celeb ever. Not even controversial cross dresser Bobrisky comes any close with a paltry 5 million. It hardly comes as any surprise that sports good giant Nike readily plumped for an endorsement deal worth \$12 m over his rival and senior colleague Wizkid. Expectedly, it sparked a social media row between the two with their

followers and supporters massing solidly behind them. At the end of what has since been dubbed the Nike war between the two Nigerian entertainers, it was clear who had come out tops. Another unintended ugly fallout from the Nike deal was that one of the musicians was hustled out of a club in London where both of them were at the same time. To the best of this reporter's knowledge, it was not Davido who was shooed out of the club unceremoniously.

Though a late starter in the entertainment industry in Nigeria, Davido's popularity has since surpassed those who ruled the entertainment scene before him. Any surprise Nike signed him on to promote their product? Fans argue that both Davido and Wizkid are hugely talented, both show a demonstrable flair for the profession with more than enough hits – singles and albums – to show for their undying commitment to music. Tattooed teenagers in dreadlocks anywhere from Ikeja to Surulere, Oregun and Gbagada still nod their heads to Wizkid's "Ojuelegba" from their earphones. So do many others listen avidly and even sway to Davido's "Aye" at street corners in towns across Nigeria. Both have also made frequent stage appearances in concerts here in Nigeria and abroad, winning thousands of swooning fans along the way.

But for a change of mind midway in university, Davido's career in music might never have even begun. He was already a Business Admin undergraduate at Oakwood University Alabama when he just wasn't interested anymore. What was the point of it all? Where would he have ended up? Behind a polished desk in a posh company in downtown Lagos, possibly, coke-bottle glasses firmly in place groaning about debtors failing to repay their loans or cleverly evading enforcers. A permanent place in a dreary office had no appeal for a young man born in America to a billionaire Nigerian father with pockets deep enough for whatever may catch the boy's fancy.

It was music. Though his father was said to have objected at first, he has since become one of his biggest fan and supporter considering how far and how well Davido has progressed in his chosen métier.

In the beginning

From as young as five, six or so, Davido demonstrated a keen interest in musical instruments, fond of the keyboard mostly and in a church in GRA Ikeja where he grew up. Originally from Ede in Osun state, his father's sprawling compound was somewhere on Oduduwa Crescent Ikeja, a winking distance from other wealthy families: the Kingibes were neighbours; an uncle Ademola Adeleke who is the current governor of Osun state lived on 15B Sowemimo Street in the same GRA; an aunty who has since relocated to the U.S. had her residence nearby.

Now a hotel worker in Ogun state, Ochuko Ogenekaro once worked as a cameraman recording weddings and birthdays of socialites in Lagos. His mother was a private chef to an Indian family in the same neighbourhood as the Adelekes in the mid-nineties. He has fond memories of the Adeleke household. People were always coming and going, family, friends and visitors. And the children, among them a three-year-old handsome boy with full cheeks and cherry-red lips. Of course, nobody knew he was ever going to become the Afrobeat star of today. "I remember when Davido was a little boy then," says Ochuko, "He was a very humble boy and respectful." From GRA, Adeleke Senior parceled off his son to British International School Lekki for his secondary education after which the yet-to-be-known superstar went to America for his degree programme. The rest, as they say, is history.

Right now, much of Davido's history is still unfolding, complete with the smooth sailings and bumps. On his birthday November 21, for instance, he appeared in a Big Homies House podcast where he spoke his mind on the state of his country. His verdict?

Awful. Message? Forget it, he said, to African Americans in the U.S. aiming to come to Nigeria.

"It is not cool back home," Davido began in the now infamous declaration. "The economy is in shambles," he went on, insisting that "I do my part, I am an ambassador. When I go home and I am filming, I am not going to show the bad parts...I am talking about the situation in the country. Now the exchange rate is messed up; a lot of stuff is not going well."

Coming from Davido, his comment has raised hackles across Nigeria, drawing condemnation as well as praise from quite a number of people. Analyst Reno Omokri and politician Joe Igbokwe have called him out, declaring his birthday remark as unpatriotic and sort of de-marketing the country.

"My in-law Davido has made me sad by telling the world in America that Nigeria's economy is in shambles," Igbokwe fired back. (Davido is married to his heartthrob Chioma of Igbo parentage thus Igbokwe's reference to the musician as his in-law.) Omokri was more frontal in his riposte. "David Adeleke displayed ignorance and a lack of patriotism with that statement on a globally renowned podcast like the Big Homies House...Even worse, he said that to a foreign audience in a foreign country. Davido may have U.S. citizenship, but that does not mean he should de-market Nigeria." Some of Davido's fellow artistes have sided with him. Performer Paulo 57, defended Davido for his boldness in telling his mind, however brutally frank. "Please, you all should leave Davido alone, mad people. Davido spoke the truth. Nigeria's current economic state is so bad. With global companies leaving and local businesses facing significant losses, we face challenges. Let's acknowledge the reality and work towards a better future. God bless Nigeria."

For Michael Stephens known to fans

and music aficionados as Ruggedman, Davido has not said or done anything unpatriotic. Rather than blame the musician, the federal government should “address the situation. Okay, Davido has said what he said. Moving forward, the government should fix Nigeria so nobody will say such a thing again. All this barking all over the place is not fixing the nation. The hardship is too much.”

Massing behind Paulo and Ruggedman, Tiwa Savage has held the Nigerian leadership to account, insisting that much of what Davido said is not only true but has had adverse effects on entertainers like herself. The Nigerian economic situation has “transformed celebrities into hustlers. I think Nigeria is, but when you come to Nigeria, you will understand why we breed many superstars. To survive in Nigeria is something else, so the artistes that come out of Nigeria are just like hustlers. They are just hustling.”

If anyone expected an apology from Davido, it has not materialized. While his remark has polarized netizens, he tweeted a terse “God bless Nigeria,” his final word on the matter. Davido has also complained that, because of his birthday declaration about his country, plans are under way to deny him shows – either through sponsorships or even staging concerts. How true that is isn’t quite clear. But what is more than certain is that by February next year, Davido will take his rightful place with other musicians from across the world for recognition at the Grammys – win or not.

Of course, the 32-year-old Afrobeats star is not unfamiliar with such big-ticket event. On 25 June 2023, for instance, Davido performed at the Microsoft Theatre in Los Angeles during the BET Awards. Five years before, he performed during the

opening ceremony of the Africa Cup of Nations at Stade de l’Amitié Sino-Gabonaise in Libreville January 14. A workaholic no doubt, critics admit that judges for the 2025 Grammy must have been swayed by his most recent hit “Timeless” featured in the album “A Better Time.” Tellingly, the cover of the album shows a black and white photo of Davido cradling his adorable daughter, a poignant reminder of the loss he suffered the year before after his son Ifeanyi fell and drowned in his swimming pool in his Lekki residence. For the bereaved father, it was more of a self-consolatory paean for the devastating loss of a loved and dear one. Of the album itself, The Guardian music critic wrote thusly: “A Better Time is a celebration of life, love, and hope,

artiste of his generation, Davido donated \$500,000 to Covid-19 relief fund in Nigeria in 2020, along with personal protective equipment to hospitals across the country.

Combined with his musical ingenuity, Davido’s unexpected acts of generosity has endeared him to millions of Nigerian youths, no wonder the massive following on his social media, be it X, Instagram or the like. Part of the Big Homies House podcast, which has been conveniently forgotten by his traducers, Davido pointedly noted that the entertainment industry is one of the few success stories in Nigeria despite government not lending a helping hand to artistes. In a sense, it is his way of encouraging



and it showcases Davido’s versatility and talent as a Nigerian music and global music icon.”

Apart from delighting his fans with music and fancy footwork in stage shows in Nigeria and elsewhere, Davido’s reputation as a philanthropist has grown in leaps and bounds, a trait Ochuko traces to his parents. His unparalleled generosity has become the stuff of legend. For years and without fail, Davido gifted Nigerians with millions of naira on his birthdays. More than any other

the government to do more for performers because, in his words, they are the true ambassadors of Nigeria.

He couldn’t have been more correct, given his nomination along with five other of his contemporaries. And come February 2025 at the Grammys, Davido’s comment about musicians being the real ambassadors of Nigeria would’ve been revalidated if any of them wins.



Nigeria Armed Forces Shines at 2nd Africa Military Games (AMGA) 2024

By Abdulrazaq Auwal Mungadi

The Nigeria Armed Forces put on an impressive display at the 2nd Africa Military Games (AMGA), 2024, as they clinched a total of 234 medals. This remarkable achievement showcases the exceptional athleticism, discipline, and camaraderie of the military personnel representing Nigeria.

Initiated in 2002 through the collaborative efforts of the International Military Sports Council (CISM) and the Organisation of Military Sports in Africa (OSMA), the Africa Military Games have provided a platform for military personnel from different African countries to come together, relate and compete in various sporting events while networking.

The Nigeria Armed Forces' success at the event is a testament to their dedication, hard work, and commitment

to excellence. It is a proud moment for Nigeria and a reflection of the talent and skill present within the country's military ranks.

Celebrate the successful conclusion of the AMGA 2024, the President of OSMA Maj.-Gen. Abdullahi Maikano, described the event which was held at the National Stadium in Abuja, as a milestone of cooperation and unity in African Armed Forces.

Maikano, in his closing remarks at the event, stated that the 2024 games showcased extraordinary displays of skills, determination and sportsmanship as well as the very base of the African continent.

He explained that games goes beyond a platform for competition, but a celebration of shared values of unity.

He said, "We have seen athletes from diverse transcending borders differences, unity by common purpose to honor our nations and the ideals we stand for and we stand by".

While appreciating the Nigerian military other participating nation, the President Urges them to carry forward the cooperation, understanding, friendship and bond formed during the games. "We in the African Armed Forces, each event was not just a contest of strength and skills, but a testimony of your hard work, discipline, unwavering spirits and cooperation," he added.

Meanwhile, the Nigeria's Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), Gen. Christopher Musa, expresses delight over display of courage, skill and sportsmanship by officers and men from the 20 participating nations, describing the

exhibition as nothing short of inspiring. He added that the 2024 edition of competition is a testament to the increasing solidarity and collaboration among African military forces. He explained that teams proved that victory is not just about crossing the finish line first, but about embodying the values of unity and resilience.

He said, "Over the past several days, the National Stadium in Abuja has been a hub of camaraderie, excellence

"To the victors, I say congratulations. And to those who may not have won medals, know that your participation has enriched this event and reinforce the spirit of the Games," the defence chief stated while appreciating President Bola Ahmed Tinubu and his administration for supporting the military and ensuring the successful hosting of the event in Abuja.

Also speaking at the event, President Tinubu commended the armed forces

achieve when we unite, not just as soldiers, but as guardians of a shared destiny. Indeed, I am elated to witness not only showcase the possibilities we can achieve when we stand together, but also the strength that comes with our unity.

"This platform has provided an extraordinary opportunity for me to participate, exchange ideas, and explore innovative solutions to our shared challenges. Supporting activities such as these are not just recreational, they are a road to achieving optimal physical, mental, and emotional well-being," Tinubu said as he reaffirmed the resolve of his administration to rid Nigeria of security threats and violent crimes.

He equally promised to use his position as Chairman of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), to ensure stabilising solutions and extending their efforts across the continent.

Total of 234 medals as the competition concluded on Saturday



and sportsmanship. We witnessed a powerful demonstration of how sports can bridge boundaries, foster friendship and strengthening bonds among the Armed Forces of Africa.

"The athletes have showcased not just their physical prowess, but also their dedication, discipline and determination, qualities that define the military ethos," the CDC stated. Speaking further, Musa celebrated the successful conclusion of the games without casualty, describing it a testament to the fitness, preparedness and professionalism of the athletes. According to him, the remarkable outcome underscores the discipline and training that are hallmarks of the military institutions across Africa.

of Nigeria for the successfully hosting of the 2024 AMGA in Abuja. The president who was represented by his vice, Sen. Kashim Shettima, stated that the military demonstrated the true essence of unity and camaraderie that transcends borders and strengthens the ties that bind the African continent as one great family.

According to him, the grand event has more than just a display of athletic prowess, it has been a celebration of the enduring spirit of collaboration, the pursuit of excellence, and the unwavering resolve of our militaries to stand together.

"The games we have witnessed are a powerful reminder of what we can

night.

According to the medal table, team Nigeria topped the competition with a total of 114 gold, 65 silver, and 45 bronze across 21 sports, Algeria came second with 96 medals, consisting of 53 Gold, 22 Silver and 21 Bronze and it is billed to host the 3rd edition. Kenya hauled 59 medals consisting of 21 gold, 17 silver and 12 bronze to clinch third place, while Ghana, Ethiopia, and Tunisia rounded out the top six, finishing fourth, fifth, and sixth, respectively.

South Africa, Libya, and Uganda followed in seventh, eighth, and ninth, while Tanzania secured the tenth spot. Algeria has been picked to host the 3rd edition of the sports.



LT GEN OO OLUYEDE NAM CMH GSS psc mni FCM FCMH TSM GOM CCA
CHIEF OF ARMY STAFF

Congratulations **HAPPY CELEBRATION**

We felicitate with you and your well-deserved promotion to the rank of Four-Star General by the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria

Signed: Management