

NIGERIA VISION 20:2020-PROGRESS, CHALLENGES AND THE WAY FORWARD

By

Dr. Otive Igbuzor,

Executive Director,

African Centre for Leadership, Strategy and Development (Centre LSD),

Abuja, Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

The vision 20:2020 policy was articulated during the Olusegun Obasanjo administration (1999-2007) to make Nigeria one of the twenty largest economies in the world by the year 2020. We argued then that Nigeria vision 20-2020 agenda is an attempt by the Nigerian ruling class to hoodwink and deceive the people into believing that the state is striving to make Nigeria to become one of the 20 largest economies in the world by 2020. We argued that the Nigerian government had no intention, strategy and execution capacity to make Nigeria one of the largest economies by 2020.

On assumption of office in May, 2009, the Yar'Adua administration set up the National Council on Vision 2020 to develop a blueprint for the vision 20:2020 in collaboration with the National Planning Commission. In November, 2009, the Nigeria Vision 20:2020-Economic Transformation Blueprint for Nigeria was released to the public. In our view, the preparation of the strategy is a sign of progress and a necessary step for any organisation or nation to achieve its goal. In this write up, we examine the content of the blueprint, the unique features, deficiencies and the way forward.

NIGERIA VISION 20:2020

The Nigeria Vision 2020 economic transformation blueprint is a ten year plan for stimulating Nigeria's economic growth and launching the country onto a path of sustained and rapid economic growth to become one of the top twenty economies by 2020. The vision is anchored on the Nigerian Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS II) and the seven point agenda of President Umar Yar'Aduda.

The process of developing the vision included the formation of the National Council on Vision 2020; inputs from ministries, agencies, state and local governments as well as the private sector with the National Planning Commission playing a co-ordinating role. It also involved the analysis of 29 thematic areas and the participation of 12 special interest groups including the legislature, judiciary, media, women, youth, traditional rulers, religious groups, security, Nigerians in Diaspora, persons with disability, labour and the civil service.

The vision has a social dimension of a peaceful, equitable, harmonious and just society; an economic dimension of a resilient, diversified and industrialised economy; an institutional dimension of a stable and functional democracy in a market friendly and globally competitive business environment and an environment dimension of environmental consciousness and sustainable management. The realisation of the vision is hinged on creating the platform for success by urgently and immediately addressing the most debilitating constraints to Nigeria's growth and competitiveness; forging ahead with diligence and focus in developing the fabric of the envisioned economy and developing and deepening the capability of government to consistently translate national strategic intent into action and results by instituting evidence based decision making in Nigeria's policy space.

REVIEW OF THE VISION

The launch of the Nigeria Vision 20:2020 is a step in the right direction. Even though it took more than two years for the strategy to be produced; the production of a strategy is the first step towards the realisation of any vision.

There are certain unique features of this strategy especially when compared with previous strategies. First and foremost, the strategy is less neo-liberal than its predecessor the Nigerian Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS). The Nigeria Vision 20:2020 strategy acknowledges that “attention will be given to equity concerns about privatisation, the need to safeguard worker’s interests and to ensure that the process does not aggravate the already precarious unemployment problem in the country.” (p.25).

Secondly, the strategy advocates integrated sectoral planning to enhance linkage and synergy. This will ensure that agriculture, oil and gas and mineral and metal sectors serve as sources of inputs into the nation’s local manufacturing industry.

Thirdly, the vision advocates a cluster based approach to industrialisation which will turn the six geopolitical zones into economically viable industrial clusters built around different sectors based on the economic geography of the different zones.

Fourthly, the strategy will introduce performance management and accountability system for public service institutions.

Finally, the strategy plans to institutionalise monitoring and evaluation across all levels of government to improve their capacity to translate all strategic plans and programmes into outcomes and impacts.

However, despite the positive aspects of the vision, there are serious defects that could make the attainment of the goal of the vision impossible. First and foremost, the strategy glosses over or underestimates the political conditions or dimensions of the vision. While there are clear social, economic, institutional and environmental dimensions, there is a clear absence of political dimension or how to create the political conditions for the vision to be actualised. Meanwhile, some scholars have argued that political conditions in Africa are the greatest impediment to development.

Secondly, there are inconsistencies in the vision document in terms of what is possible and what the vision hopes to achieve. While the vision articulates the need for evidence based decision making in the policy space, the vision is anchored on unrealistic assumptions.

Achievement of the goal of the vision is anchored on “achieving broad based and double digit real growth rate annually.” (p.14). Meanwhile, the policy itself acknowledges that “the IMF predicts that Nigeria’s average economic growth rate will slow to 4.8 % between 2009 and 2014.” (p.15). There is no alternative prediction by the vision.

Thirdly, although efforts were made to involve different sectors in the formulation of the blueprint, the level of participation is not widespread and deep. It was more or less restricted to experts. The development of any country requires public ownership of the process of development of the strategy which cannot be said for the blueprint.

In addition, the strategy does not take into account some proven strategies that can help bring out people from poverty such as social protection measures and provision of housing and other social services for the poor. Indeed, the strategy states clearly that “providing new housing stock is not the only way to meet the demand for affordable housing.” (p.29).

Furthermore, one of the greatest obstacles to development in Nigeria is corruption. What needs to be done to bring about economic growth and development in known but corruptible transactions makes it impossible for objectives of policies and strategies to be realised.

Although the vision recognises that “economic growth and poverty reduction cannot be achieved in an environment of corruption and pervasive rent seeking”(p.14), there is no anti-corruption strategy either in the vision or in the country that is systematic, comprehensive, consistent, focused, publicized, non-selective and non-partisan.

Finally and perhaps most importantly, it has been documented that implementation is the graveyard of public policies in Nigeria. Although the strategy outlined what will be done differently, there is no concrete strategy on how the challenges of implementation of previous strategies will be overcome.

THE WAY FORWARD

The importance of strategy in the development of a nation cannot be over emphasized. Strategy occupies a central position in the focus and proper functioning of any nation. This is because it is a plan that integrates a country's major goals, policies and action into a cohesive whole. A well formulated strategy should therefore help to marshal and allocate a country's resources into a unique and viable posture based on its relative internal competencies and shortcomings, anticipated changes in the environment, and contingent moves by others. Strategies help to create a sense of politics, purpose and priorities for a country.

The formulation of the Nigerian Vision 20:2020 strategy is a step in the right direction. There are some positive aspects of the strategy including the introduction of integrated sectoral planning, cluster based approach to industrialisation, performance management and accountability system for the public service and institutionalisation of monitoring and evaluation. But there are deficiencies in the strategy which need to be corrected if the goals of the strategy are to be achieved. These include the necessity to create the political conditions for the vision to be realised; realistic predictions; promotion of citizen participation; social protection; dealing with corruption and addressing the challenge of implementation.

If the deficiencies identified above are corrected and the vision is executed efficiently, effectively and professionally, then Nigeria will be on the path of growth and development that will be beneficial to the citizens. It is clear to us that given current situation and realistic predictions, Nigeria is unlikely to join the league of the top twenty countries in the world by 2020 but implementation of the strategy will move Nigeria in the right direction.

ENDNOTES

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