

Responses: Making Nigeria a Great Place to Live and Work

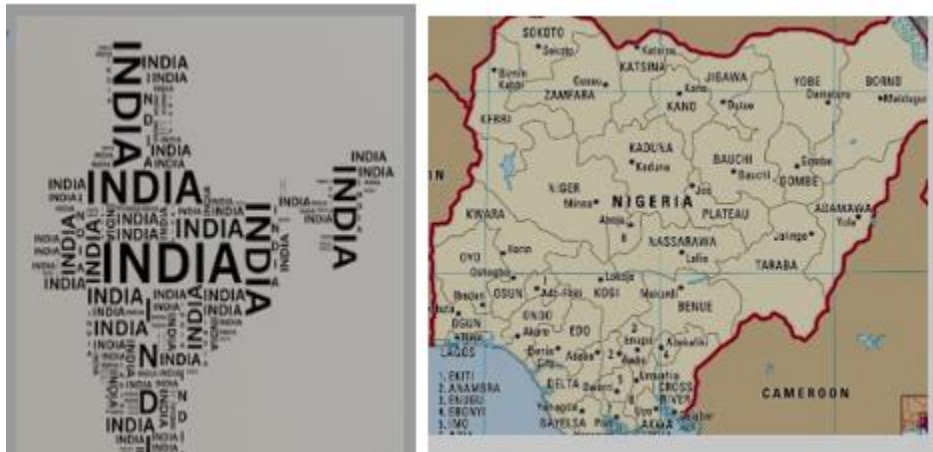
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1. Thanks to Kehinde Owolabi for a detailed response, given below:

Introduction

I have just read Akshai Aggarwal 's article on how to make Nigeria a great place to live and work. I want to celebrate and applaud Dr. Akshai Aggarwal brand of developmental journalism. There is no denying the fact that Akshai is passionate about contributing to the growth and development of the developing nations via his chosen type of developmental journalism, even though his native India is on the verge of breaking through into the league of developed nations.

Akshai in his short piece made laborious efforts to compare the great Nation of India and my beloved Nigeria.



His effort to compare the demographic similarities between India and Nigeria is very flattering. According to recent United Nations data, India and Nigeria have population sizes of 1,412bl and 216ml respectively as of 2022. India has the second largest population of the world, second only to China. In the same vein, going by UN projections, the population of India is projected to rise to 1,668bl by 2050; while Nigeria's population is projected to grow to 375 million by the same 2050. This in effect

implies that India will be the most populous nation and Nigeria the fourth most populous nation, in the world by the year 2050.

Secondly, Akshai narrated the similarities of post-independence experiences of Nigeria and India by the way of political upheavals and military interventions in Governance. Also, he correctly narrated our similarities in our demographic diversities in terms of tribal alliances, religious affiliations and language differences.

Lastly, Akshai referenced that both Nigeria and India are blessed with an abundance of natural and human resources. However, that is where the similarities end.

India is at the same time a nuclear power and an aspiring super power. In contrast, Nigeria is yet to indigenize or domesticate her industrial base. It therefore implies that the path that will make Nigeria a great place to live and work will be remarkably different from the path India has taken. In my opinion, Nigeria's path to being a great nation to live and work must take the following into consideration

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▪ **Nigeria must be restructured**

The founding fathers of the Nigerian state negotiated and agreed that Nigeria will be run or administered as a federation, through federating units called regions.. They agreed that power and resources should be devolved in such ways and manners that will enable each region develop at its own pace. However, the military intervention of 1966:

- overthrew the 1963 federal constitution.
- established the unitary system of governance.
- dissolved the regions, the federating units.
- and concentrated all powers of governance at the Centre.

This unitary system of governance encourages rent seeking and rampant corruption. Like the Lawyers will say: ***“Something can not stand on nothing”***.

No prudent economic and governance can stand on this model. Nigeria cannot become a great place to live and work unless we revert to true federalism, with about 12 regions constituting the federating units.

▪ **Nigeria Must Tackle and Tame Her Endemic Poverty**

Nigeria is a poor country. There is poverty in the land. The World Poverty Clock, an online tool for monitoring progress against poverty globally described Nigeria as the poverty capital of the world in the year 2020. These are some of the telltale descriptions of incidence of poverty in Nigeria.

- With a minimum monthly wage of #30,000, (which is about US \$70) a monthly wage of the average worker cannot buy a 50kg bag of rice which sells for #35,000, (which is about US\$79); It has become difficult for Nigerians to feed. Many are living below the globally recognized poverty line, which is \$1 per day.
- Any country worth living or working in must be able to guarantee access to electricity supply to all; accessibility here is defined in terms of availability and cost. Nigeria has failed in this regard after it stopped its long-standing subsidy of energy prices. Many in the rural areas have been disconnected from the national grid because they are no longer able to pay for the cost of energy. Even in the urban areas, the monthly cost of electricity for the average worker has become higher than their monthly income. Many urban Nigerians are also being disconnected or are disconnecting themselves from the national grid because electricity supply cost via the grid has become unaffordable.

▪ **Realignment of the fiscal policy with terms of the Africa Free Trade Agreement (AFCTA)**

Nigeria is a big player in Africa. Nigeria must be seen to be committed to implementation of the letters and spirit of the Africa Free Trade Agreement (AFCTA). Nigeria cannot afford to close its borders against its neighbors for too long. No nation can be self- sufficient. Opening the borders will facilitate inter-regional trade which will contribute to reduction of prices of food, medicine and other essential products.

▪ **A Redefinition of the Objectives of Foreign Exchange Management**

Nigeria must, as a matter urgency, redefine the goal of her foreign exchange management policy. The main goal of Nigeria should be to enhance the quality of life of all its citizens, through prudent management of its foreign exchange in ways that guarantee availability of forex to industrialists, be they multinationals, local conglomerates or SMEs.

Our monetary policy management policy must also set as top priority sectors such as agriculture, health and pharmaceuticals and non-oil exports, since these sectors should be given government support.

The governments have a lot to do in ensuring that township, cities and villages are livable so that both the Nigerians as well as the foreign investors or immigrants can live and work in a reasonably comfortable environment.
