

EDO STATE POLITICS: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS.
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All Protocols Observed.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I thank you for your invitation through your hard working Chairman Mr Godwin Ehigie to deliver this speech at this august occasion of your fifteenth National Conference here in Kassel, Germany.

The summary of Edo State politics is the story of a PDP government with a few octopuses as godfathers and godsons grabbing and devouring anything and every fund within their reach without bothering or caring about the feeling and wellbeing of their kinâ€™s men and women whose wellbeing they have vowed on oath to cater for. Therefore to remove this PDP government in Edo State is a task that all Edo State political parties must achieve by working together as one as working separately, that desired goal will be elusive.

Historically Edo people are of one origin as they migrated from the centre now Benin City at different times in the history of the ancient Benin Empire. The linguistic structure, culture and traditional rights are still a binding force even in the 21st century.

Some of us who are ardent believers of the oneness of origin of Edo people, strongly believe that Edo State politics should be the politics between kinâ€™s men and women or more closely between blood brothers and sisters and this unity of origin of Edo people should manifest in unity of purpose, unity of action, unity of decisions, unity in sharing and this unity should manifest in all aspects of Edo State politics. But it is not so presently.

The fight for the creation of Mid West Region and the success of the antecedent referendum was a manifestation of that unity of purpose of Edo people. The activities of Chief Dennis Osadebayâ€™s premiership and the disposition of social amenities and infrastructures in the old Mid West region and subsequently Bendel State under Brigadier Ogbemudia also reflected that unity of origin of the people in the region in spite of their diverse language dialects as amenities and infrastructures were favourably located to enhance that oneness of Edo and Delta people.

In recent times all that unity of purpose, unity of action, sharing and even the unity of origin is being challenged and in some situation, that unity is being eroded for the sake of individual aggrandizement, personal greed, self esteem and unholy acquisition of wealth and tremendous power over a largely pulverised population groaning under the strain of poor governance, insensitivity, mismanagement of public fund, lack of maintenance culture and total lack of accountability.

In the last eight years, we have had the PDP government in Edo State and the main achievement has been movement in the reverse direction. The good work of yesteryears has

been completely eroded through mismanagement and lack of accountability, poor maintenance culture and poor utilisation of revenue that accrued to Edo State from the federal government.

With the above background the people of Edo State are not at all in a dilemma rather they have become inured as their cries are never heard or are their yearning responded to. Is it then not obvious that they will punish their tormentors in the next polls? The question is, can they? Will they have the will and the opportunity to do so?

In the current dispensation when one of the godfathers is bringing in the army boys to disrupt rallies of opposition parties because the defence minister is from his clan and the godfather had a hand in his appointment as a minister. Such irresponsible actions of the godfather and the minister will definitely move all of us towards the cliff's edge, total anarchy and irreparable destruction if not checked and checked quickly by the federal government. The use of the military in political rallies is a very dangerous new dimension in Nigerian politics which must be resisted at all cost. No wonder the Senate is debating the issue presently as many well meaning Nigerians have spoken against it.

Will a people who have been raped politically over a period of eight years marked by a big fight between a supposed godfather and a godson for the control of the hearts, minds and appointments be silent and watch their mandate taken away again without raising a finger? Will the people not fight and secure their destiny and the future of their offspring? To think they will not do anything is to be naïve and ignorant. Edo State belongs to Edo people and not to a select few political rogues in agbada who do not care about the welfare of their own people.

We all know that the whole election process may be a farce as the PDP have been rumoured to have already formed a government in waiting for Edo State because they have total control of the machinery of the elections process, the army, the police, and INEC and Edo State civil service. I can tell you my brothers and sisters that the machinery is destructible and can be made inactive as its efficiency and output is human dependent and will be destroyed when deactivated by the good people of Edo State for the sake of the suffering masses of our people in the next election.

The outcome of this April elections is very crucial as its results will define Edo State politics for many years to come. If Edo State PDP is allowed to take the reigns of Edo State government again, Edo people can forget their future as a free people, their security, political and economic progress, their health and the health of their children, the education of their children and accept the total dominance of the PDP godfathers over Edo people for several years to come.

The consolidation of their oppressive hold on Edo people may never be reversed. It is to forestall the above ever happening that all good Edo people should come together as one and vote out the inefficient and arrogant PDP government of Edo State and vote in another party. All political parties should come together as one and chase the uncaring PDP government away from Edo State as their rule have been a scourge on our people.

In Edo State due to the modus operandi of PDP godfathers and their godsons the stranglehold on Edo people by another PDP government after the next election will be asphyxiating and may send many more able bodied men and women to their early graves from lack of means

of livelihood. That is why in the name of God almighty and Allah the merciful; in the name of the Spirits of our Ancestors, the yoke of Edo State PDP should and must be removed from Edo State at the next elections and their foot prints and all the evil they stand for and have perpetuated be swept out of Edo State domain for ever.

Whereas Obasanjo's PDP government at the centre in Abuja may have scored some obvious good points in governance and economic development, but in Edo State as you and everyone can see, the story is totally different. The PDP government has suffocated Edo people for the last eight years; they must not be allowed to perpetuate their insensitive attitude in government any more. The only way to see their back is to work together as one in unity and remove their burden over our people forever.

There is the campaign slogan that once the governor is changed, Edo State PDP will improve, that is total gimmick, a publicity stunt and a big falsehood as the PDP machinery will remain, the godfathers who caused the non-performance of the present governor will remain, their fund immolating machinery will remain. The same godfather apparatus that produced the first governor, also produced the new governorship aspirant so Edo State PDP will not change iota as behind the door manipulations will continue.

The tiger as we know it does not change its spots as the spots are an integral part of it so the PDP government can never and will never change as non performance, corruption, and insensitivity to Edo State people is also an integral part of Edo State PDP. Our people should not and must not be deceived. This is the time to stand up and be counted as an Edo man or woman and prevent another PDP government in Edo State.

If our people should fold their hands and bow their heads as they have done in the last eight years and allow the PDP godfathers to install another PDP governor again, they would have totally sold their birth rights. Our forefathers fought great wars that established the ancient Benin Kingdom, this is the fight of our times to remove an inefficient, boisterous and insensitive PDP government from Edo State or they will consolidate and put all of us in perpetual servitude. Therefore phone your brothers and sisters at home to abhor the PDP at the polls.

Ideally the best and most suitable person should rule and guide any organization or nation, but in Edo State for the purpose of non marginalisation, brotherhood; oneness and feeding that unity flame, leadership should reach all the senatorial districts so that they can have that sense of belonging to that larger Edo family. It is for that reason we believe that governorship should rotate through all the senatorial districts in Edo State. It will be the best arrangement in a bad situation until when our people are developed democratically to that level where national or state issues affecting the common man on the street become the prime factors for selecting candidates to such important position of a State Governor. Then electoral outcome will be based on their manifestos and not the present situation of sponsorship and selection by the political godfathers who are keen to maintain the status quo of dominance to the detriment of the generality of our people.

To progress in our state, the people must ensure that their votes count and every effort must be made to subjugate the political party machineries especially that of the ruling party to the will of the people. Accountability should be to the people rather than what obtains presently where accountability is to the party hierarchy which is to the detriment of the people.

In the last few years of PDP reign in Edo State, tribalism, tribal affiliations and ethnocentricity have been pushed to the fore to the detriment of our unity of origin as unique

Edo people. Ethnic and political leaders no longer speak of the general good rather it is what is best for his or her personal advantage or ethnic group advantage that is considered while the generality of the people of the state are completely forgotten in squalor and total helplessness. These ethnic leaders now have large follower ship as they have corruptly enriched themselves as they have been fed by the federal and state government subventions which produces the erroneous belief that all is well with Edo people which is far from the truth, a falsified situation that can easily lead to implosion.

In perpetuation of this ethnocentric politics, all the federal manpower allocation to Edo State including the Minister of Defence(Onolimeme), through Edo State quota in Population Commission(Otaigbe), National Economic Intelligence Agency(Ehizokhale), National Maritime Agency (Eigbadon), INEC(Egbase), Executive Secretary, National University Commission (Okojie), and the Chief Medical Directors of the University of Benin Teaching Hospital(Okpere) and the Federal Government Neuropsychiatry Hospital in Benin(Ihenyen) and even Edo State University at Ekpoma(Akpede) are all from a section of Edo Central Senatorial Zone courtesy of Chief Tony Anenih, Chairman Board of Trustee of the National ruling PDP to the detriment of law abiding Nigerian citizens from the North and South Senatorial zones of Edo State. A win by the PDP government in Edo State will make the above disparity in sharing federal government manpower allocation to Edo State a child's play as it is a case of the winners takes all.

Where there is love, a slice of bread can be shared and this attitude of total control and allocation of all available resources being it human, financial, or appointment by one individual in the name of the ruling PDP can no longer be tolerated.

You all will recall the rancour and intrigues that went into the nominations from Edo State into the Niger Delta Development Commission. The governor of Edo State submitted his list as the number one citizen in Edo State and Chief Tony Anenih submitted another list to counter the governor's list. This issue deteriorated into one of the nominee being excommunicated from his village of origin. Edo State can and should no longer allow a situation where we have a parallel government operating in the state; one by the political godfathers and the other by the political godsons. For Edo State and the people of Edo State to progress economically, ascend in their standard of living, improvement in their general health and to reduce the number of our mothers and sisters who die in childbirth and reduce the number of our babies who die soon after birth, we must have a unified government led by a governor chosen by the people and who listen to the people, listen to the State Assembly and public spirited individual who give unsolicited advice based on their training and expertise.

The type of ethnocentric politics prevailing in Edo State should not be condoned or allowed to be perpetuated. Edo North and Edo South should also have their share of the federal government largesse small as it may be that accrue to Edo State. The federal government personified by President Obasanjo may not be aware of this rape of justice by the Chairman Board of Trustee of the ruling PDP, on Edo people in distributing these choice positions to mainly the people of his village and ethnic origin in a section of Edo Central Senatorial zone. This position of distributor of federal government patronage has been largely taken away from the State Governor which in part contributes to the ongoing division and rancour in Edo State PDP. That will be unacceptable in future Edo State government.

In the fight to sustain the oneness of Edo People, we should invite our brothers from the North senatorial zone this time represented by Mr Adam Oshiomhole to the governorship of

Edo State. It will right a little of the numerous wrongs perpetuated by the PDP godfathers on Edo People. Rather to look at our brothers from Edo Central with suspicion because of the ill and greed of a few men, we should all come together; Edo North, Edo Central and Edo South and remove the cause of the division amongst our people due to personal greed and domineering tendencies of an individual who in recent times created a non historical position to subjugate all the chiefs from the Esan area of Edo State. We should not stand aloof and watch a handful of individuals destroy the good destiny of a people bound in history, origin and past glory. We should not watch while a handful of people sow the seed of discord, disharmony and animosity between and within Edo people. Edo unity must outlive our generation so that we continue to share the love and friendship we started as innocent students at school in Edo State many years ago.

Those of us fighting for a unified Edo State must not be made to look ridiculous by not redressing the present state of affairs in the State.

For Edo North Adam Oshiomhole to be assured of victory, he should reach out to his political opponents from the South Senatorial Districts especially Hon Arigbe Osula and Charles Idahosa whom he displaced as the gubernatorial candidate of AC. He should not squander Edo North chances and the opportunity to ensure that for the first time in Edo State history, our brother from Edo North is the governor of Edo State. His failure to heed this call will make his political ambition and a good chance of Edo North to preside in Osadebay Avenue end in quick sand. We said this 2005 in our meeting in Budapest Hungary long before Oshiomhole came into Edo State political scene and here we are in the 11th hour saying it again that Edo North should produce the next governor of Edo State. I therefore use this medium to call on my brothers who are the gubernatorial candidates from Edo South to yield to persuasion as the unity of Edo people surpasses any individual ambition.

We will feel fulfilled at the end of the elections if Adam Oshiomhole wins the Governorship of Edo State for the North Senatorial district, execute policies and programmes that will make all Edo people, irrespective of where they come from, to see themselves as one people, driven by a common dream and vision of making the state the best in the country and a point of reference in terms of development. His success as Edo State Governor will endear him to all Nigerians and would be a stepping stone for his Presidential ambition. The decision is his to make, to be all inclusive and be successful or to be parochial and confined to the political dustbin at the end of his tenure.

Finally my brothers and sisters from Edo State, if we have to be one, we must work as one, talk as one, act as one and share whatever resources we have as one people. We must right the wrongs of the last eight years. We must work to remove the political godfathers who have all outlived their usefulness for the good of Edo people.

The night is far spent, the day is at hand, let us therefore cast off the work of darkness represented by the godfathers and let us put on the armour of light and truth and in the name of God and our ancestors our good desire for the wellbeing of the people of Edo State will prevail and triumph over parochial and personal desires of a handful of people described as PDP godfathers in Edo State.

Thank you for your patience and attention. The second part of this speech will dwell on sowing, that is investment in Edo State private sector.

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