

# Host Nation Work Ethics and Diaspora Contributions to Economic Development in Nigeria

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## ***Abstract***

*In this article, I will undertake a critical analysis of the nature of work ethics that drive economic development in Nigeria. I will argue that the current work ethics is insufficient to drive economic development in Nigeria. This insufficiency is a factor in Nigeria's underdevelopment. Thus, I will show that the insufficiency of work ethics in Nigeria also affects the nature of diaspora remittance and investment in Nigeria. Consequently, I suggest that the diaspora experience of work ethics in developed nations can bridge the gap of economic development in Nigeria. I highlight the fact that a strong work ethics will mobilize the diaspora for positive investment in Nigeria and will also contribute to economic development in Nigeria.*

***Keywords:*** *Diaspora, Work Ethics, Remittances, Transnationalism.*

## Introduction

The diaspora is a person with, *at least*, two homes in two nations.<sup>1</sup> Du Bois, in his study of the lives and experiences of African-Americans of the 19th and early 20th centuries, speaks of the crisis which the diasporas, in this case, African-Americans, experience in their relationship with their two homes as *double-consciousness*. Du Bois' idea of double consciousness is not a straightforward expression of awareness of binationality. It is rather his expression of the confusion in the mind of the diaspora, in this case, the African American on how to make sense of his two worlds, first as an African and second as an American. The manifest helplessness of the individual in the face of the two identities is pungently expressed by Du Bois thus:

Why did God make me an outcast and a stranger in my own house? ... One feels his two-ness, —an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder as “unreconciled striving.”<sup>2</sup>

Contemporary diasporas are not bogged by the baggages of slavery, forced migration, and open, institutionalized racism that characterised the experience of African-Americans of Du Bois' era. Thus, double consciousness as applied to this paper holds a different meaning as clear awareness of their two heritages as well as their relationship, duties and expectations of the heritages. Appropriately, theirs is a strong refusal to be strangers in their own homes which they seriously seek to influence. Researchers date the beginning of this phenomenon of diasporas seeking to actively contribute in nation building and therefore in the development of their homelands to the great migration wave of the 19th century.<sup>3</sup>

The research framework that captures the contemporary diasporas' refusal to be strangers in their own homes is transnationalism. Thus, this article is

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<sup>1</sup> Nina Glick Schiller, Linda Basch, & Cristina Szanton-Blanc, “Towards a Transnational Perspective on Migration: Race, Class, Ethnicity, and Nationalism Reconsidered,” *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* (1992): 2.

<sup>2</sup> W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of the Black Folk* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 8.

<sup>3</sup> Mari Toivanen, *The Kobane Generation: Kurdish Diaspora Mobilising in France* (Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 2021),10.

a discourse in *transnationalism* in the study of Diaspora. As a framework, *transnationalism* is defined as the “processes by which immigrants build social fields that link together their country of origin and their country of settlement. Immigrants who build such social fields are designated ‘transmigrants.’”<sup>4</sup> Transnationalism owes its origin to the early 20th Century protestation against the rationalist model of the migrant as *homo economicus*.<sup>5</sup> Bourne<sup>6</sup> who first used the term in 1916 argued that migrants in America still maintain some cultural ties to their homelands against the dominant view of America as a melting pot into which migrants were assumed to fully assimilate.<sup>7</sup> Although extant research on transnationalism focuses on the idea of “social fields”, the sphere of transnationalism can be broader than what the idea suggests. We may, for instance, identify religious fields, political fields and economic fields as examples of linkages which migrants can build to connect their country of origin and that of settlement within the same framework of transnationalism. Alternatively, we may treat the second set of fields as subsets of the social fields in which case, the idea of social fields will also encapsulate such themes as religious, cultural, political, economic and such other subfields. It is not clear in which of the contexts, as co-fields or sub-fields, Schiller, Basch and Szanton-Blanc used the second set of fields when they invoked them as examples of the many relations migrants can hold across borders.<sup>8</sup> Transnationalism expresses the diasporas’ burden to influence their home nations, to contribute to their development even while living outside of them. It also reflects the distinct contributions which diasporas make to their host nations by virtue of their home nations. The influences and contributions can either be positive or negative. Bercovitch expresses this ambivalence in terms of whether

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<sup>4</sup>Nina Glick Schiller, Linda Basch, & Cristina Szanton-Blanc, “Towards a Transnational Perspective on Migration,” 1.

<sup>5</sup>Ato Quayson & Girish Daswani. “Introduction – Diaspora and Transnationalism: Scapes, Scales and Scopes,” in *A Companion to Diaspora and Transnationalism*, ed. Ato Quayson & Girish Daswani (West Sussex: Blackwell, 2013), 12

<sup>6</sup>Randolph Bourne, “Trans-national America.” *Atlantic Monthly* 118 (1916): 86

<sup>7</sup>Huib Ernste, Henk van Houtum, & Annelies Zoomers, “Trans-world: Debating the Place and Borders of Places in the Age of Transnationalism.” *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie* 100, no. 5 (2009): 578

<sup>8</sup>Nina Glick Schiller, Linda Basch, & Cristina Szanton-Blanc, “Towards a Transnational Perspective on Migration,” 1.

diasporas are peace makers or peace wreckers.<sup>9</sup> As peace wreckers, diasporas have historically funded radical political groups in their home lands, sponsored demonstrations, overthrew governments and even enlisted in terrorist networks. Conversely, as peace makers they promote democracy, peace and development.<sup>10</sup>

Host nations and homeland situations determine the trajectory of the relationship between the diaspora and the homeland. Ireland<sup>11</sup> made the claim that the experience of institutionally sanctioned isolation of migrants in a host state would more likely direct their attention towards the homeland. It may therefore be assumed that on the other hand individuals in more receptive and accommodative host nations are less likely to show interest in the affairs of their homelands. While we may not discountenance Ireland's observation above, diasporas' connection with their homelands is also influenced by memory, nostalgia, family ties, traditions, shared values, as well as economic and political conditions of the homeland. Among the Nigerian Igbo, for instance, the idea of *aku rue ulo* (wealth made in diaspora is meant for the homeland) is a heavy influence on *Igbo diaspora transnationalism*.

In this article, therefore, I examine the way in which Nigerian government mobilizes its diasporas to promote economic development in Nigeria. I also show that in spite of the government's effort to mobilize them, the nature of Nigeria's diaspora contribution to the development of the country is heavily tilted in favor of assistance to family members and therefore can be said to fund consumption rather than economic development. This is an instance of what Gal, Leoussi and Smith (2010) call poor or weak diaspora orientation towards homeland which explains the type of commitment that is a consequence of the developmental gap between diaspora's homeland and host nation. The connection is richer when the "homeland is developed and

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<sup>9</sup> Jacob Bercovitch, "A Neglected Relationship: Diasporas and Conflict Resolution," in *Diasporas in Conflict: Peace-Makers or Peace-Wreckers*, ed. Hazel Smith and Paul Stares. (New York: United Nations University Press, 2007), 42

<sup>10</sup> Maria Koinova, "Diaspora Mobilizations for Conflict: Beyond Amplification and Reduction", in *Routledge Handbook of Diaspora Studies*, ed. Robin Cohen and Carolin Fischer. (New York: Routledge, 2019), 311.

<sup>11</sup> Patrick Ireland, *The Policy Challenge of Ethnic Diversity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press)

dynamic, and somehow attuned to the emigrants' destination.”<sup>12</sup> This article shows that lack of trust in the economy is responsible for the weak connection which the diasporas have with Nigeria and determine the nature of their remittances. The article also shows the role of work ethics in economic development of nations. Nigerian Diasporas can be mobilized to remit for investment if the nation's economy is developed. Transfer of the work ethics of successful host nations of the Diasporas will contribute to economic development in Nigeria. The diaspora is key to this. Thus, a strong and viable work ethics will restore not only the diaspora confidence in the economy and the nature of their remittance, it will also spur foreign direct investment and strengthen local investments in Nigeria.

### **Designating the Nigerian Diaspora**

The term diaspora is polysemic. The fact that the history of every diasporic experience yields its own meaning of the term accounts for the polysemy. Quayson and Daswani trace the history and therefore the etymology of the term to the Septuagint, a name given to the Greek translation of the Hebrew Torah. The translation was to aid the reading, observation of religious rites of the third-century BCE Alexandrian Jews who had lost mastery of the Hebrew Language following their diasporic experience in Egypt. It was also intended to give the Alexandrian Courts access to Jewish Laws. In the course of the translation, the Alexandrian Jews crafted

a Greek neologism aimed at expressing a Biblical reality devoid of Greek equivalent. The Greek noun “diaspora” was coined after the verb *diaspeirō* (from *dia*, “through” and *speirō*, “to sow”), which literally means “to disperse” or “to scatter” (hence, by extension, “to take root elsewhere”) ... it is first employed in reference to God's curse and threat of dispersal of the Jews if they do not respect his divine commandments. It is hence true to say that Jewish translators created a word that designated the potential, and not actual, dispersal of the Jewish people<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>12</sup>Allon Gal, & Athena S. Leoussi, Anthony D. Smith, “Introduction,” in *The Call of the Homelands: Diaspora Nationalisms, Past and Present*, ed. Gal, Allon, Leoussi, Athena S. & Smith, Anthony D. (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2010), xv.

<sup>13</sup>Ato Quayson & Girish Daswani. “Introduction – Diaspora and Transnationalism: Scapes, Scales and Scopes,” 8-9.

In its historical appearances, some of which bent backwards to capture actual movement and settling of people from one location to another even in epochs preceding the coinage of the word, the term has incorporated such meanings that capture events like exile, forced migration, dispersion, captivity, slavery, colonialism. In the light of the above, Cohen observes the difficulty in offering any definitive definition of the term. He argues that existing definitions individually emphasize important features of what diaspora means.

Nothing demonstrates the importance of these features than Cohen's deployment of the Austrian analytic Philosopher, Ludwig Wittgenstein's game and rope metaphors. In the game metaphor, for instance, the analytic philosopher once raised a question about what defines a game. Is it the entertainment, the rules, the skill or the competitiveness? None of the above, yet all of the above. What Wittgenstein means is that individually, none of the four elements of a game is sufficient to capture the essence of a game but all of them when taken together easily fulfill that purpose. Cohen would then list nine features that characterized the various definitions of diaspora emphasizing the importance of all of them. They include: dispersal, expansion, retention, idealization, return, distinctiveness, apprehension, creativity and solidarity.<sup>14</sup>

Most of Cohen's features play a role in my attempt to delineate the Nigerian diaspora. Thus, the term Nigerian Diaspora refers to Nigerians who have migrated from Nigeria to any other part of the world including parts of Africa and who still retain valuable connection with Nigeria. Colin Palmer provides a timeline for such a migration for the entire Africa.

The first African diaspora was a consequence of the great movement within and outside of Africa that began about 100,000 years ago...The second major diasporic stream began about 3000 B.C.E. with the movement of the Bantu-speaking peoples from the region that is now the contemporary nations of Nigeria and Cameroon to other parts of the African continent and to the Indian Ocean. The third major stream, which I characterize loosely as a trading diaspora, involved the movement of traders, merchants, slaves, soldiers, and others to parts of Europe, the Middle East, and Asia beginning

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<sup>14</sup>Robert Cohen, *Global Diasporas: An Introduction* (London & New York: Routledge, 2003), 3

around the fifth century B.C.E... The fourth major African diasporic stream, and the one most widely studied today, is associated with the Atlantic trade in African slaves. The fifth major stream began during the 19th century particularly after slavery's demise in the Americas and continues to our times.<sup>15</sup>

Palmer's map is important but insufficient to the aim of this article. Its importance lies in its historicization of the diasporic process in Africa. Its insufficiency, on the other hand, stems from the fact that the periods he puts together have very little or nothing in common with Nigeria or many countries in present day Africa. The reason for this stems from the fact that Nigerian citizenship, like that of most African countries, was non-existent in the 19th century up to the mid-20th century.

What Palmer left undone is the creation of the sixth stream that would capture the character of the migration out of the post-colonial/independent African nation states including Nigeria. His assumption that migratory processes of 19th century Africa and that of the late 20th century up till this moment share the same features is heavily mistaken. Attainment of nationhood and political independence by African countries reshaped migratory processes in Africa. It also imbued the migrating Africans with a new identity which the earlier migrating Africans lacked. Palmer also failed to capture how modern political and economic realities in Africa influence migration. Hence, it should be noted that it was only after 1960 that the idea of a Nigerian took root, a fact amplified by the 1999 Nigerian Constitution which provides that: "A person is a citizen of Nigeria by birth if he is born in Nigeria before, or after, the date of independence, having either of his parent or grandparent belonging to an indigenous Nigerian community."<sup>16</sup>

What is emphasized in the definition above is that the term Nigerian diaspora applies to individuals who can successfully trace their origin to communities which constitute present day Nigeria. On the other hand, other persons, if they were born outside Nigeria and whose parents or grandparents fail to trace their roots to any Nigerian community cannot lay

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<sup>15</sup>Colin A. Palmer, "Defining and Studying the Modern African Diaspora," *The Journal of Negro History* 85, no. 1/2 (2000): 27–28. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2649097>.

<sup>16</sup>Federal Republic of Nigeria. *The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria*, 1999.

claim to being a Nigerian. Thus, this article will be limited to the definition of a Nigerian as stipulated in the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Accordingly, a Nigerian Diaspora is a Nigerian migrant or descendant of a Nigerian migrant who is conscious of his or her Nigerian root. The idea of root consciousness relates to the affinitive relation which the individual so-defined holds with Nigeria. This could be in the form of his interaction with his or her community in Nigeria, association with other Diaspora Nigerians in his country of abode or elsewhere, association with Nigerian government or its representatives in his country of residence, association with or interest in the affairs of at least one of the communities that make up Nigeria and demonstration of possession of some compelling memories about Nigeria.

Since the Fall of 2021 when I took up a sponsored Fellowship in an American University, I have had the opportunity of being immersed in a diaspora Nigerian community. My interaction with the community is an interesting study. For instance, the above qualities were observed among the older Nigerian diasporas I interacted with in America. They demonstrated strong consciousness or affinity with Nigeria. They considered Nigeria as a beloved homeland to which they may never return. They complained of the state of underdevelopment manifest in high incidences of poverty, insecurity, lack of basic amenities, dysfunctional healthcare system and comatose educational system as accounting for their inability or lack of plans to return to Nigeria on any permanent basis. In the midst of all these, they still nurture a compulsive desire to witness a developed Nigeria in their life-time. A developed Nigeria will uplift their pride among citizens of other nations with whom they interact in the diaspora. Robert Crane would as well have spoken of their wish for Nigeria when he uttered the following lines about Muslims:

One day the gloom will be lifted from the Nile Valley, the Indus Valley, and far beyond and [there will be] men and women who call themselves Muslims, citizens of the only remaining superpower in the world. . . Tomorrow, with them, will be the children of the Old World. Together they will say . . . verily I am one of the Muslims. The voices will echo from the four corners of the continent and resonate in corridors of power.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>Robert D. Crane, formerly a foreign policy adviser to President Nixon, a Muslim activist, speaking in a sermon at the American Muslim Council, AMC Report (February 1994), 8.

Their disposition is sharply contrasted with that of their offsprings, all of whom were born in the United States of America. To many of this set of offsprings, their parents are the only connection to Nigeria which they possess. They have no memory about Nigeria and nurture neither regret nor plan of a return. They proudly identify themselves as Americans and merely regard Nigeria as the distant land of their parents. It is difficult in our context to regard such persons as Nigerian diasporas even if their parents qualify as such.

### **Nigeria's Development Outlook**

There is an increasing tendency to describe Nigeria's development in negative terms. The genesis of this was Nigeria's failure to actualize its first national post-independence development plan of 1962-1968. The Plan's ambition to raise standards of living by modernizing and diversifying the economy was not met. Among the specific targets of the Plan were the goals of improving agriculture and industrialization, achieving annual 4 percent growth in GDP, expanding access to education and creating employment demands for graduates.<sup>18</sup> Areola who assessed the two immediate successor plans of 1969-1974 and 1975-1980 held that they achieved little in terms of meeting their overall objectives of "raising the standard of living of the people and removing regional inequalities in development."<sup>19</sup>

The situation has since worsened as no national development initiative has been completely met. The recent World Bank 2022 National Development Update for Nigeria notes that Nigeria is in a terrible economic crisis.<sup>20</sup> Among others, the Bank had reviewed its earlier estimate for the year 2022 that 6 million Nigerians would slump into poverty. In the updated review the Bank projected that an additional 1 million Nigerians would fall into poverty by the end of 2022 bringing the total figure to 7 million Nigerians who would succumb to poverty in 2022 alone.

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<sup>18</sup>USAID, "Nigeria: Study of Manpower Needs, Educational Capabilities and Overseas Study," Report 2, (August 20, 1965).

<sup>19</sup>Olusegun Areola, "Changing Resource Systems and Problems of Development Planning in Nigeria," *Resource Management and Optimization* 2, no 1 (1982): 43

<sup>20</sup>World Bank, *National Development Update for Nigeria: The Continuing the Urgency of Business Unusual*. World Bank Group, (June 2022).

One of the theories that sought to account for this development failure include the Neo Marxists theory of dependency relation between the metropolises and the peripheries.<sup>21</sup> In this relation, the metropolises are accused of siphoning resources, human and material to the metropolises. The Neo Marxists theory was particularly strong during the colonial era and is being revived to counter China's incursion into Africa.

In simple terms, the neo-Marxist explanation holds that part of Nigeria's development failure stemmed from its over-reliance on importation of goods and services, over dependence on crude oil as a major source of foreign exchange, and the inability to build a resilient and ethically minded workforce to drive development. The last point, inability to build a workforce, meant that industries were either not built or were shut down as soon as they were built. Multinational companies which target Nigeria as their major market in Africa relocated to other African countries from where they service Nigeria. The net effect of these is that rather than industrialize Nigeria remains what Osondu-Oti<sup>22</sup> described as a source of raw materials for developed countries who exchange their finished products with Africa's raw materials. Even China, the major metropole of 21st Century Africa, shows massive distrust of the capacity of Nigerian workforce. As a result, China's major businesses in the country are manned by Chinese workforce as is the case in other parts of Africa. Meagher notes that this state of affairs is responsible for the high level of joblessness in Nigeria which on the other hand accounts for the unprecedented social unrest being witnessed in Nigeria.<sup>23</sup>

Nigeria has adopted various responses to its development challenges ranging from efforts at expansion of access to education and emphasis on Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM), Africanization/indigenization, external borrowing, structural adjustment programme, debt relief, increase in taxation, and reliance on diaspora

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<sup>21</sup>Ini Udoka, "History and the Challenges of Underdevelopment in 21st Century Africa," *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 16 (2005):72.

<sup>22</sup>Adaora Osondu-Oti, "China and Africa: Human Rights Perspective," *Africa Development / AfriqueetDéveloppement* 41, no. 1 (2016): 49–80.

<sup>23</sup>Kate Meagher, "The Jobs Crisis Behind Nigeria's Unrest," *Current History* 112, no.754 (2013): 169.

remittances. Its persistent drift is responsible for the World Bank's call that Nigeria's salvation needs continuous urgent business unusual approach.<sup>24</sup>

### **The Diaspora Contribution to Nigeria's Development**

Recent scholarship recognizes an increase in the incidences of migration. This is attributed to cheaper transport and communication systems which have enabled even poorer individuals to migrate from their area of poverty to a place of relative affluence where they hope to live a better life. Bakewell terms this movement from developing countries to developed countries, *South-North Movement*, and holds that its driving force is material wellbeing of the migrant.<sup>25</sup>

Successful migrants have linked their success to the success of their home nations which they now impact with the goodies of their host nation. Consequently, migrant populations have increasingly become integral agents of development of their home nations. The recognition of this fact in Africa is responsible for their being variously referred to as "development assets", "the continent's major donors," "Africa's 6th Region," among others. Toivanen observes that diaspora contributions to homeland development take "different forms depending on the diaspora communities' profiles, the needs of the 'homeland' and the possibilities in the host societies to contribute to the homeland."<sup>26</sup>

As shown earlier, diaspora contributions can be viewed either negatively or positively. When viewed negatively, diasporas are seen as responsible for the problem of brain drain which bedevils developing nations including Nigeria. Reference is often made to the high number of trained personnel and professionals who migrate from Nigeria to take residence in other countries. Attention is drawn to the massive resources invested in their education by the country which is reaped by foreign developed countries. Even the diaspora remittances which have been hailed as their greatest contribution to Nigeria's development have also been cast in negative

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<sup>24</sup>World Bank. *National Development Update for Nigeria*, 2022.

<sup>25</sup>Oliver Bakewell, "Migration, Diasporas and Development: Some Critical Perspectives." *Jahrbücher Für Nationalökonomie Und Statistik / Journal of Economics and Statistics* 229, no. 6 (2009): 791.

<sup>26</sup>Toivanen, *The Kobane Generation*, 9

lights. Among its highlighted shortcomings is the claim that it caused and entrenched inequality among people.<sup>27</sup> It also caused conspicuous consumption among the people to whom it is remitted rather than spurring them into productive investment.<sup>28</sup> Nigerian Diasporas are also a source of negative image for the country as the difficulty in breaking into the mainstream life of their host nations lead them into all sorts of crimes as survival techniques. Viewed from this angle, diasporas contribute to underdevelopment.

The positive contributions of diasporas can be in form of political participation,<sup>29</sup> cultural exchanges,<sup>30</sup> or economic remittances and participation in development.<sup>31</sup> The population of the Nigerian diaspora is pegged at 17 million people and their contribution to national development is mainly in the form of remittances the value of which was put at 20 billion dollars for the year 2021.<sup>32</sup> Series of interviews I conducted with select Nigerian diasporas show that they remit for the following reasons: (1) As assistance to family members in Nigeria which they hold is fueled by their perception that Nigerian economy is weak and therefore unable to support family members. (2) Investment to cushion retirement especially for those investing in cheaper real estate which they hope to reap from on retirement; and (3) Savings for those who are planning a return. Despite Nigeria's

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<sup>27</sup>R. H. ADAMS Jr. "The Effects of International Remittances on Poverty, Inequality and Development in Rural Egypt," *Research Report* no.96, International Food Policy Research Institute, (1991).

<sup>28</sup>C. Keely & Bao Nga Tran, "Remittances from Labor Migration: Evaluations, Performance, and Implications," *International Migration Review* 23, no.3 (1989).

<sup>29</sup>G. Cano & Alexandro Delano (2007). The Mexican Government and Organized Mexican Immigrants in the United States: A Historical Analysis of Political Transnationalism (1848–2005), *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 33, no.5 (2007): 695–725. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13691830701359157>

<sup>30</sup>José Itzigsohn and Silvia Giorguli Saucedo. "Immigrant Incorporation and Sociocultural Transnationalism." *The International Migration Review* 36, no. 3 (2002): 766–98.

<sup>31</sup>José Itzigsohn, Dore Cabral, C., Hernandez E. Medina, & O. Vazquez, "Mapping Dominican Transnationalism: Narrow and Broad Transnational Practices," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 22, no.2 (1999): 322. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/014198799329503>

<sup>32</sup>Sodiq Omolaoye. "Diaspora Remittances Hit \$20b, says NIDCOM — Business — The Guardian Nigeria News – Nigeria and World News." *The Guardian Nigeria*, July 22, 2022. <https://guardian.ng/business-services/diaspora-remittances-hit-20b-says-nidcom/>.

celebration of huge diaspora remittances, studies have since shown that diaspora remittances do not drive economic development and indeed contribute so little in poverty alleviation.<sup>33</sup>

Besides their foreign remittance value, diaspora Nigerians also bring their expertise or technical know-how to bear on the country. Many of them function as medical doctors, lawyers, professors, accountants and so on. Diasporas in this category constitute those who make the often-difficult decision to return home. They broaden the service and productive industries in the country by bringing their foreign training and experience to bear on local conditions.

Given their well-advertised relevance to development, many countries now seek ways to mobilize their diasporas for effective contribution. In Nigeria, the government enacted an Act in 2017 which established the Nigeria Diaspora Commission (NIDCOM). The overall duty of the Commission is to explore, attract and manage diaspora contributions to the development of Nigeria. Since its establishment, the Commission has published some of its plans which include the development of diaspora database which will serve as a vehicle of diaspora engagement with Nigeria. The different ways in which the database will benefit the Nigerian Diaspora include the following: (1). Diaspora voting (2). Diaspora Mortgages for Housing (3). Incentives for investments such as the Nigeria Diaspora Investment Trust Fund and the Diaspora Bonds (4). Land and Property allocations (5). Political and community appointments and recognitions like 600 diaspora magazines. (7). Interventions and Credit loans for Agriculture and Solid Minerals Development through the CBN and BOI initiative etc.<sup>34</sup>

There is so much to criticize about NIDCOM's objectives. For instance, it will amount to robbing Peter to pay Paul to mobilize mortgage funds for diaspora when such facilities are not available to home-based citizens. Government's hope of motivating diaspora investment in Nigeria fails to

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<sup>33</sup>Hein de Haas, "Migration and Development: A Theoretical Perspective," *The International Migration Review* 44, no. 1 (2010): 234

<sup>34</sup>AbdulrahmanTerab, "Development and Synchronization of Diaspora Database at the Sub National Levels with NIDCOM for Effective Mobilization and Integration of Nigerians in the Diaspora for National Development." <https://nidcom.gov.ng/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/>

realize that the same reason Diasporas have failed to invest is heavily linked to the same reason why many productive industries either collapsed or left Nigeria. Thus, there is a need to create conditions necessary for investment and development. The chief among these conditions is the availability of disciplined and ethical work force on whose shoulders would rest the economic advancement of Nigeria. The availability of conditions will motivate not only Diasporas but also foreign investors to invest their resources in Nigeria as it would guarantee profitability and security of investment.

### **Work Ethics and Economic Development**

In 1904, Max Weber,<sup>35</sup> a German Sociologist, established that work ethics was the most important condition in the development of global Western nations in the capitalist era. At the core of Weber's thesis is that the Protestant Work Ethics, with its privileging of individualism and hard work, was responsible for the 18th and 19th Century Industrial Revolution in Western Europe. Weber's book inverted Karl Marx's claim that situated capitalism as a historical process that only emerged during the industrial revolution. For Weber, Capitalism was an old system existing in ancient societies of Egypt, India, China, Babylon and even Medieval Europe. It only took a new form, what he called modern capitalism, during the industrial revolution. The old capitalism was simply a traditional "regular orientation to the achievement of profit through (nominally peaceful) economic exchange." Modern capitalism, on the other hand, involves a "rational organization of formally free labour." Giddens<sup>36</sup> explains the entailment of Weber's characterisation of modern capitalism.

By 'rational organization' of labor here Weber means its routinised, calculated administration within continuously functioning enterprises. A rationalized capitalistic enterprise implies two things: a disciplined labor force, and the regularized investment of capital.

Investment of capital without the corresponding disciplined workforce, Weber holds, is detrimental to any economy. Thus, economies grow to the

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<sup>35</sup>Max Weber. *The Protestant Ethics and the Spirit of Capitalism* (London & New York: Routledge, 2005)

<sup>36</sup>Anthony Giddens wrote this in his "Introduction" to Max Weber's *The Protestant Ethics and the Spirit of Capitalism*, xi.

extent that capital investment meets a labor force amply imbued with the knowledge that the essence of capitalism is not just blind accumulation of wealth for its own sake. Rather capitalism entails a tendency towards reproduction and reinvestment. Weber identifies the Protestant ethics as possessing this drive for reproduction and reinvestment and therefore responsible for modern capitalism. He found the proof of this in the idea of the elect and predestination.

The notion of the elect captures the Biblical idea of the chosen. Protestants, especially Calvinists, believe that God has already chosen the Saints. This is directly linked to the idea of predestination, which expresses the fact that there is nothing anyone can do to be so chosen by God. However, success in this worldly life could be a sign of being chosen by God. Consequently, Protestants developed an unprecedented commitment to earthly success as it was a direct proof of being chosen by God. This is contrasted with the Catholic ethics which promoted monastic asceticism with its attendant disinterestedness in the affairs of the world.<sup>37</sup>

Researchers who have studied the application of Protestant ethics in non-Western societies hold the view that it also influenced prosperity, improved living conditions and general economic development of those societies. The Balokole of East Africa is one such society whose economic fortune relative to their neighbors is credited to their application of protestant ethics. Taylor referenced the connection between the Protestant ethics and the economic wellbeing of the Balokole people thus:

Evangelical Christianity, with its Gospel of individual conversion, the good news of rescue and the power to be different, not only appeals to, but also creates a bourgeoisie. The revival movement, for example, calls peasants and herdsmen to rise above the ruck, morally and spiritually. In a very short time, they have inevitably risen above it socially. Money that was spent on drink or women or divination is put into the home. In a few years husband and wife are justifiably proud of their house and garden, of their children, and of their reputation. Even the simple, older village women have a new outlook; in relationship to the peasant society, they are evoluis. A new class

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<sup>37</sup> Max Weber. *The Protestant Ethics and the Spirit of Capitalism*, 7.

is being created, fashioned by the Gospel in alliance with modern enlightenment.<sup>38</sup>

Critiques of the Protestant Ethics and its influence on the economy often buttress their points by explaining that other ethical considerations could be responsible for the economic growth of a people. Winter, for instance, holds that the connection made between Balokole economic progress and Protestant ethics is without any evidence and ignores the historical and cultural contexts of Weber's writings.<sup>39</sup> Such arguments do not take away from the simple implication of Weber's book which is that work ethics play important roles in the success and failure of nations in the modern capitalist system.

The current success of contemporary Western societies, given the waning influence of religion in Western public life, has also shown that a different kind of ethics could be responsible for the economic progress of such societies. Consequently, emphasis is now placed on non-theistic ethics which emphasize the role of reason in ethics rather than divine forces as determinants of morality. One important figure in this area of thinking is Hannah Arendt<sup>40</sup>. She distinguishes between two types of lives, *vita activa* and *vita contemplativa* (active life and life of contemplation). While ancient philosophers favored *vita activa* as the desirable life, Marx in the modern era favored *vita activa*. Without favoring any, Arendt declared that her interest is in *vita activa* which she held has three components, labour, work and action. Labour is the survival routine of all animals including humans. People labour to eat and survive just like animals. It is instinctual. Work, on the other hand, is the arena of human creativity. It is through work that man recreates the world and improves it through production of artificial materials. It is also through work that the freedom of man is expressed and meaning is given to his life. Arendt's understanding of work imbues the concept with new meaning and bestows in the individual the new *raison d'etre* for work that is devoid of all pretenses to other worldly motivation.

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<sup>38</sup>John Vernon Taylor, *The Growth of the Church in Buganda*, (London: SCM Press, 1956), 257.

<sup>39</sup>Mark, Winter. "The Balokole and the Protestant Ethic: A Critique." *Journal of Religion in Africa* 14, no. 1 (1983): 59. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1594934>.

<sup>40</sup>Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998)

## **Diaspora and Work Ethics for Nigeria**

Nation states now attempt to control the nature of transnational contributions which diasporas make. This control or lack of it may make the difference between whether a diaspora group makes a negative or positive contribution. A diaspora group is more likely to make a positive contribution if it is in contact with its home nation government, if it is convinced of the sincerity and commitment of that government to nation building, and if it views itself as a partner of the government in the progress of the nation. Negative contribution happens when the diasporas or a section of them perceive the government in a bad light. This is always the case when the government is said to be corrupt, oppressive, and incompetent. It is also the case when the diasporas live in unfavorable conditions in their host nations like when they experience racism or xenophobia in their new environment. Diasporas in these cases have historically mobilized to function as alternative governments, call for international intervention in their home governments, and where possible effect regime change. Their grudge with state actors stem from conviction that they were responsible for creating conditions at home that made them victims abroad. In response, they seek to create a counter condition that would aid their return. Muzondidya who studied Zimbabwean diasporas in South Africa holds that all the people he interviewed hoped to return to Zimbabwe once economic and political normalcy is restored.<sup>41</sup>

Thus, a nation state which is alive to the destabilizing influence of diasporas' negative contribution will take the initiative of mobilizing them towards a positive contribution. Nigeria did exactly this with the establishment of Nigeria Diaspora Commission (NIDCOM). NIDCOM's intervention, however, has not led to strong diaspora orientation. All of the twenty diasporas I randomly interviewed for this study hold that they remit mainly to family members and friends. Eight of the interviewees who claimed to have remitted in the past for investment complain of over taxation, of daily harassment from government agents and of outright

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<sup>41</sup> James Muzondidya, "Makwerekwere: Migration, Citizenship and Identity Among Zimbabweans in South Africa," in *Zimbabwe's New Diaspora: Displacement and the Cultural Politics of Survival*, ed. JoAnn McGregor and RankaPrimorac (New York &Oxford: Berghan Books): 49

mismanagement of their investments by family members or hired managers. Thus, as far as this state of affairs persists remittance will remain in favor of weak orientation.

Every economy is as good as the ethics of works that animates it. And this includes its vision of work; its system of rewards including reward expectation and actual reward. Diaspora Nigerians are participants in the life and experiences of their host nations. They are conditioned by these lives and experiences as co-builders of the society in which they found themselves. Abike Dabiri, the Director of NIDCOM, aptly captures the various impactful contributions which Nigerian diasporas make to the economy of their host nations.<sup>42</sup> However, the question about why Nigerians who while at home cannot transform their home nations become acclaimed agents of transformation of their host nations finds its answer in the nature of ethics that determine actions including work in their host nations and their homeland.

I have rummaged literature on Nigeria's work ethics without finding any worth the name. Papers on work ethics in Nigeria are more of moral codes that guide professionals without any philosophical reflection that would transform them into ethics. Thus, it can be said that we have no work ethics but we have morality of work which are variously derived from the morality of traditional Nigerian societies; and from their religious scriptures whether the Bible or the Koran. I shall buttress my point with the morality of work of Igbo society which is couched in a proverb, *aka ajaja na ebute onu mmanummanu*. (The soiled hand feeds the oily mouth). A hermeneutical interpretation or philosophical reflection on this proverb yields a connection between work and food. Thus, the essence of work is food production. Thus, one who has gotten enough food needs not work again. What he has should be stored in the barn pending when the need arises. This type of thinking is responsible for the seasonal nature of work in traditional Nigerian societies. Foods are cultivated and harvested in certain seasons. Thus, there is time to soil the hand and another time to oil the mouth. This mentality is taken into the corporate and formal sector.

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<sup>42</sup>Omolaoye, "Diaspora remittances Hit \$20b", <https://guardian.ng/business-services/diaspora-remittances-hit-20b-says-nidcom/>.

The worker does not view his work as entailing total dedication and commitment throughout the work period. He factors some time in between it for rest, gossip, and so on thus creating a season and out of season of work out of his daily work experience. Such an ethics holds no meaning outside the need for consumption. The loophole in this attitude to work invokes the urgency of a work ethic that transcends the simple question of working to eat. Our new ethics of work must be such that will drive us to compete with the already developed nations of the world.

Nigeria's first point of call for evolving a productive work ethics is the Diaspora. We must be able to inquire from them the work ethics that animate work in their various locations. Thus, what the diasporas need to remit urgently is the knowledge of work ethics of their host nations. This will be in form of education and trainings that will consciously transform the Nigerian work environment. The attempt is to distill what is good in the work of ethics of host nations as a stop gap measure. In the long run, the ultimate solution will be to evolve a work ethic that will derive from the African person's vision of the world. The African's vision of the world is an intricate world where the essence of life is attainment of immortality as ancestors.

### **Conclusion**

What contribution can the Nigerian diaspora make towards the development of Nigeria? This is the question which the preceding sections of this article considered. Emphasis has been placed on diaspora remittances as the biggest contribution which diasporas can make to national development. Critics of diaspora remittances have dismissed the claim that they can lead to the development of any nation. One of the possible reasons for this is the fact that most remittances go as support to family members and rarely as investment. The verdict of the historic costructuralist is that current diasporic movement, described as "*flight from misery* caused by global capitalist expansion, ... is therefore inherently unable to resolve the structural conditions that cause migration. *Quite on the contrary, migration is seen as aggravating problems of underdevelopment.*"<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>43</sup>Haas, "Migration and Development," 233

The above verdict hinges on the nature of diasporic contribution. Thus, I have presented an argument that rather than money or remittances, what homelands need from diasporas is knowledge transfer. My interest is mainly in intangible processes that sustain productive ventures in developed nations. In this light, I identified transfer of work ethics as an important area of contribution which the Nigerian diasporas can make towards the development of Nigeria. This emphasis on work ethics is informed by the well-documented evidence that their work ethics was the most important intangible variable in the success of developed nations. Thus, a short-term approach is to understudy and apply the work ethics of those developed nations that host the Diasporas. The long-term approach is the evolution of Nigerian centered work ethics that derive from the Nigerian peoples' vision of the world.

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