Imagine Nigeria

Exploring the Future of Nigeria

ABRIDGED VERSION

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Imagine Nigeria is a report by the High Level Panel established to explore the Future of Nigeria

THE MEMBERS of THE HIGH LEVEL PANEL

Yemi Osinbajo, SAN,
Chair, Vice President
of Nigeria

Zainab Shamsuna Ahmed
Minister of Finance,
Budget & National
Planning

Clem Agba
Hon. Minister of State
for Budget & National
Planning of Nigeria

Ibrahim Gambari
Chief of Staff to the
President of Nigeria

Adiba Ighodaro
Founding Member &
Former Partner at Actis

Mohamed Yahya
Resident Representative
of UNDP Nigeria

Myma Belo-Osagie
Partner Emerita
(Of Counsel) Udo Udoma
& Belo-Osagie

Shamsuddeen Usman
Economist & Banker

Tonye Cole
Co-founder & former
Group Executive Director
of Sahara Group

Udoma Udo Udoma
Immediate past Nigerian
Minister of Budget &
National Planning

THE HIGH LEVEL PANEL WAS SUPPORTED by A STEERING COMMITTEE

Adeyemi Dipeolu
Simon Ridley
Tunji Lardner

The Technical Secretariat, undertook the day-to-day activities in support of the Advisory Board.

Olugbenga Adesida, Lead Advisor
Somkele Awa-Kalu
Sylvain Boko
Saenandoah Tiradentes Dutra
Olamide Fagbuji
Jonathan Glennie
Paulo Roberto Gitirana de Araújo Guerra
Chris Ngwodo
Kolawole Omole
Lanre Shasore, Coordinator
Akin Soetan
Lai Yahaya
Aisha Tijjani Yusuf

Abbreviations

#ENDSARS   Decentralised social movement comprised of a series of mass protests against police brutality in Nigeria, which called for the disbanding of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS), a unit of the Nigerian Police.

5G   5th generation mobile network (global wireless standard)

AfDB   African Development Bank

APIs   Application Programming Interfaces

ASF   Africa Standby Force

AU   African Union

DIY   Do-It-Yourself

ECOMOG   Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group

ECOWAS   Economic Community of West African States

FAANG   Facebook, Amazon, Apple, Netflix, Google

GaaP   Government as a Platform

GDP   Gross Domestic Product

GHG   Greenhouse Gas

ICT   Information and Communications Technology

LBC   Left Behind Class

MDAs   Ministries, Departments, and Agencies

NBS   National Bureau of Statistics

NYSC   National Youth Service Corps

R&D   Research & Development

UBI   Universal Basic Income

UNFCCC   United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

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"My aspiration for Nigeria is to see us get to a place where we focus more on local content creation and attain self-reliance; a Nigeria where we recognise, appreciate and utilise our local content."

Albert Alexander Kure

Reflect on the future.
Brainstorm big ideas.
Find alternative possibilities.
Imagine a sustainable
and prosperous Nigeria,
and make it happen.

"I want to see a Nigeria (Africa) where the West looks up to us for solutions."

Tolulope Olusola Adetunji
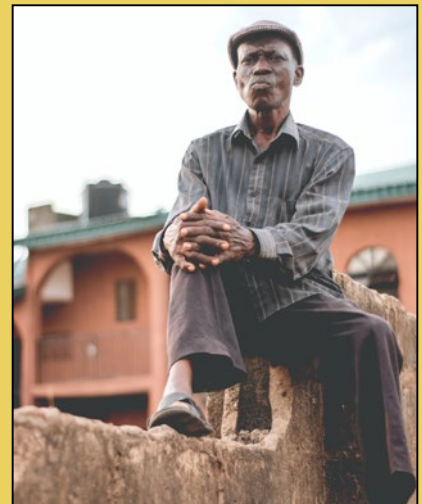
"I want to see an accountable and just Nigeria, where resources are employed to their full potentials. A Nigeria where everyone has access to affordable and sustainable energy. A Nigeria united by a common purpose of national progress and development."

Muhammad Mubarak Abdulkarim

"I want to see a Nigeria that is self-reliant and not dependent on the rise or fall in the price of a particular resource when we are blessed with so many others."

Bernice Abeku Achi

"I want to see a Nigeria where we have quality education, where our products can handle our situation and provide solutions."

Mika'il Haruna Daya

"I will like to see a Nigeria where our most vulnerable and marginalized populations become active participants in their own sustainable growth and development."

Zaliha Abdulhamid Lawal

"I want to fall endlessly in love with Nigeria. More importantly, I want Nigeria to fall in love with me, first as an African woman, as a Nigerian, as a young person, as an active citizen, as an entrepreneur and as a hardworking person. Because if you fall in love with me, you will make things easy for me to thrive."

Ayisat Olabimpe Agbaje

Preface

The members of the High Level Panel were invited to shepherd this project from concept to implementation due to a shared belief in the future of Nigeria and the role it could play in the transformation of our continent, Africa. The uniqueness of this project is to be found in the fact that it is a bold and unfettered look into Nigeria's future in the coming decades of the twenty-first century, rather than a national plan comprising projects. It provides a licence to imagine a Nigeria better than its storied past and its compounded present. There is no better time to think about the future of Nigeria than now; and this is for several reasons.

First, the world is under the assault of the Coronavirus pandemic which has led to a global health and economic crisis since early 2020. Despite the havoc wreaked by the pandemic, it has also provided the world an opportunity to see and to learn that existing systems are simply not sustainable and that there is a need for change. The main question however is: What changes will be needed to build a just post-COVID-19 world?

Beyond the COVID-19 pandemic, Nigeria faces critical decisions. Among these is the looming end to the oil economy which provides our dominant export product and generates the most foreign exchange earnings for Nigeria. We are also dealing with effects of climate change, which is already impacting our country in various ways, from driving migrations to affecting the livelihoods of many. There are also those who seek to threaten the peace and stability of the country. Furthermore, the voices calling for greater inclusion are getting louder.

While Nigeria is facing these challenges and many others, the country also has numerous and significant opportunities which can be seized for national transformation. Its sheer size and population makes it the biggest market in Africa. It has the biggest economy; Nigeria remains the major power on the continent. It has been a leader in international peacekeeping efforts, and its creative industry - from film, music to design - provides the country with significant soft power that is unmatched. Nigeria is looked up to by many in and outside of Africa to help lead the continent. In addition, the Nigerian private sector and, in particular, the young people are leading a technological revolution. Today, Nigeria is the preferred destination of foreign investors in Africa especially in the technology sector. Nigerian firms are expanding across the continent and Nigeria is now expected to help lead the Africa Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA).

In light of this belief, our Panel, with the support of our technical team, led a strategic reflection and conversations on the future of Nigeria. The idea was to engage as many Nigerians and experts in and outside of Nigeria as possible to think about the future in order to answer some questions: Where are we as a nation? What are the possibilities of the future? What must be done to ensure the transformation of Nigeria?

These questions formed the basis of the various activities undertaken over a 9-month peri-od to produce this report and its associated outputs. The report is presented in three parts: Part one focuses on analysis; Part two presents the global trends and future scenarios for Nigeria while Part three proposes five recommendations to transform Nigeria. We are convinced that if all Nigerians come together we can bring about change and the desired future for all. Our recommendations centre on our nation working towards building a cul-ture of innovation, catalysing the green economy, leading Africa, build trust, and facilitat-ing a national narrative.

For us, this is not the end of the process but the beginning. This exercise is not about pre-dicting the future of Nigeria; rather it is about initiating a process of national reflection and facilitating the engagement of all Nigerians in building the future we desire.

As such, we are making the dialogue and reflection open to all Nigerians. Our call is for everyone in civil society, firms, organisations, and individuals to promote a dialogue using the outputs of this exercise as the starting point for their own reflection on the future. This call for open dialogue is also a call to action to focus on what we can do to start building from today the country we want for ourselves and for the next generations. The key ques-tions are: What must be done? What are our roles as stakeholders? And how do we engage with others? How shall it be achieved?

The task before us as a nation is to create our desired future. We therefore challenge everyone to engage with this process and be a part of mobilising the necessary collective actions. Importantly, we need everyone to lead from their own respective corner of our country in order to help bring about the transformation that we all desire.

**The Imagine Nigeria exercise and its outputs are only the seeds;
it is now left to all of us to begin to act.**

Introduction

About this report

The year 2020 started off like any other year; optimism rife in the air as people made plans for the future. Nobody envisioned the world stopping in its tracks to face the ravaging COVID-19 pandemic. As the virus continued to spread, governments and people had to contend with border closures and series of lockdowns. Life, as we knew it, was never the same. From social distancing to mask wearing to the constant hand sanitising to mass testing, it was clear that governments and people were playing reactive roles to a stubborn and mutating virus.

In Nigeria, the pandemic exacerbated some of the lingering issues: poverty and insecurity. Some of the economic gains of the previous years were wiped away as unemployment grew and many people lacked the opportunity, technology, and infrastructure to transition to remote working. The children were not left out of the quagmire with many cut off from receiving an education as schools shut down. For Nigeria not to be caught unawares in the future, she had to take the first step in envisioning a new reality.

The Imagine Nigeria report was conceived as part of multi-stakeholder efforts to create a desirable future for Nigeria beyond its current realities. It is a move to paint pictures of alternative futures for Nigeria and to mobilise all stakeholders to begin the process of building the desired future now, rather than letting things fall apart. The report comes from research and high-level deliberations between key representatives of Nigeria's public, including private and public sectors as well as civil society. The development of the Imagine Nigeria report was led by a High-Level Panel, and the exercise received support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the federal government.

How was the Imagine Nigeria Report Written?

The journey that birthed Imagine Nigeria began in September 2020 with the formation of a High-Level Panel. In the same month, an international advisory team plus a national secretariat were created to manage the day-to-day activities leading up to this report. October 2020 saw the preparation of a concept note and the formulation of an action plan. The foresight exercise was participatory in nature, and it included the marriage of research, participatory and foresight techniques in the analysis and futures exploration. A series of expert workshops, focus group meetings, scenarios workshops and research were undertaken between October 2020 until February 2021. Interviews of key experts and Members of the High-Level Panel were also undertaken so as to elicit diverse views on the future of Nigeria. Also, a team of experts prepared policy briefs as background materials. The outputs of the various activities were used by the expert team to prepare the report. The report was reviewed and approved in July for publication.

Imagine Nigeria methodology.
Overview of how the report was conceived.

Implementing the Agenda:
Implications

Situation & futures analysis

External environment & major trends

Nigeria scenarios (Normative)

Vision

Alternative outcomes

Recommen-dations

Strategic Review (past and present)
Aspirations

Policy briefs

WHERE ARE WE?

WHERE ARE WE HEADED?
(World, Africa, Nigeria)

WHERE DO WE WANT TO GO?

HOW DO WE GET THERE?
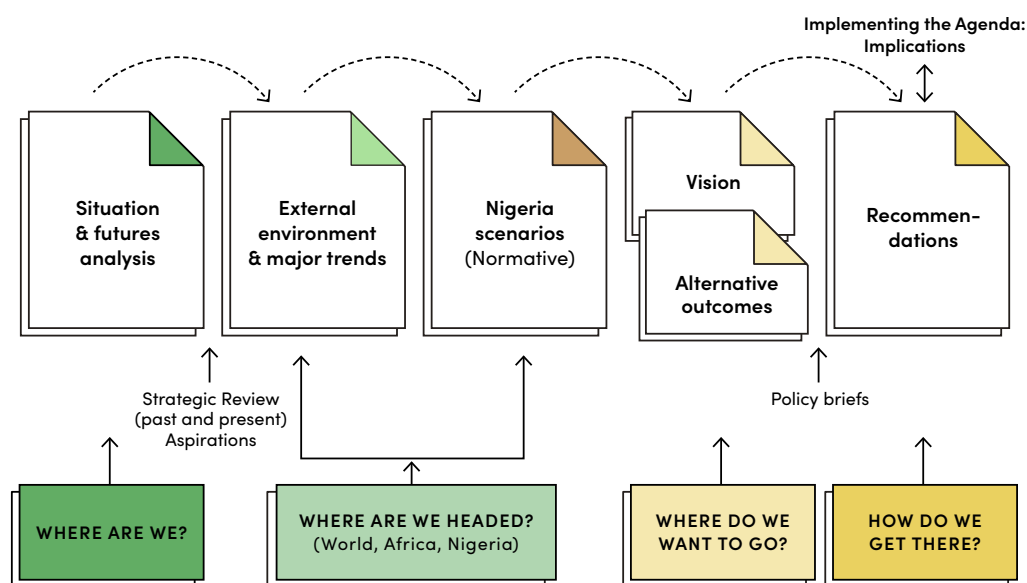
**Who Should Read and What to Do After Reading
the Imagine Nigeria Report?**

This report should be read by everyone interested in the future of Nigeria.
This includes decision makers in every arm and level of government, leaders
from the private sector and civil society organisations, leaders of foreign donor/
humanitarian agencies, and Nigerian citizens by birth or adoption.

Reading the Imagine Nigeria report is sure to elicit several responses in the
reader one of which could be what next? What do I do with the information
in this report or how can I contribute to birthing the Imagined Nigeria?

**You can be a part of the Imagine Nigeria movement in several ways.
Check the "Take Action" section of our website, www.imaginenigeria.ng,
for more information.**

Part One
Analysis: The challenges

Nigeria in 2021 is a country full of opportunities and in which the seeds of change which could lead Nigeria to the desired future are already present or emerging. In a world in constant flux and in which the advanced industrial nations are focused on addressing the challenges within their own borders, the present period presents Nigeria a unique opportunity. However, if Nigeria does not rise-up, as a collective, and move quickly, the future can easily be derailed by the multiplicity of existential threats and challenges which could turn the Nigerian dream into a nightmare.

ILLUSTRATION   ▶   Nigeria today Overview

governance

infrastructure

end of oil?

conflict

corruption

natural resources

talent

climate change

tech

soft power
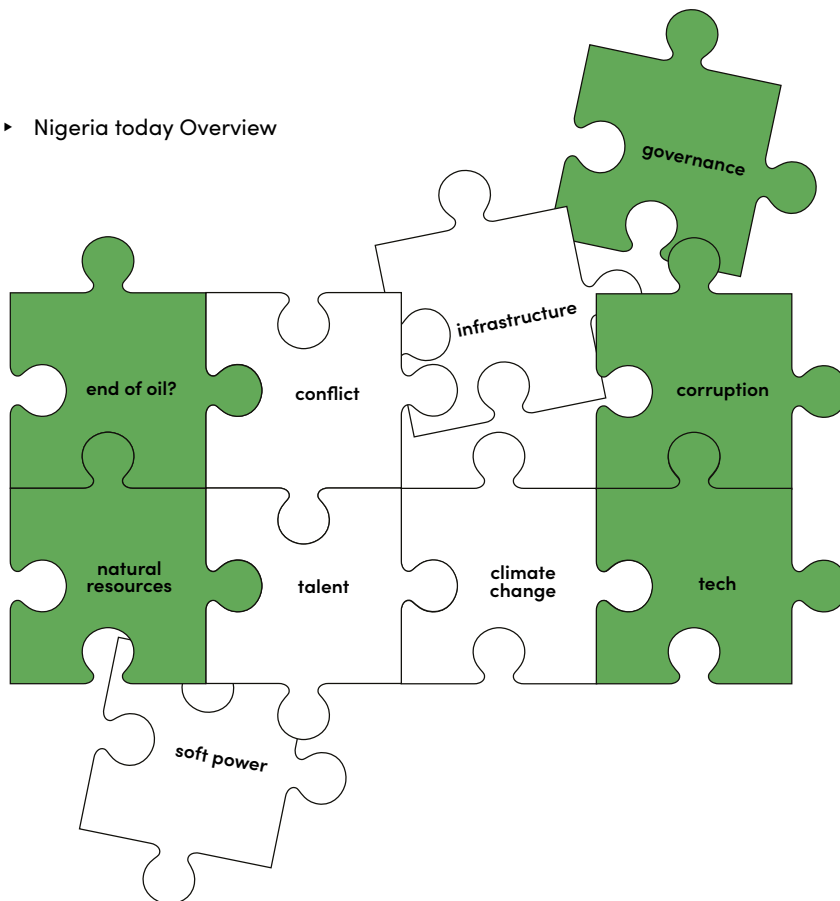
IN THIS SECTION, WE LOOK AT THE DRIVING FACTORS WHICH PROVIDE THE BACKDROP FOR OTHER SECTIONS OF THIS REPORT. THEY INCLUDE:

Fluctuating Economy

From a -1.9 percent economic contraction to a 5.7 percent increase in inflation rate in 2020[1], it is clear to see that Nigeria's economy is struggling. The COVID-19 pandemic since 2020 has been detrimental to the economy. The global halt in economic activities as a result of lockdowns led to a supply glut in the oil market and decline in demand as economic activities were halted in various degrees around the world. Over this period, Nigeria witnessed a decline in revenue and foreign exchange earnings resulting from the fall in oil prices and the reduced demand for oil. The decline in revenue has meant an overdependence on borrowing and an increased debt service payments with more than half of the annual federal government revenues being used to service debts[2]. Beyond the short-term challenges for the oil sector, principal forex earner for Nigeria, are the longer-term concerns as the world makes determined moves to reduce the consumption of fossil fuels.

Unemployment, underemployment, and their effects on poverty have remained a bane for Nigeria. If no urgent measures are deployed soon, Nigeria with its teeming population is certain to fall into desperate times. Already, the World Bank projects about 5 million Nigerians will fall below the poverty line[3], this is in addition to the 82.9 million people reported by NBS in 2019 to be living in extreme poverty[4].

The manufacturing sector which could have provided succour is also battling challenges, such as poor power supply, multiple taxation, and inadequate infrastructure. This does not mean progress has not been made in the sector, as measures such as faster business registration time, improved imports and exports systems have been introduced. If more appropriate interventions are deployed, the manufacturing sector is sure to experience growth and be able to contribute more than the 12.82 percent it contributed to the economy in 2020[5].

Contributing 24.45 percent to the economy in 2020 and employing close to 70 percent of Nigeria's labour force, the agriculture sector is second to oil in generating revenue for Nigeria[6]. But the sector can be more productive and even surpass the oil sector if the challenges facing it such as poor adoption of improved farming methods, inadequate infrastructure and insufficient credit are addressed. A 2019 McKinsey study[7] found that the sector could be two to three times more productive if efforts are refocused on skills development, better fertilizer use, and strengthening the elements of the agricultural value chain, including processing, setting quality standards, packaging, marketing, and management.

Conflict is a constant factor

Nigeria was already battling different pockets of conflict and insecurity pre-COVID-19. Combined with the loss of income, poverty, and economic difficulties accruing to the pandemic, the situation is now more dire. Banditry, kidnappings, herdsmen-farmer clashes, gender-based violence, human rights abuses and other security travails are now the staple in daily news[8,9,10]. This has resulted in a diversion of scarce resources to tackling the hydra-headed security challenges. But nothing seems to be working. Rather than keep looking to the government and established security agencies for a solution, citizens are increasingly creating self-help security or vigilante groups to protect themselves. Not checked, this could create an "all man for himself" situation.

Infrastructure is deficient

Like other factors, Nigeria is faced with a serious infrstructure deficit. This cuts across housing, water, power, telecommunication, and transportation network[11]. All of these have contributed to slow economic growth. Nigeria's growing population is another element to contend with. However, if Nigeria's infrastructure capacity can be raised to the same level as those of the region's middle-income countries, annual growth would be boosted by about 4 percent[12]. Imagine the annual growth that will accrue if the infrastructure deficiency can be fully resolved.

Governance

Chief amongst the problems facing Nigeria is governance since everything rises and falls on governance. Unfit, corrupt, self-serving leadership has brought Nigeria to

its current state where insecurity, unemployment, and unfulfilled promises have bred popular skepticism. Not only that, all public sectors and government parastatals in Nigeria have suffered from this decay in governance. The civil service at the national and state levels are the sites of the most visible evidence of decay. Little wonder the calls for restructuring and self-determination are at an all-time high. The critical challenge now is how to forge grand national narratives as a basis for a social compact to rally the nation around a new set of national ideals and values.

Natural Resources:
from curse to blessing

Ranking in the world's top 10 for proven reserves of oil and gas, Nigeria remains the main oil exporter in Sub-Saharan Africa[13]. The country is also blessed with other resources[14]. The continued fall in oil prices, a global trend towards a zero-carbon world economy by 2050, climate change and a pledge to reduce greenhouse gas emissions between 20 percent and 45 percent by 2030 under the Paris Climate Agreement have introduced a new dynamic that Nigeria must respond to[15]. As such, there have been initiatives developed by the government of Nigeria to drive the green growth which if properly implemented would position Nigeria as a major powerhouse in creating green jobs of the future and further strengthen the private sector in sustaining the country's GDP as Africa's largest economy.

Human Resources:
Nigeria's great opportunities

The enormous human capital that exists in Nigeria and the opportunity it presents cannot be overlooked. In fact, it is Nigeria's greatest opportunity. With close to 374 ethnic nationalities[16] and about 552 living languages[17] spoken by over 206 million people[18], there would be no limit to what the country can achieve if it put its mind to engaging all citizens, leveraging on education, culture, and government support.

Regional Leadership

Examples abound of how Nigeria has demonstrated leadership in the continent. From its engagement in setting up continental institutions such as AU, AfDB to its critical role in the formation of ECOWAS and ECOMOG[19]. These contributions notwithstanding, Nigeria is yet to take its place as the undisputed leader in Africa[20]. For that to happen Nigeria needs to address its own internal challenges, including domestic stability, governance capacity and political leadership. Implementing the African Continental Free Trade Agreement will also help in no small way to make this happen[21].

Conclusion: The Urgency of Now

The contours of tomorrow will be shaped by the ambitions that Nigeria sets for itself today. Trying to return to a previous status quo would be a recipe for disaster. The multi-sectoral nature of the current crisis presents an opportunity for re-prioritisation as well as strengthening partnerships and integrated responses. The future of Nigeria will be determined by the collective actions and inactions of Nigerians with respect to the opportunities, the challenges as well as the emerging global developments. If Nigeria responds boldly, the country could emerge as a major player over the next years and decades, not only within Africa, but also globally.

> **WHAT ARE THE POSSIBILITIES OF THE FUTURE AND HOW CAN NIGERIA MOVE FORWARD? THESE WE ADDRESS IN THE OTHER PARTS OF THIS REPORT.**

Top photo **Food Security, Kano**, photo by UNDP / Bottom photo **Danfo in Lagos**, photo by Ayoola Salako on Unsplash

Photo by Tolani Alli, SA Photography

Nigeria's rich cultural heritage and ethnic diversity are not only treasures to be cherished but also sources of inspiration to its growing creative industry'.

Part Two
Futures: The possibilities

Global trends

Change and uncertainty are, today, the only constants. Looking to the future, the pace of change is expected to rise exponentially and to generate more uncertainties. The challenge for Nigeria is how to ride the wave of opportunity, while mitigating threats to progress. Changes already underway will impact the major industrial countries as well as the developing world.

ILLUSTRATION ▸ Global Megatrends
Tendencies for the next 20 to 40 years

Politics & economics	Citizenship	Demographics
• New economic powers • Marketplace globalization • Rising energy demand • Inequalities • **Agriculture 4.0**	• Hyperconnectivity • Individualization • Citizens' movements (local/global) • **Knowledge culture** • Gender shift • Transparency • Populism	• **Rapid urbanization** • Mobility • Migration • Returning diaspora • Silver society • Security
Environment	**Technology**	**Development Enablers**
• **Climate crisis** • Resources scarcity • Nature-based solutions • Green economy	• Technology shift and exponential advancement • **Digital transformation** • 4th industrial revolution • Biotech. • Artificial intelligence • New work • Clean tech	• Investment in human capital • Governance (public sector and business) • Empowerment of women • Entrepreneurial youth • Clean tech

Politics and Economics

The technology sector has become the dominant sector in the world and the reason for this is not hard to see. Rising interconnectedness of economies, increasing digitisation and the growth of platform economies are some of the fruits of technological innovations.

With Britain's Brexit, China, and the United States' fight for dominance in the technology space, it is clear to see the increasing spread of "my country first" ideology across the world. Notwithstanding the growing anti-globalisation, global trade keeps increasing with Africa signing the African Continental Free Trade Agreement in 2018. The agreement will bring 1.3 billion Africans into one market, and it is geared to drive inter-African trade and provide opportunities for socio-economic development.

There has also been a growing demand for equality, human rights, good governance, and freedom across the world. A case in point is the October 2020 #ENDSARS protest in Nigeria.

Demography is also changing. Nigeria's population keeps growing and it is expected to more than double by 2050, if current growth rates remain the same[22]. While the percentage of the elderly and an accompanying demand for pension and elderly care will increase, a boom in the youth population is also expected. If properly harnessed and provided with necessary resources (such as education and employment) this youth population will be a great asset that Nigeria can leverage for its transformation[23]. But the reverse will be the case if this youth are left unemployed with no education and faced with abject living conditions. An upsurge in crime and security challenges is sure to follow such a scenario.

Technology

Behind most of the shifts and innovations shaping the world today is technology and the COVID-19 pandemic presents a good example. The lockdowns and closures that accompanied the pandemic would have had a more deleterious impact were it not for the various technological interventions (telecommuting, virtual meetings, online education) deployed by individuals, organisations, and governments alike. All further emphasising the need for increasing technological capability.

Many ideas which were only in the realm of science fiction a few years back are becoming the norm - from robotics and automation to 3D printing of buildings to artificial intelligence composing music and writing stories. This rise in innovation has not been without some consequences. One is the new cold war for supremacy between the United States and China. Another is the increased demand for green economy and the energy transition sweeping the world, which would affect oil dependent countries like Nigeria.

So, technology presents both opportunities and challenges for Nigeria[24]. While companies like Paystack and Flutterwave show that embracing digital technologies have massive benefits for Nigeria[25], a failure to deploy the appropriate solutions would mean Nigeria will not get its fair share in the emerging technology-driven world.

Environment

Decades of environmental abuse and degradation have resulted in a climate change crisis with serious economic, infrastructural, and social impacts. Sadly, developing economies which contributed the least to climate emergency are likely to bear the brunt of the climate crisis more. Near example of the effect of this climate crisis is the gradual drying up of Lake Chad and the herdsmen-farmer clashes because of the forced migration of herders from the north to the south.

The COVID-19 pandemic has further compounded issues and emphasised the need to think up new fuel/energy solutions. Automakers have pledged to adopt electric cars as a replacement for fossil fuel- consuming vehicles[26]. The world is turning to solar power and wind energy technologies. There have also been more calls for green initiatives since a green economy not only increases resource efficiency (capital, labour, materials, energy, and natural resources) and reduces greenhouse gases emissions, but can also improve social equity and human well-being.

The AfDB has been investing in green growth initiatives for almost a decade[27]. Also, several African governments have developed, or are developing, green economy strategies and action plans[28]. In June 2020, the World Economic Forum launched "The Great Reset" initiative, calling for "entirely new foundations for our economic and social systems[29]." 121 countries and over 1000 businesses joined the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change's (UNFCCC) "Climate Ambition Alliance," pledging to reach net zero greenhouse gases (GHG) emission by 2050, while the world's biggest GHG emitter, China, announced in September 2020 that the country will reach carbon neutrality by 2060[30]. All these initiaves are showing that the green economy is the way forward for economic recovery and an alternative economic model for nations globally.

The future will likely be driven by the interplay of the three critical areas identified above, along with other trends and unexpected events. These emerging realities lead to several serious questions.

Will we build futures of resilience and progress that carry everyone along? Will the world continue to build on the existing global order to improve collaboration and enhanced partnerships for win–win outcomes or will the rise of "me first" win, with increasing movements of isolationism, xenophobia, and nationalism? Will technological advancement be democratised and put at the service of human race or will it simply be captured by global monopolies and a few countries? Will we enable cooperation in our collective struggle against climate change and exploitation? Who will own the emerging global data mines and digital infrastructure? Will most countries be able to participate in the fourth industrial revolution or will it be for a few, further exacerbating global inequalities?

Imagining Futures:
Four Scenarios For Nigeria

Scenario–building processes focus on the long term. Scenarios are a creative way of shining a light on the critical factors that will drive countries in one direction or the other. They are not predictions, nor even explore which future is most likely. They help decision makers think through how to better manage uncertainty and complexity, the only constants in today's world.

In imagining alternative futures for Nigeria, four (4) scenarios were developed. They include Fire On The Mountain, One Chance, Which Way Nigeria? and African Giant Awake. The scenarios visualise Nigeria over a 25-year period (2025 - 2050) under varying conditions of technology and governance. What happens when the world is characterised by a technology regime that is "open" (inclusive, trusted, distributed) or "closed" (monopolies, splinternet) in conjunction with governance that is "us" (inclusive, negotiated) or "me" (insular, atomistic)?

FIGURE   1   ▸   Global trends and possible responses
Nigeria 2050 scenarios: "What future do we want?"

GOVERNANCE: "US"
(inclusive, negotiated)

Scenario 3
One Chance

Scenario 4
African Giant Awake

TECH "CLOSED"
(monopolies, splinternet)

TECH "OPEN"
(inclusive, trusted, distributed)

Scenario 1
Fire on the Mountain

Scenario 2
Which Way Nigeria?

GOVERNANCE: "ME"
(insular, atomistic)
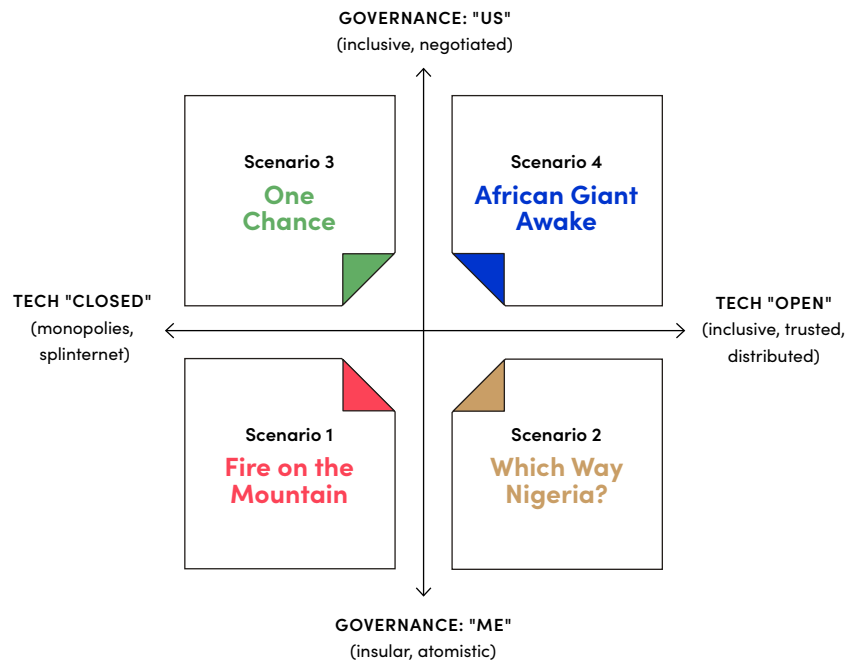
"Me-first" governance

Widening of social gaps

Scenario 1

Fire on the Mountain

Widespread poverty

Lack of technological development
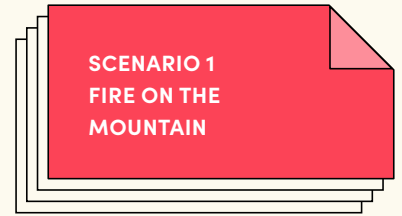
→ **This scenario explores a "me–first" governance approach in a closed technology environment.**

It is named after the Nigerian expression "Fire on the mountain, but no one is running," which denotes an extreme emergency with no apparent attempt to prevent or contain it.

Timeline
Fire on the Mountain

A poor response to COVID-19 has amplified Nigeria's social fractures

2025

Poor response to COVID-19, anti-vax sentiment, and new variants increase death and cement vaccine apartheid.

Citizens struggle to make ends meet while only the vaccinated can move freely and get jobs.

Intensifying waves of insecurity concentrate government efforts in restoring order.

Attacks against oil facilities force state governments into a deal with the saboteurs, who are successful in keeping the oil flow for the next decade.

China's digital giants, the BATs (Baidu, Alibaba, Tencent), secure the Nigerian market in exchange for US$ 1 billion annual payments to the government.

In this me-first world, tech remains unregulated, and opportunists line up to extract maximum value from Nigeria.

The Rule of the Cabals

2035

Insecurity rises with sabotage to oil infrastructure and the rise of 'protection' schemes, while massive unemployment remains.

The BATs and several Nigerians earn billions selling people's data, reducing most citizens' data to commodities.

Foreign investors partner with local businesses to exploit the unemployed youth in sweatshops, profiting from ultra-light regulatory regimes.

The resistance emerges

2045

Oil is no longer a source of wealth due to the global transition to net-zero.

Climate change has intensified floods and droughts, causing people from North and South to migrate towards the Middle Belt.

New strains of COVID and a new pandemic plague the country.

Conflict and economic divides intensify.

Desperation and deprivation are leading to rebellion, supported by the diaspora.

Opportunists, known as the Cabals, have amassed tremendous wealth, a fraction of which is used to create job opportunities in the protection business for the pandemic-ravaged youth.

Around 2025, a powerfully virulent COVID-19 strain increases death, oil facilities come under constant attack while most ordinary citizens only worry about making ends meet. A poor response to COVID-19 begins to amplify Nigeria's social fractures.

Authorities are desperate, overwhelmed by the intensifying waves of insecurity and a yawning gap between rich and poor, urban, and rural, healthy, and sick. The national government and governors realise that the window of opportunity to make money from oil is closing.

In a me-first world, where tech remains unregulated, opportunists - known as the Cabals - line up to capture and extract maximum value from this flailing giant of a nation. During the next decade (2025- 2035), a deal with previous saboteurs, turned Oil Barons, guarantees that oil flows uninterrupted. The Digital Dons (Baidu, Alibaba, Tencent) offer Nigeria US$1 billion in exchange for exclusive rights to all the data they collect in platforms developed to try and improve governance. Lastly, Sweatshop Kingpins, foreign investors from Asia teamed up with local business leaders, turn Nigeria into the factory making low-tech garments and digital gadgets, profiting from an ultra-light regulatory regime provided by the government.

The Digital Dons hit the jackpot by selling the data to the pharmaceutical industry seeking to test new vaccines and therapies. The Conglomerate is enriching itself on the back of a large pool of desperate Nigerians who have jobs with no security or satisfaction.

In the meantime, as the energy transition towards renewables accelerate, oil prices fall and by 2045 there is no oil industry to speak of in the country. Climate variability has intensified floods and droughts both in the South and the North, with climate refugees concentrating in the country's middle belt and the competition for resources (land, water, and opportunities) worsened by the identity dynamics of ethnicity and faith. Another pandemic surges in waves while urban slums expand, causing greater economic divide.

Desperation and deprivation are leading to rebellion, with groups of self-entitled patriots and climate refugees fighting to take back their land and dignity from the hands of incompetent politicians and the Cabals who are exploiting the country. Overwhelmingly young, the movement's appeal for self-determination cuts across location, ethnicity, and religion, attracting growing support from Nigerians in the country and abroad.

How will it end?

Will the resistance gather momentum and easily take over power? Will it be able to disrupt the systems of exploitation that have rendered Nigerians mere commodities? Or will the powerful fight back, leading to an all-out war causing death and destruction on a scale unimaginable?

Scenario 2

Which way Nigeria?

New surveillance technologies

Failure in improving governance

A cyber war reaches a global dimension
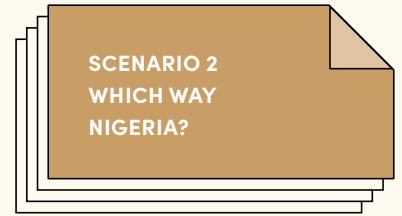
→ **In this scenario the government responds well to the challenge of technology but neglects the governance issue.**

"Which way?" is a commonly used rhetorical question in Nigeria. It expresses a sense of exasperation at the state of affairs bearing in mind extant dilemmas and risks for the future.

Timeline
Which Way, Nigeria?

Towards the surveillance state

2025

Nigeria faces a series of security challenges, unrests, and secessionist impulses.

A new government is elected with the promise of increasing security.

A locally developed surveillance system manages to reduce insecurity and improve revenue.

Data becomes the "new oil", as the world transitions to renewables.

New surveillance technologies

2035

70% of the country is under surveillance, thanks to a partnership with Chinese firms, in exchange for access to Nigeria's 5G market.

Crime and security threats diminish significantly, while tax collection increases dramatically.

Reduced global demand weakens the importance of oil in Nigeria's economy.

Almost all economically active people are now banked and using a government mandated e-commerce platform.

With a better view of is citizens, the government found ways to identify citizens who are productive and those considered of little value ('the Left Behind Class' — LBC).

To avoid surveillance, rebels isolate themselves in Do-It-Yourself (DIY) tech villages.

Religious groups also reject surveillance and become hermits.

Conflict

2045

Globally, open science, open innovation, open data is the prevailing paradigm.

Climate change drives the transition to green technologies.

All data is now a global public good but with strong protections on privacy.

In Nigeria, data mining start-ups are thriving servicing the government.

Several cities grow due to more efficient infrastructure and migration of climate change affected populations.

Efforts to improve governance in Nigeria fail.

DIY villages, which are in a tech war against the government, grow as LBC people seek shelter from a major climate change impacts.

Slowly a semi-autonomous movement of 'tech liberators' emerges with the objective of revolution and providing Universal Basic Income (UBI) for all.

Overwhelmed, the Government recruits outlaws and provides them with surveillance tools and data to help in fighting the rebels.

The cyber war reaches a global dimension.

In 2025, Nigeria faces a series of severe security challenges, at the same time as dwindling oil revenues mean that security is increasingly unaffordable. The prospect of state failure is real, so the key issue for the 2023 elections is restoring security. In response, the newly elected national government adopts technology to address security through better surveillance and predictive analysis. The surveillance system is successful in diffusing conflicts, breaking up terrorist cells and reducing crime. As an unintended positive effect, the surveillance system allows the government to monitor markets and improve tax collection. Data is indeed the new oil.

By 2035, the new surveillance technologies are rolled out nationally in partnership with Chinese firms, which offers to do it for free in return for exclusive access to the 5G market. The citizens were initially apprehensive but were persuaded by improved security. Nigeria is a 24-hour economy. Tax collection has increased dramatically. The government develops an online platform to move the economy online. There is only one power to deal with - the government - and since the government is clear about what it wants, life is quite easy (as long as you obey).

A new appreciation of technology has seen massive investment in equipment and skills and a re-organisation of government, with the Ministry of Finance now merged with Defence and Internal Security. Additionally, the government has found ways to identify citizens who are productive, to whom priority is given in providing services, and those considered of little value ("the Left Behind Class," LBC), generally abandoned to their devices but monitored in case they become restless.

Given the prevalence of open technologies globally, some groups of technology rebels are beginning to organise themselves into Do-It-Yourself (DIY) tech villages[31]. The LBC and other disenfranchised groups, however, are preyed upon by criminal gangs.

By 2045, cities have grown because of government's encouragement of "more efficient" urbanisation, which was also accelerated by climate change. DIY villages also grow after a major climate change event a few years ago triggered a massive movement of LBC people to these enclaves. At this time, DIY villages have adopted green technologies as part of a tech war with government.

Globally, open science, open innovation, open data is the prevailing paradigm. A thriving market to sell personal data emerge, with many data mining start-ups have now been established in Nigeria and are thriving servicing government.

However, tragically, efforts to improve governance in Nigeria have not been successful. Slowly, a movement of "tech liberators" has emerged, with the objective of revolution and providing Universal Basic Income (UBI) for all. Overwhelmed, the government recruited outlaws to help in fighting the rebels. The local cyber war reaches a global dimension.

It is not clear what will happen next.

Will the rebels overwhelm the government and facilitate the opening surveillance systems for oversight by civil society, which could lead Nigeria to new kind of leadership that is accountable? Or could the government prevail, with the support of criminal elements, who gain new power and expand their zones of influence, demanding a greater share of revenues on data concessions?

Scenario 3

One Chance

Wealth at the cost of independence and privacy

Global tech services thrive in Nigeria
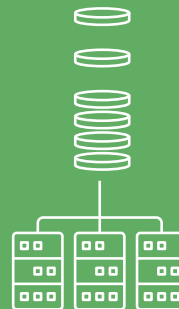
Nigerian's data is monetized

→ **In this scenario, Nigeria chooses the easy options, and is seduced and hijacked by tech giants.**

Therefore, the name "One Chance," a Nigerian expression that refers to the practice of being hoodwinked or tricked. Warnings are usually given to Nigerians not to enter "One Chance" when on a journey or in a business relationship.

Timeline
One Chance Timeline

The Trojan Horse

2025

Tech giants (FAANGs: Facebook, Amazon, Apple, Netflix, Google) choose Nigeria as their entry point to Africa, creating jobs for the people and generating revenue for the government.

Broadband infrastructure and an integrated Digi-Gov system are fully deployed in Nigeria.

The tech services sector thrives in Nigeria, driving unprecedent growth and government efficiency.

Trust in the government improves while a general sentiment that 'our data is our future' prevails.

AfCFTA accelerates with the FAANG deal seen as a blueprint for Africa.

The Nigerian government starts shutting down local entrepreneurs that could become competitors to the FAANGs.

Rumours start circulating about the actual deal with the FAANGs and what Nigeria was getting out of it.

Deal with the Devil

2035

Extreme weather, caused by climate change, destroys infrastructure built by the FAANGs and coastal cities are left with no internet access.

The FAANG replicate the "Nigeria Digital Dawn" in some other Africa countries.

A new political party, the 'takebacks', is formed by a group of tech savvy politicians opposed to the FAANGs deal.

Dissatisfied with the FAANGs deal, groups move to areas with limited internet access and revert to pre 2021 times.

Government starts using big data to reward good behaviour and punish opposition, imprisoning their leaders as 'enemies of the state'.
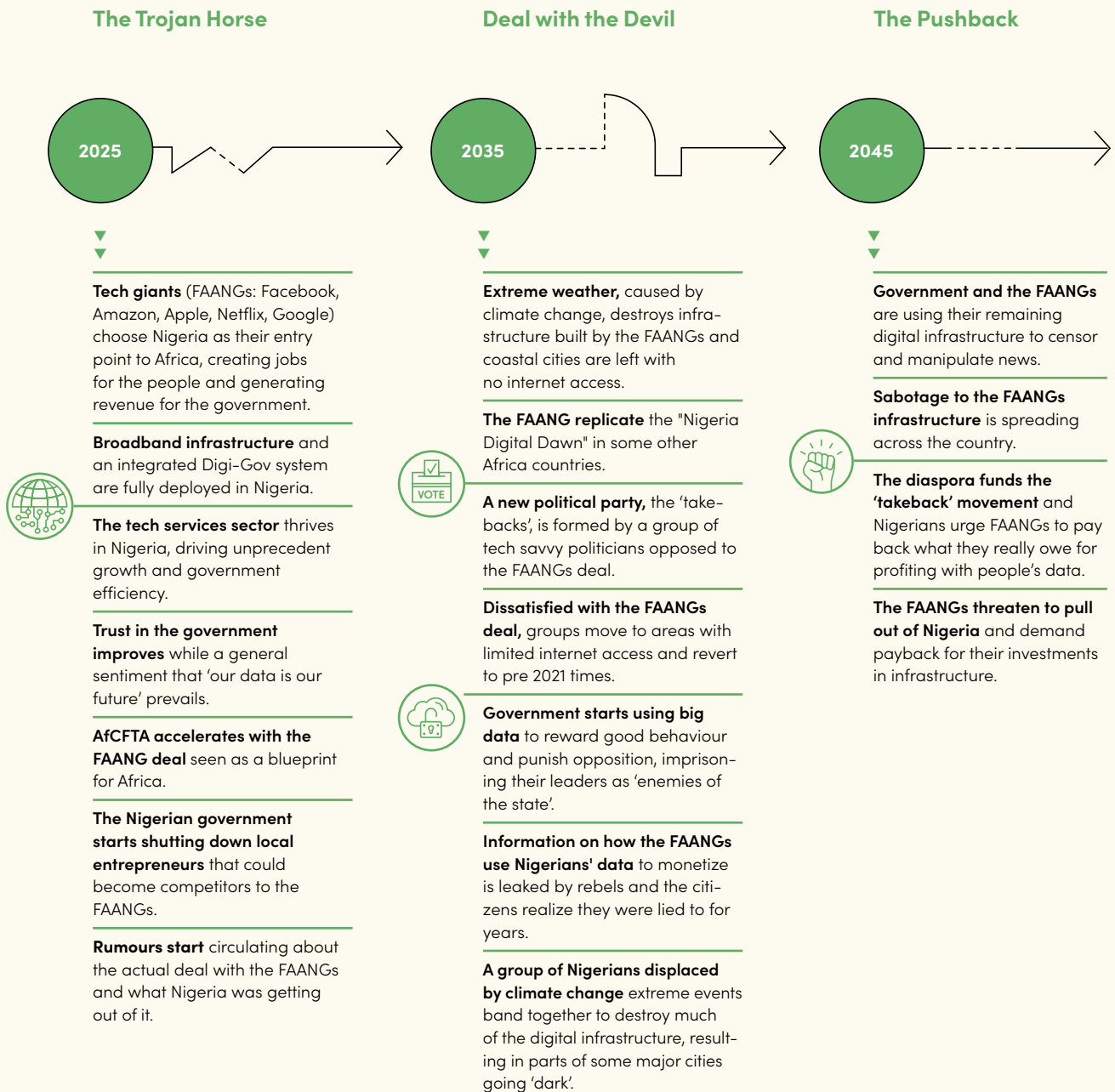
Information on how the FAANGs use Nigerians' data to monetize is leaked by rebels and the citizens realize they were lied to for years.

A group of Nigerians displaced by climate change extreme events band together to destroy much of the digital infrastructure, resulting in parts of some major cities going 'dark'.

The Pushback

2045

Government and the FAANGs are using their remaining digital infrastructure to censor and manipulate news.

Sabotage to the FAANGs infrastructure is spreading across the country.

The diaspora funds the 'takeback' movement and Nigerians urge FAANGs to pay back what they really owe for profiting with people's data.

The FAANGs threaten to pull out of Nigeria and demand payback for their investments in infrastructure.

Caught at the crossroads of an unknown future, Nigerians need to determine their path

Seeking for markets to maintain their hyper growth, the FAANG group of tech giants (Facebook, Amazon, Apple, Netflix, Google) choose Nigeria as their entry point into Africa. In the aftermath of the 2023 elections, they make a deal with the Nigerian government: in exchange for providing a myriad of services, the FAANGs receive rights to all Nigerian citizens' data, reasonable exclusivity within their various domains, and payment of a yearly concession fee of USD30 billion.

The official opposition party disagreed, classifying the deal as a Trojan Horse. As promised, the FAANGs built infrastructure. The integrated Digi-Gov system is inaugurated and creates a hyper efficient government eliminating much corruption. Mass employment is created both within the FAANG workforce and in non-competitive, adjacent industries and offshore outsourcing services. Agriculture and manufacturing are being revolutionised by AI and machine learning. With increased efficiencies and more businesses in operation, not only has the tax base swollen, but these extra funds have been invested into primary healthcare, policing, housing, roads, and water access. The sceptics have been silenced. Things are looking good.

Gradually, Nigeria realised that data was indeed the new digital oil[32] and "mining" it was not only "easier" but more valuable as it could be reused to improve services. This was especially important given the declining revenue from oil. These incredible gains led to unprecedented "trust in government" levels and by 2030, Nigeria is hailed as the "epitome of tech and gov." Shortly after rumours start to circulate about the actual deal with the FAANGs and what Nigeria was getting out of it.

By 2035, extreme weather caused by climate change destroyed the infrastructure built by the FAANGs and caused floods in coastal cities[33,34,] which are left with no internet access. As the floods spread, so has disease, and even tech is not able to prevent the deaths of hundreds of thousands. In this crisis, the president decided to delay elections.

A new political party, Takeback Party, has been formed by a group of tech savvy politicians opposed to the FAANG deal, who openly question the motives of the FAANGs. This message is resonating strongly with many who have grown tired of their dependence on the FAANGs and want to take back their country. In 2036, the national government grows concerned with the groundswell support of the Takebacks and starts using data to incentivise "good" behaviour among the citizens through benefits, while those with "bad" behaviour have diminished access to public services. Of course, the Takeback party and its supporters are targeted and many of them are disallowed from voting and labelled "enemies of the state."

By 2040, the use of the Nigerian data was still lucrative for the FAANGs. Nigerians are increasingly viewed only as "streams of data" to monetise. In 2042, this information is "hacked" by a diaspora-linked group. The Nigerian populace realises it had been lied to for two decades, demanding the president resigns. A group of displaced citizens, many of whom moved during the great flood of 2035, band together to destroy much of the digital infrastructure, resulting in parts of some major cities going "dark."

It is 2045 and the government and the FAANGs are using their remaining digital infrastructure to censor and manipulate news, but this has swollen the ranks of the Takeback party. The destruction of FAANG infrastructure is spreading across the country. "No to digital colonialism" is the rallying cry. The FAANGs are threatening to pull out of Nigeria and are demanding payback of $750 billion plus interest, lest they cut off the digital infrastructure they have invested in over the last 25 years.

> **Caught at the crossroads of an unknown future,** Nigerians need to determine their path. Either the FAANGs will refuse to relinquish control, aided by the president who manages to squash the Takebacks' uprising, further consolidating FAANG power. Or the president will be voted out, leading to the FAANGs being negotiated out of Africa, with Nigeria open-sourcing its data, encouraging a "million flowers to bloom."

Scenario 4

African Giant Awake

A renewed Nigeria that gets governance and leadership right

Environmental innovation lead to economic opportunity
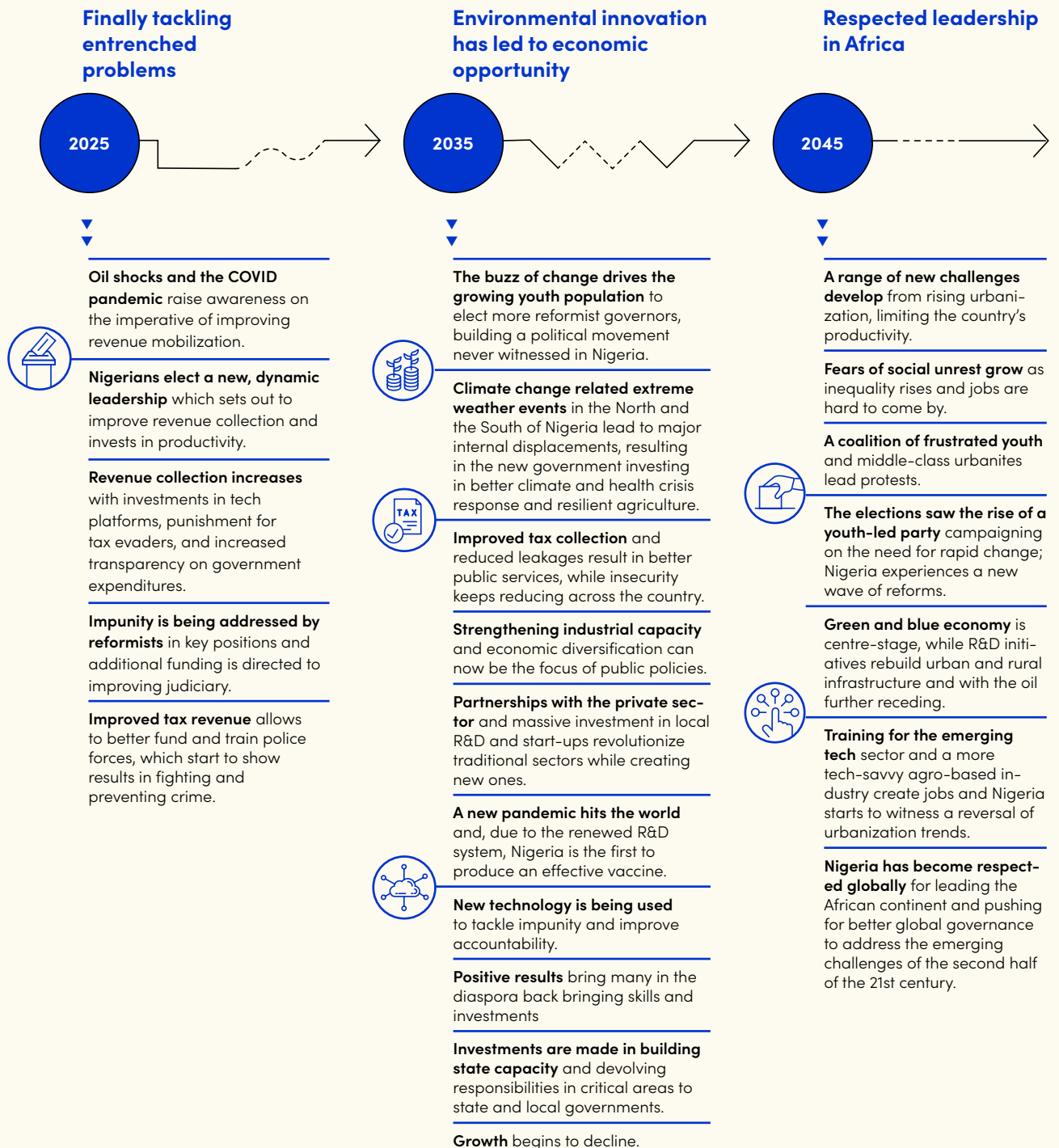
Respected leadership in Africa

→ **African Giant Awake!
is a scenario of a renewed
Nigeria that gets governance
and leadership right while
diversifying its economy.**

The title for this scenario alludes to the fact that Nigeria is
often referred to as the "Giant of Africa" owing to its size.
But it has been a "sleeping giant" with latent, untapped,
strengths and opportunities.

Timeline
African Giant Awake Timeline

Finally tackling entrenched problems

2025

Oil shocks and the COVID pandemic raise awareness on the imperative of improving revenue mobilization.

Nigerians elect a new, dynamic leadership which sets out to improve revenue collection and invests in productivity.

Revenue collection increases with investments in tech platforms, punishment for tax evaders, and increased transparency on government expenditures.

Impunity is being addressed by reformists in key positions and additional funding is directed to improving judiciary.

Improved tax revenue allows to better fund and train police forces, which start to show results in fighting and preventing crime.

Environmental innovation has led to economic opportunity

2035

The buzz of change drives the growing youth population to elect more reformist governors, building a political movement never witnessed in Nigeria.

Climate change related extreme weather events in the North and the South of Nigeria lead to major internal displacements, resulting in the new government investing in better climate and health crisis response and resilient agriculture.

Improved tax collection and reduced leakages result in better public services, while insecurity keeps reducing across the country.

Strengthening industrial capacity and economic diversification can now be the focus of public policies.

Partnerships with the private sector and massive investment in local R&D and start-ups revolutionize traditional sectors while creating new ones.

A new pandemic hits the world and, due to the renewed R&D system, Nigeria is the first to produce an effective vaccine.

New technology is being used to tackle impunity and improve accountability.

Positive results bring many in the diaspora back bringing skills and investments

Investments are made in building state capacity and devolving responsibilities in critical areas to state and local governments.

Growth begins to decline.

Respected leadership in Africa

2045

A range of new challenges develop from rising urbanization, limiting the country's productivity.

Fears of social unrest grow as inequality rises and jobs are hard to come by.

A coalition of frustrated youth and middle-class urbanites lead protests.

The elections saw the rise of a youth-led party campaigning on the need for rapid change; Nigeria experiences a new wave of reforms.

Green and blue economy is centre-stage, while R&D initiatives rebuild urban and rural infrastructure and with the oil further receding.

Training for the emerging tech sector and a more tech-savvy agro-based industry create jobs and Nigeria starts to witness a reversal of urbanization trends.

Nigeria has become respected globally for leading the African continent and pushing for better global governance to address the emerging challenges of the second half of the 21st century.

Will Nigerians and their leadership rise to the occasion? Time will tell.

It is 2025 and following two recessions within 4 years (2016 and 2020) as a result of two oil shocks and the COVID-19 pandemic, there is a heightened sense of awareness about fiscal crisis and the imperative of improving revenue mobilisation. The elected president amasses a reformist elite which immediately sets out to improve revenue collection and invest in productivity, creating tangible domestic and international excitement.

New technology platforms are built, making it easy for everyone to pay their taxes. The opposition claims that the government is trying to exploit Nigerians, so a campaign to explain how funds are being spent is launched, with tax data and project implementation updates being made available online. The government also begins to address impunity, using higher tax revenue to better fund the police. Overhauling the security services will take several years, but Nigerians feel encouraged by successes.

The buzz of change (and the fear of falling backwards again) drives the growing youth population to elect more reformist governors, building a political movement never before witnessed in Nigeria. The 2027 election is won by a landslide giving a mandate to continue reforms.

With improved tax-to-GDP ratio, citizens have come to see improvements in critical public services. The government now decides to focus on strengthening industrial capacity, partnering with the private sector to bet on the creative sector and climate-compatible economic activities. With focus on exports forcing higher productivity, the government is pushed to facilitate the launch of 1 million startups in a decade, building partnerships and a US$5 billion fund. After only a few years, Nigeria begins to witness the rise of new entrepreneurs and firms in light manufacturing, digital economy, software, agriculture, and health.

As the next stage in tackling impunity and improving accountability, new technology is being used to monitor the police and other security agents, enabling citizens to report public officials breaking the law. Those caught are severely punished.

A new program of state reform is launched focused on building state capacity to implement Nigeria's ambitious agenda, which includes a significant devolution of responsibilities to state level in critical areas. Competition among states has meant spectacular results for the leading states, while the others begin to follow their example.

In 2036, extreme weather events in both the North (drought) and the South (floods) lead to major internal displacements and provided fuel for naysayers to challenge the government on the lack of adequate disaster prevention. The newly elected president prioritises the development of a national disaster and recovery strategy, which includes programs to anticipate and address health crises, leading to the revamping of R&D in the biomedical and health fields. As a result, when a new global pandemic rapidly spreads in 2038, Nigerian biomedical institutions are the first to produce the vaccines.

With increasing confidence in its locally developed products, government is strategically using its purchasing power to promote national industrial development. A new Nigeria was emerging. With improved economic performance, citizens feel dignity and a sense of national belonging. This virtuous circle is attracting investors and skilled experts, boosting confidence, and raising domestic savings and investment.

Yet, growth begins to decline in 2039 due to many factors, including the inability to continue to ramp up civil service reforms. A rising urbanisation has caused a range of new challenges while a sizeable share of the population had not fully benefited from the growth. Fears of social unrest grow as inequality rises and jobs are hard to come by. As a result, the 2039 elections saw a landslide victory by a youth-led party that embarks immediately on reforms to promote efficiency and effectiveness, transferring more power to states and speeding up digital government.

Today in 2045, green and blue economies are centre stage, with major R&D initiatives and rebuilding of urban and rural infrastructure. Nigeria is rallying African nations to work together on the global stage as a bloc, building on its youthful, dynamic population and a sizeable market. The oil economy is now almost a memory. The new Nigeria is leading the African continent in pushing for better global governance, global citizenship, and more global interconnectedness to address the emerging challenges of the second half of the 21st century.

→ # What does the future hold?

The scenarios are only some of the possible futures for Nigeria. The future might be none or a combination of the four. What happens will depend on what Nigeria does with the resources at its disposal.

In the next chapter, we propose some recommendations which we believe will help Nigeria birth its desired future.
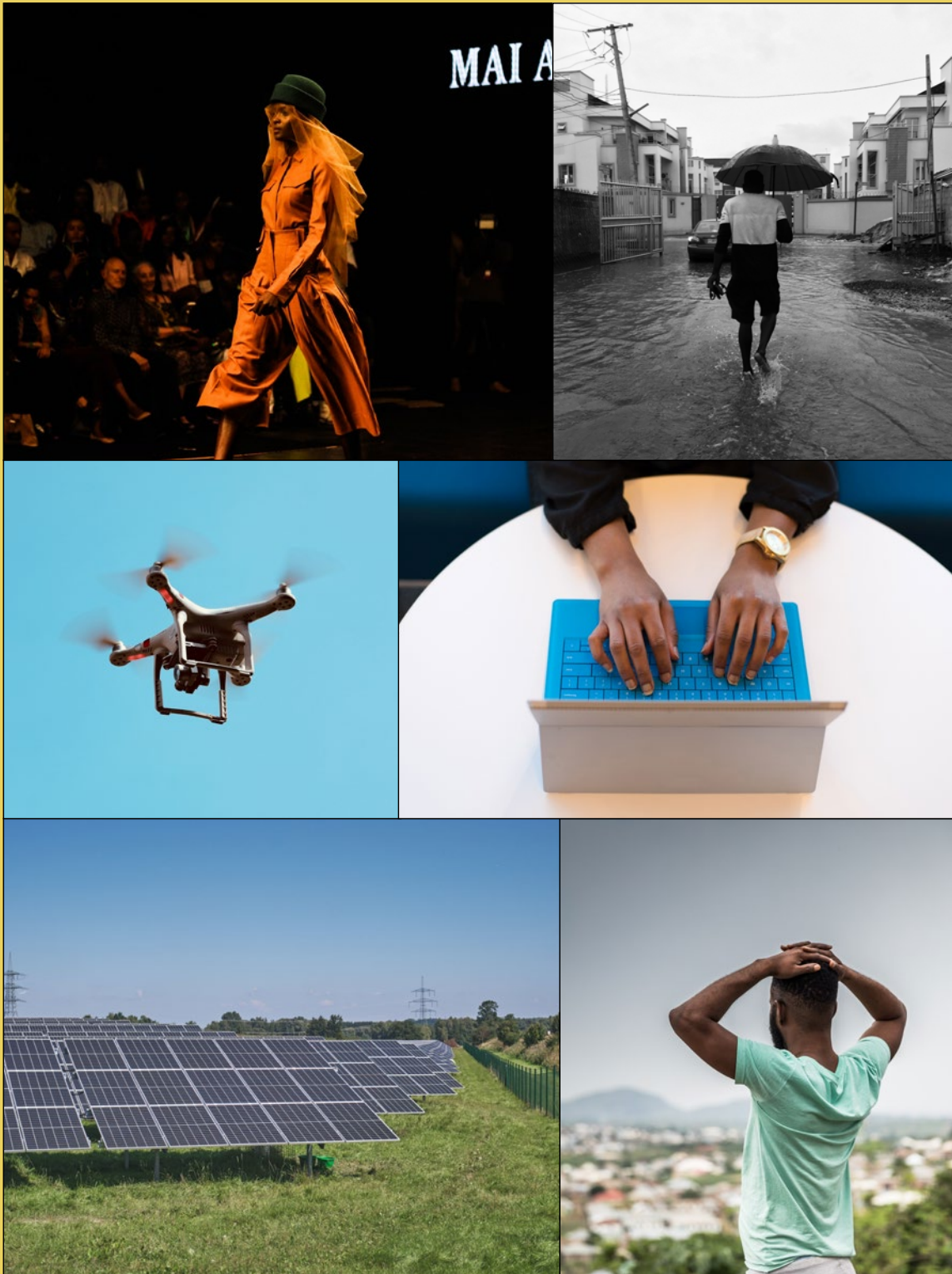
Photo by Gbenga Onalaja , Ovinuchi Ejiohuo, Francis Odeyemi, Desola Lanre Ologun, Christina Wocintechchat, Michael Fortsch and Ovinuchi Ejiohuo on Unsplash

Part Three:
Recommendations:
The Opportunities

Nigeria's opportunities to shine bright

Having analysed the current situation and imagined alternative futures for Nigeria, we have identified five major areas of intervention we believe the country needs to create the desired future. With so many important issues to deal with, it is critical to set priorities. We make five sets of recommendations. They are:

→   **Build a Culture of Innovation**

→   **Catalyse the Green Economy**

→   **Lead Africa**

→   **Build Trust**

→   **Facilitate a National Narrative**

FIGURE 2 ▶ Linkages among the five recommendations for building forward

Build a Culture of Innovation

Build Trust

Lead Africa

Catalyse the Green Economy

Facilitate a National Narrative
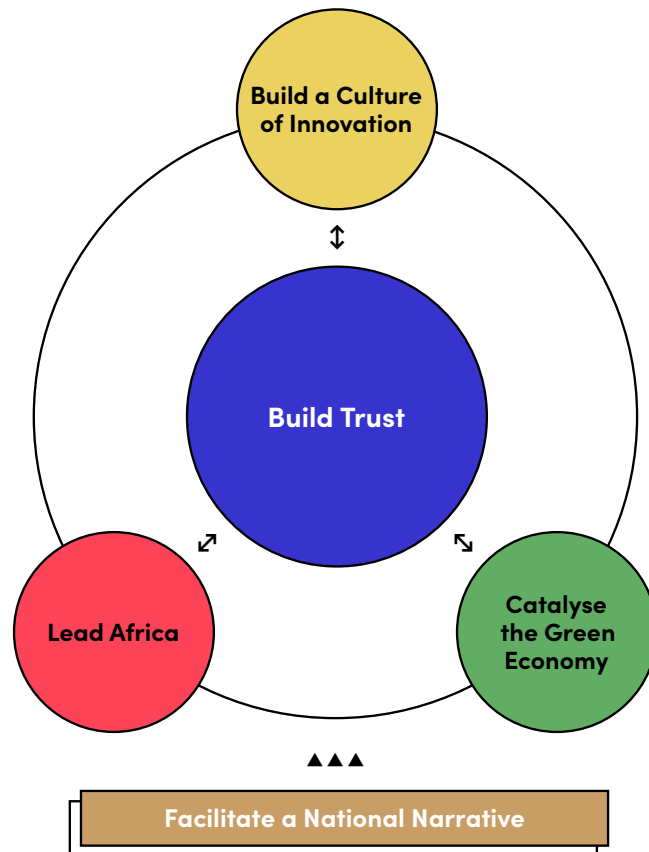
→ Build a Culture of Innovation

For Nigeria to move forward, it must embrace innovation, an important determinant of long-term economic growth[35,36]. Embracing innovation should not be a one-off activity but rather a culture. Culture has been proven to have a significant influence on innovation both at national and organisational levels[37].

The government has a central role to play in ensuring Nigeria leads in innovation. Amongst other things it must create the right conditions for innovation within and across systems. It must also lead in defining the country's innovation agenda, adopting strategies that can take cognizance of the strengths and weaknesses of the main system actors, government itself included[38].

→ **Building a culture of innovation is possible for Nigeria if the following recommendations are followed:**

I. Build a National System of Innovation

A National System of Innovation (NSI) is the network of institutions in the public and private sectors whose activities and interactions initiate, import, modify and diffuse new technologies[39]. Having an NSI is key to building a culture of innovation and for it to be effective it must have three core pillars: innovation capacities, innovation policy and economic development[40].

Nigeria made moves in the past to have an NSI, including launching the Science, Technology, and Innovation policy document in 2012. The document made reference to establishing an NSI and a National Research and Innovation Council (NRIC)[41]. The NRIC was inaugurated in 2014 and it held its first meeting in 2016. Not much has happened since then but now is a good time to revisit it since the benefits that will accrue from a functioning NSI[42] outweigh the challenges hindering its functioning.

II. Build Anticipatory Governance Capability

Anticipatory governance is a whole-of-government process incorporating foresight at every level of governance, visualised and structured as a complex process[43]. It portends a government that is proactive and flexible enough to respond to any situation. The need for this cannot be overemphasised, considering the current climate which is characterised by uncertainty, volatility, complexity, and ambiguity.

III. Invest in Key Sectors

Rather than continue to depend on oil, Nigeria should target and invest in specific key sectors that have the potential to drive innovation and create jobs. Such key sectors include the green and circular economy industries, technology, the creative/cultural industries, vehicle manufacturing and agriculture. In investing in key sectors, Nigeria must be careful not to focus on too many or too few sectors, choosing the wrong focal sectors, and transitioning into or out of new or existing sectors too quickly or too slowly.

IV. Enable Digital Transformation with Regulation

Achieving digital transformation will not happen without the right regulations in place. This regulation will cut across content and business environment, amongst others. The government should start an open consultation with the private sector to define which laws and regulations should be created, changed, eliminated and why. Once all data is compiled, government will be able to decide what, how and where to change.

V. Build a Robust Monitoring & Evaluation (MERL) System

Nigeria should establish a robust, holistic and endogenous Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting & Learning (MERL) system to give feedback in real time on initiatives[44]. The reasons for this include increasing accountability and transparency, ensuring lessons are learnt from the successes and failures of deployed initiatives which is crucial to affirm or inform strategy.

→ Catalyse the Green Economy

Going green is in the national interest of Nigeria and it is a strategic choice that, if fully pursued, could allow Nigeria to exploit an emerging global trend in its favour. Asides the possible wealth that will accrue to Nigeria from going green, as the green economy could create $250bn in investment opportunities in the country[45], the effects of climate change will also be mitigated if more green initiatives are deployed.

All sectors of the Nigerian economy must be encouraged to embrace green practices in their day-to-day activities from industries to Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs), to individual persons, in essence, the entire ecosystem.

→   **To catalyse a green economy,
Nigeria must do the following:**

I. Embed the Green Agenda in Economic Policy

The execution of a future green economy in Nigeria will require the formulation of strategic agenda and policies tailored towards achieving the desired outcome in the long run. This must be adopted in all identified sectors that drive the Nigerian economy. The goal of the government should be to position Nigeria as a dominant player in the global green space through the adoption of sustainable policies to achieve a seamless transition to a green economy. This will ensure Nigeria becomes the investment destination for disruptive green innovation and an industry leader in knowledge, data gathering, project planning and execution as well as technology transfer in the climate and green space.

II. Invest in Renewable Energy

There is a wide gap in access to electricity between rural and urban areas of Nigeria[46]. This gap can be closed by leveraging the abundance of renewable energy sources in the country. If current efforts are improved upon, by 2050, a sizeable portion of Nigerians should have access to electricity from off grid sources with 70 percent of energy derived from renewables and 30 percent from the national grid.

III. Manage Waste Better

Based on its capacity for energy generation, reducing GHG emission and its impact in health and quality of life[47], waste reduction must be a collective responsibility for all Nigerians. Proper logistical arrangements alongside incentivised mechanisms and tools should be put in place to encourage the adption of circular approaches in production chains. Not only that, but the benefits derived from circular economy should be well articulated to sustain the narrative and the momentum.

IV. Green the Value Chain

Nigeria can become a global powerhouse in green energy if it has a transition strategy that allows the country to exploit the benefits of the green economy without immediately giving up its fossil fuel resources or compromising its need for economic diversification. Government must partner with the private sector to drive the green economy. This they can do by providing incentives such as the development and adoption of eco-efficient processes and technologies which reduce costs in production by saving resources and energy. Government should also promote knowledge dissemination to ensure more rapid uptake of eco-efficiency practices in the private sector.

V. Provide Opportunities for Greener MSMEs

MSMEs, due to their size and flexibility, are uniquely suited to adopt lower cost eco-efficient processes and drive innovation in the green economy. This will happen if they receive adequate support. Offering incentives such as tax breaks, lower interest rate financing, and access to public procurement will ensure Nigeria's MSMEs become more efficient, increase their profits, scale up faster, experience commercial growth, and have access to foreign markets thereby fast-tracking Nigeria's move to become Africa's green powerhouse.
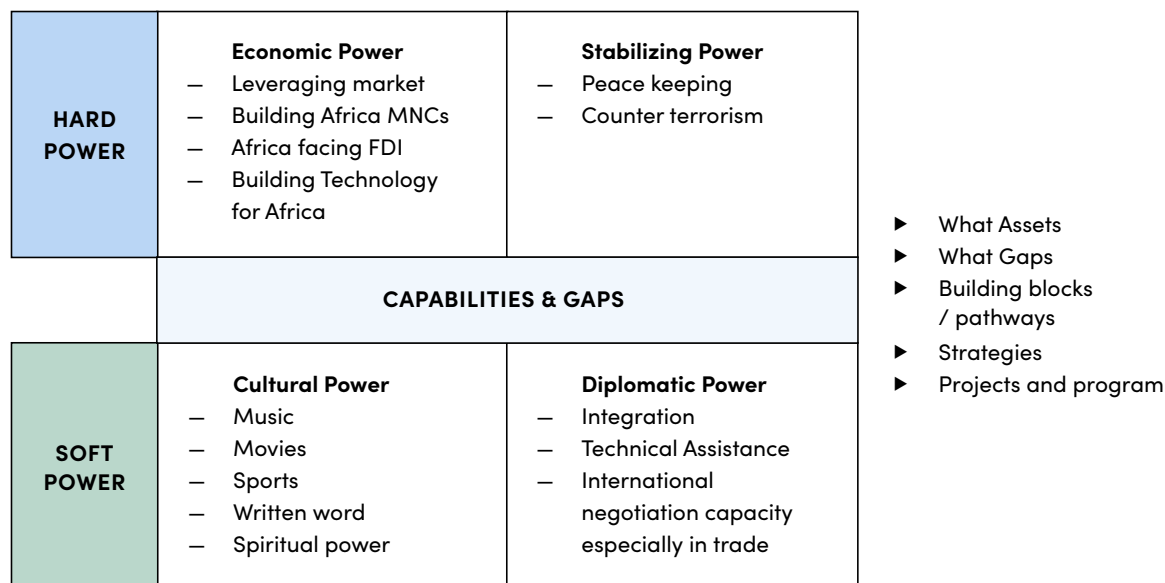
VI. Build a Green Institutional Framework

Building green growth that works for Nigeria will require an institutional framework that is dedicated and able to drive its implementation. The institutional framework should involve all key stakeholder groups and should have the power to act, lead and coordinate as well as facilitate collaboration among the various actors. A critical role will include mobilising government, the private sector, universities, international funds, as well as communities in support of a single-minded objective: make Nigeria a green power. Amongst other things the framework should set up and oversee Nigeria's Green Economy Fund, create and manage Green Data Gathering, and create Green Economy Education Partnership.

→ # Lead Africa

The potential for Nigeria to lead Africa is not in doubt. But its governance and image problems are militating against Nigeria leading the continent. Nigeria is often accused of being unable to project power because of a profound domestic governance deficit that is manifested in internal violent conflict, the lack of state capacity and lack of inclusiveness[48]. People's perception of Nigeria continues to be a significant liability so much so that while Nigerians are admired, they are equally viewed with distrust, with a passport treated with suspicion at many points of entry throughout the world[49]. This is due in part to the corruption, environmental degradation, terrorism/banditry, human rights violation by the security forces, and other issues facing Nigeria[50]. **But there's a way forward for Nigeria, and it involves leveraging on the soft and hard powers available to it.** The country's hard power includes economic and stabilising power while its soft power includes its cultural/creative and diplomatic power.

FIGURE 3 ▶ Towards African Leadership — Analytical Framework

HARD POWER	**Economic Power** — Leveraging market — Building Africa MNCs — Africa facing FDI — Building Technology for Africa	**Stabilizing Power** — Peace keeping — Counter terrorism
	CAPABILITIES & GAPS	
SOFT POWER	**Cultural Power** — Music — Movies — Sports — Written word — Spiritual power	**Diplomatic Power** — Integration — Technical Assistance — International negotiation capacity especially in trade

▶ What Assets
▶ What Gaps
▶ Building blocks / pathways
▶ Strategies
▶ Projects and program

→ **Nigeria can lead Africa if it follows the following recommendations:**

I. Maximise Economic Advantage
A country's economy is its ultimate power and Nigeria's population can give it maximum economic advantage if properly harnessed. Nigeria's large population implies a huge market which can support the emergence of powerful local businesses that can expand to Africa and even globally. The market also gives Nigeria significant power for driving industrialisation, building diplomatic influence[51], and being the infrastructure leader[52].

II. Enhance Strategic Military Leadership
To claim leadership, Nigeria needs to be able to guarantee peace in Africa through conflict resolution and peacekeeping efforts[53]. Nigeria has demonstrated this through its leadership of the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) to restore peace in Liberia and Sierra Leone in the 1990s[54,55]. Nigeria can lead Africa by putting more diplomatic efforts into making the Africa Standby Force (ASF) operational while also helping to drive peace keeping operations on the continent[56].

III. Invest in Diplomacy
For years Nigeria has tried to become a permanent member of the Security Council of the United Nations representing Africa[57]. However, this has not been successful, partly because South Africa is a stiff contender[58] and partly because Nigeria has not been able to get the buy in of countries it has helped in the past to support its candidacy. Nigeria needs to be ready to bear the cost for diplomatic leadership and should see how its diplomatic efforts can be more effectively aligned with supporting economic goals[59].

IV. Modernise Development Cooperation
Giving aid has been proven to be one of the ways countries can earn goodwill and economic returns for themselves[60] and Nigeria should consider providing more development assistance to build more influence. This development assistance should go beyond traditional "vertical" aid and focus on forging mutually beneficial cooperation arrangements that will see Nigeria become the go-to country for discussing African solutions to Africa's problems.

V. Further Realise Cultural Impact
Nigeria has a rich creative arts sector which is globally known. Our movies, music and books are making impact on the world[61,62,63]. But the impact can be so much more if a strategy to build a coherent creative economy is in place. This strategy should seek to refocus the sector to be more African than Nigerian, given that its consumers are all Africans. The government should be ready to give all necessary support to the sector so it can fulfil its potentials.

VI. Leverage the Nigerian Diaspora
Nigeria has a highly dynamic diaspora several generations deep that are spread across the globe. These diasporas have scaled heights of education, technology, business, and entertainment and they hold significant political positions in their host countries[64]. If leveraged properly, Nigeria stands to gain increased revenues from remittances and tourism from them. And to do this, Nigeria must develop a proactive diaspora engagement strategy that will see diasporas investing more in Nigeria's economy[65].

→ Build Trust

A persistent challenge that Nigeria has grappled with all through the six decades plus of its independence is one of governance dysfunction, which has had varied effects, including a considerable slowing down of the pace and quality of change and transformation in the political economy. The COVID-19 outbreak further amplified this governance shortcoming and strained the trust between citizens and public institutions. At present, there is pervasive scepticism among the masses about the will and intentions of the political class to bring about change.

As resilient societies are premised on good governance, trusted state-society relations are key to effective short-term crisis management as well as to developing a long-term recovery strategy. As such, **the most pressing priority for the Nigerian government is building trust between the various parts of Nigeria's society[66]. Without trust, very little progress will be possible.** Trust is earned through concrete actions, meaningful dialogue/enhanced engagement, and a radical approach to accountability and transparency

But trust cannot be built by government alone, rather all segments of the Nigerian society must be involved. Also, trust is not enough to take Nigeria forward. Dynamism, innovation, and creativity must be encouraged within government and across society if Nigeria is to grasp the opportunities of the coming decades and avoid the potential crises.

Governance anchored on a vision of national transformation incorporates mainstream elements such as transparency, media freedom, and the rule of law. But it must also go way beyond these to be a system of citizen empowerment, trust building, and legitimacy enhancement.

BUILD TRUST

→ **Nigeria can build trust by following the below recommendations:**

I. Substantially Increase Citizen Engagement
In these times where there is so much apathy about being a Nigerian citizen, all arms of government must determine what rights are available to citizens regardless of who they are and ensure that these rights are enjoyed by all on the same terms and conditions. These rights should include access to public education, health, housing services, freedom of worship, assembly, movement, association, and speech, amongst others. Doing this will go a long way in increasing citizen engagement and ultimately help build trust for government by the people.

II. Ensure Inclusion and Participation
Nigeria has not been fully utilising the population it is blessed with, and this has meant losing out on the economic and social benefits that could accrue from it. To correct this, Nigeria must create policies that are friendly to youths, girls, women, the elderly, and persons living with disabilities. This will ensure these members of the society are able to participate fully in the society and get their needs met across all areas.

III. Building Institutions
A key priority should be the strengthening of institutional capacity to deliver public goods and social services. Government must deploy new and improve on existing efforts that will eliminate corruption from all arms of government, promote pay for result, ensure budget execution reports are available to citizens, improve communication and information sharing, enhance electoral processes, and strengthen accountability across all governance levels.

V. Invest in a National Peacebuilding Architecture
Government must consider different short-, medium- and long-term interventions across local, state, and federal levels to combat insecurity and build sustainable peace processes. A comprehensive and coordinated infrastructure for peace and security should include a national level mechanism supported by state and local level platforms, equipped to run early warning, mediation, reconciliation and other peace processes specific to each situation.

VII. Digitalise Government Services
We recommend government adopt a combination of civic tech and Government as a Platform (GaaP) measures to transform and build a dynamic governance. Civic tech is a new and important way to democratise governance and public services delivery, as well as to foster greater transparency and accountability between government and the governed. While Government as a Platform is the reorganising of the work of government around a network of shared application programming interfaces (APIs) and components, open-standards and canonical datasets, so that civil servants, businesses and others are enabled to deliver better services to the public, more safely, more efficiently, and accountably[67]. Transforming public services into e-services and adopting electronic (paperless) processes internally have many benefits which include improved governmental transparency, reduction in human interference and in the possibility of corruption, incentivising the entrepreneurship sector, fostering a new culture in the public sector, and building local technology companies.

IV. Decentralise Government
There should be a complete overhaul of the federal system including both governance and revenue. More power should be given to state and local governments. For instance, the logic of localised taxation to fund public service delivery at the local level should come into effect. Allowing the states to have more control will facilitate proximity and allow citizens to better monitor expenses and take part in deciding where money should be invested.

VI. End Impunity
The government should demonstrate its seriousness about building forward by holding everyone that breaks the law accountable. The justice sector should be more agile and responsive across the criminal justice chain: police, justice and corrections, including, for example, a strengthened ICT ecosystem across all institutions and measures to support access to justice for vulnerable groups such as IDPs, women and girls.

→ Facilitate a National Narrative

A national narrative consists of an ideal (or set of ideals) that marshals the mutual resolve of the public as a singular expression of moral, mental and material efforts aimed at achieving a common purpose. Typically depicted in national symbols and embedded in the written and unwritten norms and conventions such as anthems and flags, this narrative defines the citizens' sense of their collective identity and their relations with the state.

All successful nations have grand narratives that define the terms of belonging and meaning. They also inform each nation's sense of exceptionalism in the world. Nigeria cannot be different in this regard.

The country should embark on a sustainable transformative national mobilisation that will involve the retelling and reframing of Nigeria's circumstances and that will situate the past and the present within an evolutionary arc that bends towards progress.

The Nigerian government has made efforts in the past to drive a national narrative. Examples of these efforts include: the institution of a general amnesty which precluded mass trials of those that served on the rebel side of the civil war, the establishment of the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC), the creation of the National Sports Festival, the institution of the Federal Character Principle and the setting up of Federal Government Colleges/Unity Schools nationwide. These efforts need to be built upon and reconfigured where necessary.

→ **For Nigeria to facilitate a national narrative we recommend the following:**

I. Reclaim History for Civics

The government should design a program of civic orientation implemented through both formal educational institutions and the utilisation of mass media to reach the wider public. This will help discard the prevalent narrative of Nigeria as an arbitrary colonial patchwork of mutually alienated communities. It will also help to drive a new narrative of Nigeria as the odyssey of self-determination, self-actualisation and progress of the biggest black nation in the world. Designing the program will require the implementation of the Heritage Recovery Project, a wide-ranging redesign of the history, social studies and civics curricular for primary and secondary schools.

II. Decolonise the Past

The government should encourage research, particularly in the fields of archaeology, palaeontology and anthropology, to unearth ancient migration and settlement patterns as well as the long links between Nigeria's constituent communities. This will provide a scientific basis for reframing the conversation around identity, belonging, a shared past and a common future.

III. Engage Popular Culture

Creative arts have the power to shape the hearts and minds of the populace to renew the possibility and plausibility of the Nigerian nation. As such, the government should encourage and engage in partnerships with film makers, story tellers, artistes, and cultural entrepreneurs of all hues to mainstream the national narrative through artistic platforms.

IV. Revitalise Integrative Institutions

Strategic agencies such as the NYSC, the National Sports Festival, the Federal Government Colleges and the Federal Character Commission should be retooled and strengthened to effectively carry out their mandates of promoting social cohesion, national integration, and inclusion on a transformative scale.

V. Create a Pantheon of Heroic Exemplars

A nation perpetuates the sort of behaviour that it rewards. Promoting a new narrative therefore calls for introducing social incentives that encourage the popular adoption of the desired ideals and adequate recognition of individuals that represent the finest manifestation of the values highlighted in the narrative. A tested way of doing this is through the National Honours and Awards. The government should redesign the National Honours and Awards to recognise those individuals who exemplify service to country in Nigeria and those of Nigerian descent in the diaspora who are making contributions to human progress abroad. Highlighting and amplifying the recipients as heroic exemplars of the Nigerian spirit of achievement will have a salutary effect on the national consciousness and reinforce the ideal of Nigerians as the torchbearers of black excellence.

→ # Conclusion

Trust and National narratives

The selection of the five pillars as the basis for "building forward" and transformation is rooted in the analysis of the trends that will shape the world and Nigeria over the next 30 years. The challenge before Nigerians is how to proactively seize the opportunities provided by the rapidly changing world as well as to be prepared to mitigate the threats. The two most fundamental building blocks are trust and engagement of all citizens and sectors of the Nigerian society in a process of building a new grand narrative as a basis for a renewed social compact. The people need to believe in their government to facilitate a virtuous development circle.

A culture of Innovation

Embracing a culture of innovation is also key for a transformed Nigeria to happen. It is only through ensuring that innovation permeates the culture and everything that we do as a nation can we be sure of making progress.

Green Economy

Nigeria must diversify its economy and become a global leader in green economy. It must also respond to the global climate crisis, prepare for the emerging end of the oil economy, and anticipate the behavioural changes taking place in the world with respect to going green.

Lead Africa

Finally, Nigeria must lead and help organise the African continent to act as a bloc and compete with other major blocs whether it is in trade negotiations, science, and technology or in geopolitical games of interest. Nigeria leading the African bloc stands a better chance in all fronts and it is critical to fast track its "building forward." Nigeria has what it takes to be the leader of Africa.

→ **This report will be a fruitless exercise if the recommendations/ suggestions it contains are not implemented.**

In implementing the suggestions in this report, Nigeria must co-design with and co-opt important stakeholders across all sectors of the society. Nigeria must also prioritise interventions and systematise and sequence policy recommendations. Key actors to operationalise recommendations must also be identified and actions must be measured and monitored to determine their impacts.

The next generation is counting on us.

Let's Imagine Nigeria.

Photo by Abubakar Balogun on Unsplash

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Scenarios

Aidan Eyakuze
Amaka Anku
Craig Wing
Julius Gatune
Olugbenga Adesida

Policy Briefs

Adebayo Olokushi
Adewale Ajadi
Bankole Oloruntoba
Geci Karuri-Sebina
Julius Gatune

Reviewers

Catherine Diam-Valla
Clive Bates
Halima Bawa-Bwari
Huzi Mshelia
Kabir Yusuf
Narue Shiki
Renata Rubian

Interviews

Abdu Mukhtar
Adewale Ajadi
Adiba Ighodaro
Akintunde A. Oyebode
Charles Murito
Clem Agba
Christian Oldiges

Comfort Ero
Damilola Ogunbiyi
David Ladipo
Diana Alarcón
Funmi Olonisakin
Garry Conille
Jonathan Reichental
Kala Fleming
Kojo Boakye
Marco Steinberg
Mark Okoye
Martha Chen
Myma Belo-Osagie
Pali Lehohla
Romulo Paes
Sabina Alkire
Shamsudeen Usman
Tayo Akinwande
Tonye Cole
Udoma Udo Udoma
Yemi Osinbajo
Valentine Bianki

Consultations

Abayomi Awobokun
Abdu Usman
Abdul Quawiy Olododo
Abdulaziz S. Ahmed
Abdullahi Abubakar
Abdulmumin Mukhtar
Abdulrahaman Isah
Abiodun Buari
Abiri Oluwatosin Niyi
Abu Shettima
Abubakar Suleiman
Abubakar Metcho
Adaeze Usoh

Adamu Garba Adinga
Adaobi K. Oniwinde
Adara Abiodun
Adebayo Olukoshi
Adekunle Akinkunmi
Adenike Balogun
Adewale Ajadi
Adeyemi Zainab
Adia Swoho
Ahaji Ahmed Ashemi
Ahmad Modibbo
Ahmed Shehu
Aidan Eyakuze
Aisha Augie Kuta
Aji Kolo Alamai
Akin Soetan
Akudo Ojo
Alan Hirsch
Albert Kure
Alex Anyanwu
Ama Ase
Amaka Anku
Amaka Cyri
Amina Sambo
Anita Agbakoba
Anjorin Kamal
Anna Ekeledo
Arnold Jackson
Asabe Baba Saleh
Asmaiu Ishaq
Ayeni Tolulope
Ayisat Agbaje
Baba Mustapha Dunoma
Baba-Jallah Epega
Babakura Mamman
Babatunde Abidoye
Baliqees Salaudeen
Bankole Oloruntoba
Becca Maulome

Bela'ulhakim Sani Zango
Bernice Abeku
Bibi Bakare Yusuf
Bilkisu Inuwa
Blessing Achu
Bruce Olotu
Charles Emembolu
Charles Okechukwu
Chinedu Nwagbara
Chinyere Ifendu
Chioma Okoro
Chitra Nagarajan
Chizoba Bethel
Chris Newsom
Chris Ngwodo
Chukwudi Mathew
Comrade Mohammed Isa
Craig Wing
Dan Kunle
Danladi Verheijen
Debisi Araba
Didam Laah
Donatus Okezie
Ebere Nwachukwu
Ebipere Clark
Edwin Akabuilo
Eka Ikpe
Ele Joy
Eloho Omame
Emeka Okafor
Emeka Onu
Emetu Agwu
Enyinnaya Chukwu
Ese Oswie
Esther Jerry
Esther Chibueyin Fagbo
Fagbohun Zainab
Fatima Abiodun
Francis Anatogu

Friday Odey
Funto Boroffice
Gabriel Okon
Gbadamosi Shereef
Gbenga Adesida
Geci Karuri-Sebina
Ghazali Abdulmuizz
Grema Kyari
Habib Nuhu
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Hadiza Mustapha
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Hajiya Gambo Zuwaira
Hamisu Dandajeh
Hamza Lawal
Hauwa Yabani
Hayatuddeen Omar Yusuf
Hayfa Talui
Henry Adigun
Ibrahim Abubakar
Ibrahim Lawal Ahmed
Ibrahim Modu Sheriff
Idayat Hassan
Ife Adebayo
Ijeoma Ezeasor
Ikem Isiekwena
Innocent Isichei
Iseoluwa Akintunde
Jacob Fubara
James Ochunkwo
Jamison Erwin
Jasper Iwuanyanwu
Jibril D. Jibril
Joe Penney
Jombo Paul
Joy Ajuluchkwu
Juliet Anammah
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Kadaria Ahmed
Kamaldeen Kehinde

Kassim Geidam
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Kelechukwu Nnakaenyi
Koasarah Abdulrasaq
Koffi M. Kouakou
Kofoworola Oyeleye
Kristin Wilson
Leonell Echa
Lola Masha
Lordson Ojo
Lucia Ali
Mahmud Abdullahi
Maryam Lawan-Gwadabe
Maryam Usman
Megindade Taiwo
Mercy Wakawa
Mikail Daya
Mimshach Obioha
Mjumo Mzyece
Modupe Adefeso-Olateju
Mohammed Baba Mallam
Mohammed Brimah
Mohammed Zarma
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Moji Rhodes
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Muhammad Muktar
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Mustapha Hussaini
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Nasir Abdulquadri
Ndubuku Anthony
Ngozi Dike
Ngozi Okehie
Nguveren Mary Igbazua
Nnamdi Anika
Nnanna Ochunkwo

Nneka Ukay
Nnenna Okorji
Nonye Moghalu
Obaka Ikani
Obianuju James
Odusina Oluwaseun
Ojulari Saheed
Okar Chigozue
Okpan Nnanna
Okuwa Eleanya
Olaoye Ogundamisi
Olasupo Abideen
Oliver Owen
Olufunto Boroffice
Omolar Daniel
Onuoha Ukefi
Osaretin Oswald Guobadia
Osasenaga Enogieru
Oyinkansola Odidi
Ozioma Uzoma
Pedro Bolanle
Peter Harrigton
Philip Agbese Jr.
Precious Akanonu
Prisca Egbom
Rahila Ibrahim A.
Raymond Ogbonna
Rinsola Abiola
Rolake Akinkugbe
Rotimi Suleiman
Rukayat Yahaya
Salami Ibrahim
Saliha Nasir Saled
Salman Habibat
Samuel Orji
Sanusi Abdullahi
Sanusi Ismaila
Serah Onwuka
Serah Ugbabe
Shamsudeen Magaji
Shemau Aliyu
Solape Hammond

Stanley Okoh
Suleiman Ibrahim Abdullahi
Sumayya Ishaq
Sumayya Muktar
Sunusi Hashimu
Temi Kolawole
Teslim Balogun
Tochi Okorie
Tolu Adetunji
Tomi Ayorinde
Toni Fola-Alade
Uche Otti
Uduma Emeraghu
Umar Bako
Umar Faouk Musa
Umar Faruk Mustapha
Umar Sadiq
Umaru Saidu
Usman Abba Magaji
Victoria Dogo
Vincent Okeke
Williams Olaosebikan
Wole Odetayo
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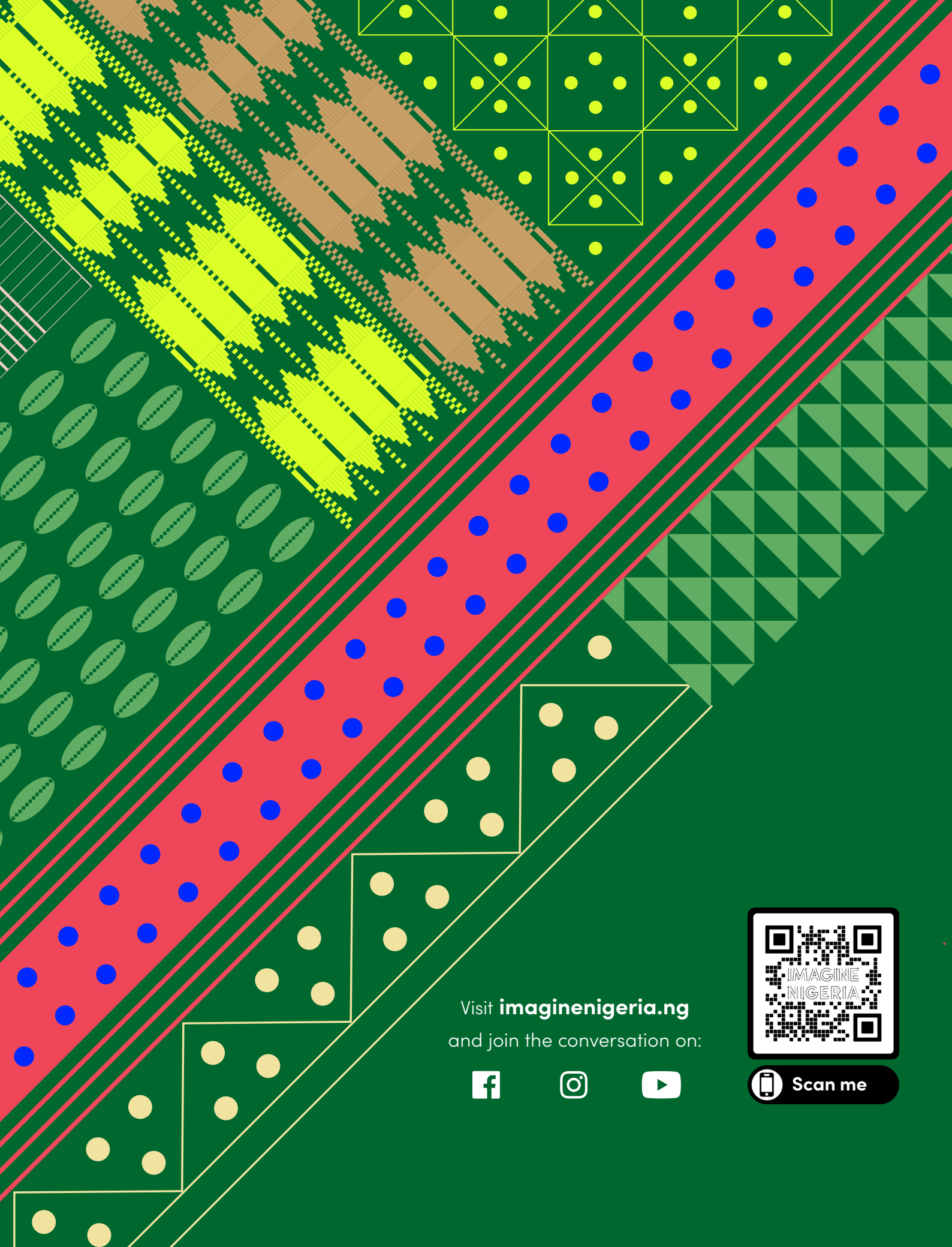
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