

Rich Opportunities in Developed Countries and Nigerians' Avidity to Live Abroad as Analogous to Jewish Captivity, Socio-Economic Benefits and Exiles' Decision to Stay in Babylon

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Introduction

The current desperation of Nigerians, seeking for citizenship or residency abroad calls for sober reflection. This new phenomenon has been code named 'Japa', a locally coined word which literally means to escape. 'Japa' and 'Welcome to New Dispensation' syndrome have been the anthems of many Nigerians as they look to leave the country. According to a Pew Research Centre study conducted in 2018, Nigerians top the chat of people who plan to move to another country within the last 5 years with 48%, among the 12 countries

sampled for the survey (Opeoluwa,2022). Thus, in the recent time, a large percentage of trained graduates, talented, creative and highly qualified intellectuals and professionals is leaving the country for rich opportunities, political stability, freedom, a developed economic and better living conditions found in developed countries (Chijioke, 2022). This analogous situation existed among the Babylonian Jews. In 586 B.C., the Babylonians, under the leadership of Nebuchadnezzar, captured Judah, destroyed Jerusalem and taken captive the Jewish people to Babylon (David, 2013).

However, life in their captivity was not necessarily that of horror or slavery. The Jews, though their migration was not voluntary, were given a good deal of social freedom and economic opportunities. They proved to be enterprising in business and economic affairs, a gift valued by the Babylonians. The Babylonian Jews were allowed to move about freely, live in their communities within or near the great cities and carry on their way of life. In fact, so secured was their life in Babylon that when King Cyrus allowed the captives to return to Judah to rebuild the temple seventy years later, many of them refused to leave Babylon. Therefore, using this biblical allusion as template, the paper examines the socio-economic factors responsible for Nigerians' desperation to live abroad. The side effects of mass emigration in Nigeria are also considered.

Jewish Captivity, Socio-economic Benefits and Decision to Stay in Babylon

The Conquest of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar II and the Jewish Captivity

Nebuchadnezzar II was the second king of neo-Babylon Empire, ruling from the death of his father, Nabopolassar, in 605 to his own death in 562 BC. Historically known as Nebuchadnezzar the Great, he is typically regarded as the empire's greatest king. Nebuchadnezzar had his military campaigns in the Levant and the construction projects in his capital, Babylon, and for the important part he played in Jewish history. Ruling for 43 years, Nebuchadnezzar was the longest-reigning king of the Chaldean dynasty. At the time of his death, he was among the most powerful rulers in the world

(Lluis, 2022).

Possibly named after his grandfather of the same name, or after Nebuchadnezzar I (1125-1104 B.C.), one of Babylon's greatest ancient warrior-kings, Nebuchadnezzar II already secured recognition for himself during his father's reign, as he led armies in the Medo-Babylonian war against the Assyrian Empire. At the battle of Carchemish in 605 B.C, Nebuchadnezzar inflicted a crushing defeat on an Egyptian army led by Pharaoh Neco II, and ensured that the Neo-Babylonian Empire succeeded the Neo-Assyrian Empire as the dominant power in the ancient Near East. Shortly after this victory, Nabopolassar his father died and Nebuchadnezzar became king.

However, in spite of his successful military career during his father's reign, the early period of his reign saw little or no major military achievement, and notably there was a disastrous failure in an attempted invasion of Egypt. These years of lackluster military performance saw some Babylonian's vassals, particularly in the Levant, beginning to doubt Babylon's power, viewing the Neo-Babylon Empire as a 'paper tiger' rather than a power truly on the level of the Neo-Assyrian Empire (Lluis, 2022). The situation grew so severe that people in Babylon itself began to disobey the king, with some going as far as to revolt against Nebuchadnezzar's rule. After this disappointing early period as king, Nebuchadnezzar's luck turned. In 580 B.C, Nebuchadnezzar engaged in a successful string of military actions in the Levant against the vassal states for rebellion there, likely with the ultimate intention of curbing Egyptian influence in the region. In 586 B.C, Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the kingdom of Judah and its capital, Jerusalem. The destruction of Jerusalem led to the Babylonian captivity as the city's population, and people from the surrounding lands, were taken captive to Babylon (Kayla, 2022).

In the series of battle that led to the final destruction of Judah, Pharaoh Neco of Egypt was the first to come up against the land. Pharaoh Neco made Eliakim king in place of his brother, Jehoahaz, and changed his name to Jehoiakim. He took Jehoahaz away to Egypt where he eventually died. Jehoiakim was a stooge of Pharaoh

Neco – he used him to collect taxes from the people of Judah. Subsequently, Egypt was defeated by Babylon under king Nebuchadnezzar II (Edmond, 2008). Following this defeat, king Jehoiakim became the servant of Nebuchadnezzar for three years before he rebelled against him. To crush this rebellion, Nebuchadnezzar sent a contingent of Chaldeans, Syrians Moabites and Ammonites to destroy Judah. However, Jehoiakim had died before the arrival of these invaders. His eighteen-year old son, Jehoiachin, reigned in his place. When Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, besieged the city, he took him captive and carried away all the treasures in the king's house and cut in pieces all the vessels of gold in the temple of the Lord which Solomon, king of Israel, had made. He carried away all the mighty men of valour, ten thousand captives in all. Only the poorest groups were left (David, 2013). Nebuchadnezzar made Mattaniah, Jehoiachin's uncle, king in his place and changed his name to Zedekiah. Zedekiah was twenty-one year old when he began to reign. Later, he rebelled against the king of Babylon and consequently, his city was besieged. When there was a severe famine in the land, he and his servants wanted to escape but they were captured and were taken to the king of Babylon in Riblah. They slew his two sons, removed his two eyes and took him to Babylon where he died. Shortly after, the Babylonian army under the command of Nebuzaradan came and burned the house of the Lord in Jerusalem, the king's house and all the good buildings and took all the able bodied men captive to Babylon.

Favourable Socio-Economic Policies in Babylon and its Post-Exilic Implication

Through the destruction of Jerusalem, the capture of the rebellious Phoenician city of Tyre, and other campaigns in the Levant, Nebuchadnezzar completed the Neo-Babylonian Empire's transformation into the new great power of the Ancient Near East. In addition to his military campaigns, Nebuchadnezzar is remembered as a great empire builder. The prosperity ensured by his wars allowed him to conduct great building projects in Babylon, and elsewhere in Mesopotamia. During his reign, the prosperity was

made possible through various economic reforms. Quoting Jursa, Lluís Bohigas said:

Babylon, in the sixth century, experienced one of the rare periods of great prosperity, or 'golden ages' that have occasionally befallen the pre-modern economies (Lluís, 2022).

Nebuchadnezzar himself expressed it in a passage found on a clay tablet and addressed to the god Marduk, Lord of the city of Babylon:

Among all the inhabited places, I know of no city so famous as your city of Babylon (Lluís, 2022).

The reforms embarked upon by king Nebuchadnezzar brought a change in economy, as earlier noted. He engaged in land reform through major infrastructural projects and reclamation of land rendered vacant usually by war. The crown reformed the use of agricultural land by allocating it to individuals or groups in exchange for military or civilian service to the state. The large agricultural landowners were temples, and their efficiency could be greatly improved. The king had representatives on the governing bodies of the temples, and saw to it that the temples leased land to private entrepreneurs, who were also tasked with distributing and selling the produce. Another very important reform was the monetization of the economy, starting with the use of silver as money. The great public works that Nebuchadnezzar undertook were not carried out by forced labourers or slaves, but by free labourers who were paid in silver. The silver came from taxes collected by the states and circulated as money in the economy. In order to facilitate the circulation of silver as money, it was important to guarantee its quality.

Jursa in Lluís work, states that it was the temples that were responsible for controlling its qualities. Silver became the medium of exchange in many transactions, including daily transaction, and monetization greatly facilitated trade. Nebuchadnezzar's building policy was impressive. He built a network of canals that eased the movement of people and goods throughout the country, and served to irrigate many lands. The king reinforced the city wall, both those of Babylon and of many cities in the region. In summary,

Nebuchadnezzar's economic policy provided political stability, built agricultural infrastructures, reformed agricultural prosperity, improved landlord management, rebuilt Babylon and other cities in Mesopotamia, provided plenty of well-paid work as well as introduced money in form of silver and created a city that was the envy of the whole world. After the death of Nebuchadnezzar, the economic prosperity accrued lasted throughout the rest of the sixth and early fifth centuries. Therefore, the effects of Nebuchadnezzar's economic policy were not simply a one-day event, it established a successful economic model that lasted for a long time.

The holistic nature of socio-economic and political situation in Babylon indicates that the Jews there enjoyed and participated in such lucrative opportunities (Jacob, 1963). Life in captivity, as noted before, was not that of horror or slavery. The Jews were given a good deal of social freedom and economic opportunities. They took part in education and commerce. They were allowed to acquire and own property. Most interestingly, they were allowed to take part in politics with many of them attaining position of importance in the government. In other word, the Jewish people were not slaves in Babylon, but were full and active members of Babylonian society (Peter, 2004). Many prospered. It is easy to imagine that after the defeat of Babylon by Persian rulers when the Jews were allowed to return home, many of them had no interest in leaving Babylon; examples of those who stayed behind were Daniel and his friends. Daniel was a young man of the tribe of Judah who traveled to Babylon with a group of young Israelite nobles, men of promise whom the conquering power felt could be of use in service.

Hence, they were taught the language spoken in Babylon. The king desired young men who had wisdom, knowledge and understanding. He planned to teach them for three years so they could serve him. Daniel lived in Babylon throughout the Jews' seventy-year captivity and eventually, he rose to become one of three satraps' administrators over the provincial governors all over the kingdom.

Rich Opportunities in Developed Countries and Nigerians' Desperation to Live Abroad

The increasing wave of emigration of Nigerians to other part of the world provokes more public attention. In the recent time, the pursuit for a better quality of life overseas has taken on an anxious and nerve-tingling mode. This is colloquially known as 'Japa', a Yoruba locution for "to run, flee or escape" (Bernard, 2022). The word takes firm root in the aspiration that young Nigerians have to leave the country for good. In other word, 'Japa' is a lingo in Nigeria for deliberate exit from the country especially for greener pastures abroad. Pathetically, the Nigerian 'Japa' situation is expanding. A recent survey from the Nigeria Cohesion Survey revealed that 7 out of 10 Nigerians are willing to relocate to other countries for various reasons, with good number of them recording success. Today, there is still an increasing rate of an emerging urge among the young and old Nigerians to leave the country (Ogungbile, 2023).

Lives in Nigeria and abroad are two parallel lines that can not meet. Many of these countries abroad are developed, offering rich opportunities that attract talents. Conversely, an array of untold circumstances illustrates reasons for relocation from Nigeria. The United Nations sorts countries based on economic and social factors. The countries of the world are classified as Developed, Moderate Developed and Developing Countries. The characteristics of Developed countries include relatively few people experiencing poverty, very low unemployment rates, citizens experience a high standard of living, and strong economic growth. They also include equitable income distribution, especially in comparison with developing countries, and industrialization. Not only that, in developed countries, three main factors of production (land, labour and capital) are used in the most efficient way possible, almost 90% of the natural resources are consumed (Reed, 2022). In developed countries generally, birth rates are lower, people have a longer life expectancy, and individual income is higher. There is also better access to services like health care, education, electricity, and other amenities. Living in a developed country also frequently comes with a larger degree of personal security. From the forgoing, one can see

the reasons many Nigerians are bent on leaving the country, believing there are better opportunities in foreign prisons than moving freely in Nigeria without any means of livelihood.

The mass exit from Nigeria, caused by high level of insecurity, unemployment, infrastructural deficit, hunger and failure of the various level of government to provide opportunities for the citizens to live their desired life and achieve their dreams is becoming a social epidemic. This is because, in most cases, many Nigerian immigrants whip up sentiment to attract sympathy and favour from the government of their host countries by painting bleak pictures of Nigeria abroad. This happens especially when they seek asylum. Some of them describe Nigeria as a slave country and cemetery, where their parents, wives, sisters, daughters, husbands, brothers, and sons are being slaughtered by terrorists and buried by the government. In a viral video recently, a young Nigerian, who successfully traveled to Canada, laid face upward on the ground screaming on top of his voice in excitement that he has exited Nigeria and had found himself in an environment of freedom. He thanked God for successfully running away from hunger, killings and hardship allegedly under President Muhammad Buhari’s administration (Chijioke, 2022). In every year, there is an increasing number of Nigerians fleeing poverty and unrest at home. Things are so unbearable in Nigeria that even now the rich are planning their escape too.

To be candid, better health facilities, higher employment opportunities, bright children future and many other things attract the people of Nigeria to other countries of the world (Absar, 2020). And due to availabilities of better amenities, their livelihood values are enhanced up to certain level in developed countries. Take for instance, report had it that before the down of Covid-19, almost 5,000 people left the country monthly for various forms of treatment abroad (Festus, 2022). In the United State, Nigerians are the most highly educated of all groups, with 61 percent holding at least a bachelor degree compared with 31 percent of the total foreign-born population and 32 percent of the US-born population, according to 2017 data from the Migration Policy Institute. More than half of

Nigerian immigrants (54 percent) were most likely to occupy management positions, compared with 32 percent of the total foreign-born population and 39 percent of the US-born population (Ima Jackson, 2020). Now, one can see that the economic future of Nigeria and the success of Nigerians abroad are closely tied; it is the lack of opportunities that drives many to leave home. Meanwhile, there are different economic consequences of migration of Nigerians abroad (Adedokun & Karzanova, 2019).

Negative Effects of Nigerians' Migration Abroad

The current situation of emigration in Nigeria is not in the best interest of the country. There are negative effects which are economic, social and political (Duru, 2021). One of the economic effects of migration is that it leads to brain drain, a situation where a country witnesses a high number of its best hands or professionals leaving the country. Many Nigerian intellectuals, as earlier noted, left the shores of the country in search of greener pastures abroad. The crop of individuals leaving the country are youths who have been trained and graduated from universities; some are young in the middle level of their professional careers. According to African Union, Revised Policy Framework for African and Plan of Action (2018-2027), an estimated 70,000 skilled professionals estimated from Africa each year. (Opeoluwa, 2022). Reports show that Nigeria lost over 9,000 medical doctors to the United Kingdom, Canada and the U.S.A between 2016-2018. Similarly, Business Day earlier in 2022 reported disturbing instances of Nigerian medical experts leaving the country on at an alarming rate. According to World Health Organization, the number of doctors in Nigeria plummeted from 83,565 in 2016 to 74,543 in 2018 (Charles, 2022). Consequently, with a depleting numbers of medical doctors, Nigeria annually spends between \$ 1.2 billion to \$1.6 billion on medical tourism. The brain drain cuts across many sectors and professions as funds are taken away from the country's economy to boost that of another country. Nairametrics earlier reported that Nigerian companies have spent over \$55 billion on foreign professionals' service in 10 years. On the other hand, the country only received \$770.48 million for

professionals in the country (Opeoluwa, 2022).

Also, loss of taxes and other fees to foreign countries is another negative effect of emigration in Nigeria. Reports show that 63.73% of the Internally Generated Revenue (IGR) in 2021 was from the Personal Income Service (PIT), this is despite the statement of chairman of the Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS), that only a handful of Nigeria pay tax. There are 15 million Nigerians in diaspora, according to Abike Dabiri-Erewa, the head of Nigeria Diaspora Commission (NICOM), These statistics means that Nigeria has lost 15 million people who will potentially pay tax and contribute to its economy. Reports show that Nigerian paid #9.78 million for a USA visa in 2017 (Opeoluwa, 2022). This fee only includes those who travelled as non-immigrant and excludes those who obtained immigrant visa or those whose applications were rejected. The cost of processing a visa varies by country in the USA; it ranges between \$160 to \$265 depending on the type of visa. Also in the United Kingdom, it ranges from \$132 to \$ 1145 based on visa type. The more Nigerians are now willing to leave the country, the more they spend at least \$220.86 million on foreign education between December, 2011 and February, 2022, amidst the lingering ASUU strike and the broken Nigerian educational system. The economic implication is that Nigerians spend more to get visa from other countries and spend for renewals. These amounts do not have a positive effect on the Nigerian economy.

Quoted by Charles Ogwo, Bamidele Okuwoga, a legal practitioner, described the situation, saying human capital is a veritable and integral part of development in any economy. He said no economy can grow or self-sustain without necessary manpower to drive the resources available. Consequently, the years of national investment in the training of different professionals, artisans, intellectuals, and others have not impacted positively on growth index in Nigeria. According to him, a large percentage of the working population is leaving the country due to unfavourable living conditions, infrastructural decay and escalating inflation. Okuwoga, said: “The gross devaluation of the naira is a major setback to the capacity of workers to plan, invest and build. Tertiary

institutions are shut and the few opened ones cannot cater for the needs of the economy that is steadily in declining state” (Okuwoga, 2022). A world Bank report found that 50 percent of Nigerian youths want to leave the country. The country placed third in West Africa among the nations polled, trailing Liberia (70 percent) and Sierra Leone (60 percent) Nigeria’s investments in human development has not been remarkable over the years as its budgetary allocation to education has not been more than 7 percent of its total budget. The poor investment in education is affecting the country’s ranking in human development as it dropped three to positions, ranking 161st in 2019 from 158 in 2018 among 189 countries in Human Development, according to the United Nations Development Programme. The United Nation Children’s Fund said Nigeria has the highest number of out-of-school children in the world (Charles, 2022). A recent Open-Door Report, published by the Washington based Institute of International Educations, reveals that enrolment of Nigerians in American universities has been on the increase. Currently, there are 12,860 Nigerian Students studying in the US, up to 83 percent from 7,028 in the 2011/2012 academic year.

Besides, this phenomenon is also affecting the social life in the country. Take for instance, most emigrants that are leaving the country are young, male and married, so this can have a destabilizing effect on the family. Not only that, the desperation to leave the country has led to the rise of fake and fraudulent travel agents and agencies, swindling unsuspecting Nigerians of their hard-earned money, there are many other socio-economic and political effects of emigration in Nigeria. Therefore, government at all levels should rise up to provide opportunities for Nigerians to live their desires life and achieve their dreams as a waystemming the tide of emigration in Nigeria, government needs to reassure the youths, create jobs and build infrastructures comparable to those obtainable in abroad.

Sadly, it is to be noted that the professionals who are supposed to adequately affect Nigeria’s economy with their expertise are promoting these European countries in boosting their affairs in all ramifications. Hitherto, many Nigerians see the Europeans as

besieging their country, with the ignorance of knowing that the development of these countries have been at the country's expense such that the nation's poverty is not providential but the making of the developed countries of the world.

Summary, Conclusion and Recommendation

The Nigerians' desperation to live abroad, a new phenomenon tagged locally as 'Japa', which literally means to escape calls for sober urgent responds. 'Japa' and 'Welcome to New Dispensation' syndrome, has earlier noted, have been the anthems of many Nigerians as they seriously look for ways of leaving the country. In the recent time, a large percentage of trained graduates, talented, creative and highly qualified intellectuals and professionals is leaving the country for rich opportunities, political stability, freedom, a developed economy and better living conditions found in developed countries. This is analogous to the Babylonian Jews captivity. Life in their captivity was not necessarily that of horror or slavery. The Jews, though their migration was not voluntary, were given a good deal of social freedom and economic opportunities. They were allowed to move about freely, live in their communities within or near the great cities and carry on their way of life. Life was so juicy for them in Babylon that when King Cyrus allowed them to return to Judah to rebuild the temple seventy years later, many of them refused to leave Babylon. Lives in Nigeria and abroad, as posited before, are two parallel lines that can not meet. In developed counties, there are several opportunities that attract talents. However, an array of untold circumstances illustrates reasons for relocation from Nigeria. In other words, the mass exit from Nigeria is caused by various socioeconomic factors, ranging from high level of insecurity, unemployment, infrastructural deficit, hunger and failure of the various level of government to provide opportunities for the citizens to live their desired life and achieve their dreams. The negative effects of migration from Nigeria are economic, social and political. Some of the economic effects of migration is that it leads to brain drain, loss of taxes and other fees to foreign countries. The more Nigerians are now willing to leave the country, the more they spend in favour

of other countries. Not only that, it is also affecting the social life in the country.

In conclusion, this paper reveals that favourable socio-economic conditions found and enjoyed by the Jews in Babylon then, which are superficial in many developed countries of the world today, subsequently resulting to Nigerians' desperation to live abroad, and the influx of talented, creative and highly qualified professionals into other countries of the world. The work shows that there are significant economic benefits for the receiving country, but the impact on the country of origin is economically regressive. This paper therefore recommends that:

- (1) Government should seriously tackle insecurity in the country because people relocate for the high level of insecurity. Workable mechanism such as introduction of state police, the use of Obas and Chiefs as Chief Security Officers (CSO) of their environments, the use of technology and other devices should be adopted. There should be improvement on the existing security intelligent infrastructure, and recruitment of more Security personnel will also add value.
- (2) Problem of high rate of poverty should be addressed. Creation of massive job opportunities and decentralization of government to help improve service delivery, particularly at the grassroots will help reduce poverty.
- (3) Government should curb intellectual migration that is draining the country's economy by reducing dependence on oil and diversification especially into agriculture to create more jobs. Most importantly, training of Nigerians, especially the youths on modern agricultural strategies and the use of technology, will help increase efficiency and open up more business and employment opportunities.
- (4) Workers should be well remunerated. Omotolu Mick Apata, the Chairman of the All-Progressive Congress (APC), Canada chapter, declared that the wave of 'Japa' Syndrome is a temporary phenomenon that will fizzle, especially when

unemployment is reduced. He said that in the recent time, migration of Nigeria’s youths to European countries has increased geometrically, a condition which experts adduced to poor working conditions and remuneration, and unfriendly economic realities.

- (5) Government should prioritize funding for the educational sector to empower citizens with free education and profession at all levels of degrees. This is because, a strong desire to success in life, enabled by education, is a common theme in Nigerian homes. This explains why many Nigerians sell their properties to send their children abroad for better education.
- (6) Better health facilities should be provided. Many Nigerians travel or live abroad because of paucity of medical care facilities in the country.
- (7) Government in Nigeria should ensure the value of our money increases so as to increase the standard of living. The gross devaluation of the naira is a major setback to the capacity of workers to plan, invest and build.
- (8) There should be availability of electricity power supply to encourage or enhance small - scale businesses and workers.
- (9) Government at various levels should ensure that social amenities are made available and maintained to discourage mass emigration.

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