



CIEA7 #31:

THE GOLDEN JUBILEE (1960-2010) OF NIGERIA'S INDEPENDENCE: AN ANALYSIS OF POLITICAL LEADERS AND FOLLOWERS.

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Golden jubilee without gold:

the anatomy of political leadership and followership in Nigeria

No doubt fifty years symbolize age of maturity for the individuals as for the nation-states. As Nigeria prepares to celebrate her fifty years of independence from colonialism, the expectation is that Nigeria should have matured enough politically. But the facts on the ground contradict this expectation. The level of political development in Nigeria can best be adjudged at the level of infancy. A number of factors have been attributed to this state of affairs.

This paper sets out to examine the relationship between the character of the political leadership and followership and the prevailing level of political underdevelopment in Nigeria. Our major assumption is that the character of political leadership and followership determines the level of political development in any society. Therefore, the objective of the paper is to explain the character of the political leadership and followership in Nigeria and how this has affected political development of the country.

Golden, Jubilee, Nigeria, Leadership, Followership.

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INTRODUCTION

On October 1st 2010, Nigeria would have been fifty years old as a politically independent state having secured her political independence on October 1st 1960 from Britain. As often happens on every October 1st that marks the political birth of Nigeria as an independent state and begins another political year, Nigeria and Nigerians will come face-to-face with the moment of contemplation. They will take stock and make a cost-benefit analysis of their achievements and failures during the five decades post-dating independence. Fifty years is indeed a golden age that ordinarily would call for celebration. A man that has attained the age of fifty years has come of age. He would have been married, maintained a stable family and have a well-launched career. The fifty-year mark represents the age of stock-taking. It is the age when a man looks back at his youth and the attendant strivings for relevance. It is the age at which a man calculates his failures and successes. It is also the age at which a man sets in motion the last part of his plans for survival, having, with the aid of hindsight, identified areas of his failures and successes.

The same could be said of a country that has attained fifty years of age as Nigeria has. Such country could be said to have survived the vagaries of infancy, the exuberance and crisis of adolescent and has established a functional and effective socio-political system or culture that will ensure stability. However, it is a different ball game when a country that is stupendously endowed, as is Nigeria, fails to utilize the experiences of her infancy and youth as building blocks for a better future.

From birth, systemic crisis and conflict seems to have dogged her path. Her youth was tainted with bloodshed, corruption and leadership inertia. At fifty years, Nigeria seems to have had the highest rate of leadership turnover in Africa. In fifty years, Nigeria has had 14 different governments. In 50 years, Nigeria has had five coup d'états, eight military governments, five civilian administrations, one Interim National Government (ING), three Republics and one aborted Republic. In fifty years, centripetal and centrifugal socio-political forces seem to have become dangerously sharpened in Nigeria, with each contending socio-political force becoming increasingly suspicious and subversive of the other. In 50 years, Nigeria seems to have enthroned corruption and charlatanism as articles of faith in her political leadership. In 50 years, Nigeria has consolidated a dubious political culture that emphasizes the primacy of sectional interest over and above the national interest. In 50 years, Nigeria's political leaders have become so immersed in flaunting their ill-gotten wealth; in upbraiding the primordial public at the expense of the civic public. In 50 years, Nigeria's record reads like a parchment on the scroll of mindless iniquities. Arthur A. Nwankwo (2001),

contends that Nigeria is a lumbering behemoth in search of a safe berth; a country with awesome potentials for global dominance but frittered away by sustained and unmitigating ethnic pariahs, leadership inertia and mindless looting of the commonwealth. According to Olusegun Obasanjo (1999), Nigeria's problems transcend the issue of poor leadership. He argues rather forcefully that the lethargic nature of the political followership is also at the center of Nigeria's unfulfilled dreams in 50 years.

As Nigeria rolls out the drums to celebrate her golden jubilee, can we really say that the country has struck gold? Can we say that our dream is alive? And that these dreams can engender enthusiastic hope for the future? These and more are the central thematic areas of this paper, to wit, that Nigeria's claim to giant of Africa is suspicious; that a country with poor political leadership cannot also be said to instigate a reasonable and critical followership. The contention of this paper is that at 50 years, Nigeria has more to worry about than merely marking her golden jubilee. The paper also contends that it is not all bleak for Nigeria: though Nigeria may as yet be a sleeping giant, there is no doubt that with the appropriate political leadership mentality with a properly mobilized followership, she will eventually awaken from her slumber to fulfill her high destiny and take her rightful place in the comity of nations. At this point of push and pull, when the events of the past 50 years seem to have traumatized Nigerians, the country can only march forward in faith and hope.

CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS OF LEADERSHIP AND FOLLOWERSHIP

Leadership

Richard Bolden (2004) remarks that leadership, especially political leadership, has become one of the most-talked about issues in the world today. Vigorous interest in understanding leadership is as old as human civilization. Leadership has been of interest for many centuries from the early Greek political philosophers like Plato, Socrates and Aristotle to the present gamut of political, management and leadership scholars. More than ever before, the question of leadership has assumed a global attention that we can no longer ignore its vitality and importance in our society. There is no doubt that in a rapidly globalizing world with breath-taking vertical and horizontal integrations of world economies; when our global environment has shrunken into a global village on account of improved technology, leadership holds the key to the success, not only of individual organizations but also of nations and states in the world. Richard Bolden, while citing a DFES Report of 2002 on leadership deficits in Britain noted thus:

Our productivity as a nation is already lagging behind our competitors in North America and Europe. By tackling our management and leadership deficits with real vigour, we will unlock the doors to increased productivity, maximize the benefits of innovation, gain advantage from technological change and create the conditions for a radical transformation of public services (DFES, 2002).

The foregoing underlies the importance of leadership and what benefits are accruable from a result-oriented leadership. Pita Ejiogor (2001) opines that good leadership in any organization or country would naturally galvanize production; hitherto dormant potentials, long coiled in a devastating slumber, will gradually uncoil and inch towards achieving organizational goals. However, Chinua Achebe (1983) warns that good leadership, like good money is difficult to find.

Having recognized the importance of leadership, one question we must answer is: what is leadership? Stogdill (1974), a leading voice in leadership scholarship argues that there is really no acceptable definition of the concept of leadership. This is not surprising given the fact that all social constructs like leadership can hardly be pigeon-holed into a strait-jacket definition. This is one problem we encounter in the social sciences because social constructs like leadership are usually subject to subjective interpretations. Beyond this subjective interpretation of leadership, there is also a second problem with its definition and that appertains to a scholar's theoretical perspective. Classical or normative theoretical definition of leadership would always assume that leadership is a social process, which emerges from group interactions, while scientific or behavioural theoretical interpretations of leadership would insist that leadership is the outcome, always, of a set of behavioural traits or characteristics possessed by a person in leadership. Expectedly, therefore, these various schools of thought bring their influence to bear on the definition of leadership and this is why Gaille (1955), contends that leadership is like the concept of power, which is prone to a lot of contestations. There are indeed four identifiable problems that make unanimity of definition of leadership almost impossible. Grint (2004), outlines these problems as process problem- a problem emanating from disagreement among scholars as whether leadership is a derivative of personal traits or whether it is a social process in which case leadership emerges from interactions among social groups. There is also the problem of legitimacy, and this begets the question as to whether the leader is in-charge with formal and defined authority or whether such a person is exerting informal influence. Still there is a third problem, which relates to the manner of influence a leader exerts on the followers- how is the leader respected domestically and internationally; is his influence intentional or casual? How does the followership

respond to this kind of influence? Or does the followership react to such influence as a result of cumulative effect of other influences exerted by the leader? The final point of contest here is whether leadership, as a social construct and concept is symbolized by individuals or groups and whether leadership is purely a human construction or has it a tinge of divinity.

These problems notwithstanding, Kellerman (2004), admits that leadership is not a moral concept. According to him, "Leaders are like the rest of us: trustworthy and deceitful; cowardly and brave; greedy and generous. To assume that all leaders are good people is to be willfully blind to the reality of human condition, and it severely limits our scope for becoming more affective at leadership".

In conceptualizing leadership, I am minded to note the psychodynamic concept of leadership as enunciated by Stech E.L (2004), and his colleagues at the famous Tavistock Institute. According to this concept, there are other areas we must consider in any attempt to conceptualize leadership such as understanding the psychological factors that motivate people to aspire to be leaders while others decide to be followers; what is the influence of group/society on the emergence of leaders and what is the transactional relationship between the leader and the followers. Using this psychodynamic approach, Morthouse (2004), has attempted to give a relatively generally acceptable definition of leadership. According to him, "Leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal". In this definition Morthouse has tried to skillfully incorporate four thematic areas in his definition. For instance he conceptualizes leadership as a process involving influence which occurs in a group and the essence is to achieve a common goal. The problem with this definition though is its anchorage on the individual as the source of leadership.

No matter how we conceptualize leadership, truth is that leadership is a complex and intricate phenomenon, which determines and drives organizational or societal processes. Leadership involves the exertion of influence on other towards achieving a collective goal. This influence must not be exerted with force but through the leader's conduct and motivation. A good leader must, through his or her conduct be able to motivate the followership; the leader should lead by example and be responsive to the interests and aspirations of his followers. According to Chinua Achebe (1983), a good leader must be patriotic- giving his best in the service of his people and demanding the best conduct and support from his people. Achebe insists that leadership is a sacred trust like the priesthood in civilized, humane religions of the world, which no one gets into without proper advice and consultations and also with total commitment.

Nigerians with their penchant for defending the absurd have at various times risen in defense of the country's leadership deficits. Apologists of poor leadership in Nigeria would always ask you: "If you were in the leader's shoe, would you perform better?" Honestly I have always considered such question as nasty and silly basically because such apologists fail to understand that leadership comes with a lot of demands from the people and he who is not prepared to meet those demands should not aspire to lead. According to Arthur A. Nwankwo (1999), "Zealous or willing leaders, as opposed to reluctant and accidental ones, have the track record of being abreast with the realities of their surroundings; that they had, before becoming leaders, come into contact with the frustrating aspects of such realities; and that given such contacts, they are always determined to the apparatus of state- especially in its transformed or radicalized nature to rebuild society from scratch". In other words, a committed leader possesses a prior point of contact with reality. Such leaders move into leadership positions with a premeditated cognition of what is wrong about the system which they intend to change, how they want to transform it and with what probable outcome. Having spoken thus far on the concept of leadership, I shall now turn attention to the concept of followership.

Followership

A proper point of navigating this issue is to ask the question: What is followership? A simple answer would be that followership is the act of following a person or a group. According to students of English language, it is the adjectival depiction of the noun "follower". A follower is one who supports the person in authority- be it religious, traditional or political authority. Followership derives from the fact that all other persons in a given organization or society should follow the leader primarily because the leader is vested with authority. The Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (1975), defines follower as someone who believes in a particular system of ideas or who supports a leader who teaches these ideas. Followers, according to Lambda (2008), have always been in existence for as long as there have been leaders. The importance of followership came to the fore in the late 1960s when, according to Nolan (2001), Wiles stated that followership and leadership may be equal, despite not exploring the dynamics of their relationship.

There is no doubt that the concept of followership as a concomitant of good leadership has been overlooked and understudied by scholars of leadership. Until recently, the prevailing assumption was that followership has little impact on leadership but we do know that every successful leadership assumes good followership. Truth is that the role of the follower has changed and become very powerful in our time. Robert Kelly (1992), argues that followership is as important as leadership and that none

should be promoted at the expense of the other; even as Dixon and Westbrook (2003), argue that due increased competitiveness of our global economy it is no longer fashionable to view the follower as a sheep that must obey blindly. A functional and active followership improves the overall efficiency of society and its structures. According to Crockett (1981), "Good leaders loathe subservience; nor do they trust 'yes' people. Good leaders want followers that can challenge their ideas, differ critically and constructively with their decisions, give them data, generate good and viable alternative ideas of achieving collective goals and who are innovative". Thus followership is the capacity of willingness of the follower to follow a leader. However, there is presently the absence of a working definition of the concept of followership but the concept is no less valuable to the success or failure of leadership. According to Chinua Achebe (2010), "We need not spend too long on the argument for the pre-eminence of followers" in any organization or society. The followers are important in the equation for successful leadership.

Historicizing Nigeria

Nigeria became an independent country on October 1st 1960 following the negotiated withdrawal of British colonial masters on account of the sustained nationalist pressures from Nigerians. Okechukwu Ikejiani and Odinchezo Miriam Ikejiani (1993), notes that before colonial contact, the geo-political entity today known as Nigeria was made up of independent ethnic nations. These ethnic nations were subdued by the forces of British colonialism and later aggregated into one country called Nigeria. James Coleman (1975), notes that the name Nigeria was not configured by any Nigerian but by Lord Lugard himself. Under colonial administration, Nigeria was divided into protectorates. There was the Northern Protectorate corresponding to the present northern Nigeria; the Lagos and Southern protectorates corresponding to present day southern Nigeria. By 1914, the Northern and Southern Protectorates were amalgamated to form what is known today as Nigeria. While the North then was ruled by colonial proclamations, the southern part of the country was ruled via Legislative Councils. There are differing opinions as to the real motive of this amalgamation. Arthur A. Nwankwo (2001), argues that the amalgamation was done without the consent of the various peoples of Nigeria. According to him, it was a marriage of convenience designed to release the Northern protectorate from the leading strings of the British treasury basically because at the time of the amalgamation the Northern Protectorate had become very unprofitable for the British government. While not debunking Nwankwo's submission, Okibe Hyginus Banko (2001), asserts that the primary aim of

the amalgamation was administrative convenience and increased economic activity by Britain.

From 1914 when the amalgamation took place, series of constitutional developments took place leading eventually to Nigeria's independence. First in these constitutional development was the inauguration of the Consultative Council for the colony of Lagos, which of course had no binding power of the colonial Governor of the colony. However, in 1922, the nationalists scored a bulls-eye when their sustained pressure led to the introduction of the Clifford constitution in 1922. The most remarkable feature of this constitution was the introduction of the "elective principle". This was followed by the introduction of the Richards constitution in 1946, which divided the country into three legislative regions, which in the main created conditions that easily lent themselves to the institutionalization of tribal politics and inter-regional rivalry. Next was the Macpherson constitution of 1951, which consolidated regionalism, gave the regions more powers and this also signaled the emergence of regional political parties. There was also the Oliver Lytleton constitution and later the independence constitution, which constitutionalized regionalism as a pseudo-confederal structure. At independence, Nigeria had four regions namely: the northern region, western region, south-eastern region and the Midwestern region. The creation of the Midwestern region is critical in Nigeria's political history because it was the result of the agitation of minorities against the perceived internal domination by the larger ethnic groups in the South especially the Igbos and Yorubas. That agitation led to the setting up of the Willink Commission which confirmed the fears of these so-called minorities and recommended the creation of the Midwestern region to mitigate these fears. At independence, Nigeria settled for the Westminster Parliamentary form of democracy.

Soon after political independence, the new country began to show signs of strain and the inability of the political class to see through the inauguration of a truly Nigerian nation. The nationalists that had shown great zeal and commitment during the decolonization process lost focus and vision. The allure of their tribal and regional loyalties weighed greatly on them that soon they reclined into tribal enclaves to whip up primordial sentiments against their colleagues. Not prepared to take up the responsibility of patriotic governance and political leadership, the nationalists lost their zeal and passion for the new state as soon as they took over the reins of power from the departing colonial masters. They were consumed with the passion of preserving and consolidating their political positions instead of concentrating efforts towards building a united and stable Nigerian state. National and group interaction would henceforth be interpreted from ethnic and religious perspectives. This was the

prevailing philosophy among the leaders and the general public in Nigeria and it was through this narrow mindedness that issues like the 1962 federal census, the western election crisis, etc were contended.

By January 15th, the Nigerian military has had enough. The late Chukwuma Kaduna Nzeogwu led other four majors of the Nigerian Army to topple the government of Tafewa Balewa, then Nigerian Prime Minister. This coup claimed the lives of some prominent Nigerian politicians especially from the Northern region. Unfortunately, the coup was misinterpreted as Igbo coup and in July of 1966, Yakubu Gowon, a northerner from the Middle Belt zone led a counter coup which toppled the military government of Thompsom Umunnakwe Aguiyi-Ironsi, an Igbo and at the time the military head of state in Nigeria. This counter coup was followed by what many South-easterners till today feel were pre-meditated genocidal attacks on people of south-eastern origin particularly the Igbos especially in the Northern region and to a reasonable extent the western region. The foundations of the new country were considerably weakened by the events that followed these attacks. Series of efforts were made to restore peace and confidence in the system from both within and outside Nigeria one of which was the famous Aburi Accord. Unfortunately, none of these efforts yielded the desired result. By 1967, people of the South-eastern region expressed deep concern about their safety in the Nigerian state and opted out of the Nigerian federation. After much consultation, the then military Governor of the South-eastern region Chukwuemeka Odumegwu-Ojukwu declared the state of Biafra. To weaken the internal cohesion and unity of the secessionist South-eastern region the federal government of Nigeria under Gowon responded swiftly by abolishing the regional structure and in its place created a 12-state structure. The declaration of the state of Biafra would ultimately lead to a 30-month old bitterly fought civil war that ended in 1970 with the surrendering of Biafra and the declaration by the Federal Government of Nigeria that there was neither a victor nor vanquished in the war. The Nigerian government would eventually grant general amnesty to all those who fought on the side of the secessionist Biafra and began a process of reconstruction, reconciliation and rehabilitation.

Gowon's reluctance to initiate transition to civil rule programme led to the coup of 1975, which was spear-headed by Murtala Ramat Mohammed. Worthy of mention is the fact that under the regime of Gowon, corruption, ineptitude and indolence especially in the civil service had become so entrenched and institutionalized as a way of life. The enormous foreign exchange which Nigeria earned as a result of the oil boom could not be properly utilized. The Gowonian administration resorted to wasteful spending with Nigeria turning into a dumping ground for all manner of articles from

every corner of the globe. The consumption patterns of Nigerians changed dramatically and with that their value system. Murtala Mohammed cited these issues in his maiden address to the country as the reasons for taking over government from Gowon and it was not surprising that he set about carrying out massive reforms in the civil service.

However, he was brutally assassinated on February 13th 1976 by Buka Suka Dimka in an abortive coup. The death of Murtala Mohammed eventually paved the way for assumption of power as Head of State by Olusegun Obasanjo. Before his tragic death, Gen. Mohammed had initiated a transition to civil rule programme in which he declared his preference for an American-type presidential system of government. With the lifting of ban on politics five political parties eventually emerged to vie for political positions. These were the National Party of Nigeria (NPN), the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN), the Nigerian People's Party (NPP), the Great Nigerian People's Party (GNPP) and the People's redemption Party (PRP). It is to the credit of Olusegun Obasanjo that he did not vitiate this programme but saw to its conclusion with the handing over power to a democratically elected government under Shehu Shagari of the NPN. Thus was born Nigeria's Second Republic.

The Second Republic was again marred by politics of antagonism as the political class replayed the events of the First Republic. The four years of that Republic were four years of wrangling, high-handedness, impeachment as dangerous weapon in the hands of legislators, corruption, tribalism, and high-wire sabotage. By December 1983, the military came calling again, accusing the political class of all manner of evils to justify their seizure of power.

From 1983 till May 29th 1999, Nigeria was variously ruled by Muhammadu Buhari, Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida, Sani Abacha and Abdulsalam Abubakar. Of particular mention is Ibrahim Babangida. There is no doubt that every government in Nigeria had tried its best to leave enduring legacies by which they would be remembered. Like I pointed out earlier the Balewa administration was Nigeria's first attempt at constitutional and parliamentary democracy. The Gowon administration successfully prosecuted the civil war to preserve Nigeria's unity while Murtala Mohammed tried to de-institutionalize corruption, which has been an integral part of national political and bureaucratic leadership. The Shagari and Buhari eras also had their own legacies. However, there comes a time when a leader wishes to leave, not just an enduring legacy, but a multiple succession of legacies, which he hopes would outlive his generation. Former military ruler, Ibrahim Babangida was one such Nigerian ruler. Whether in the context of political transition, economic reform programmes social and economic reform programmes etc Babangida left huge imprints. Only very few Nigerians would claim not to have been affected by his regime's thematic and its

fundamental implications for the Nigerian state. Babangida initiated the longest running transition programme in Nigeria's history, which terminated in the annulment of the famous June 12, 1992 presidential election- adjudged to be the freest and fairest in Nigeria's history. The annulment of that election and its outright cancellation heightened ethnic saliency, encouraged separatist agitations and inflicted grave wounds on Nigeria's federalist pretensions and instilled a climate of suspicion and distrust. To assuage the tension in the land, Babangida contrived and installed a National Interim Government under Earnest Shonekan, a Yoruba. The outrage against the cancellation of the June 12 elections ricocheted in all nooks and crannies of Nigeria and beyond especially with the arrest and detention of late Moshood Kasimawo Abiola, the acclaimed winner of that election. Nigeria was at the verge of perdition and the crisis in the country, as a matter of fact, overwhelmed the ING of Shonekan. Shonekan was eventually shoved aside in a palace coup by Sani Abacha whose regime was noted for high profile assassinations of pro-democracy activists and general reign of terror, insecurity and uncertainty. High points of the Abacha era were the killing of Ken Saro-Wiwa, renowned Nigerian Environmentalist and his eight Ogoni kinsmen and making Nigeria a pariah state in the international community especially with the suspension of Nigeria then from the Commonwealth of States.

The death of Sani Abacha on June 8th 1998 marked the ascension of Abdulsalam Abubakar as the next military head of state in Nigeria. Abubakar collapsed the Abacha transition programme, which was designed to ensure Abacha's self-succession bid, and inaugurated a new transition programme. Highlights of the Abubakar regime were the release of detained political detainees, consensus-building and the eventual handing-over of power to a democratically elected civilian administration under Olusegun Obasanjo, which marked Nigeria's Third Republic. But it is worthy to note that throughout this journey, Nigeria has moved from a four regional structure to a 36-state structure; the federal capital has moved from Lagos to Abuja and the state of siege mentality has not abated even under the Third Republic. We have been saddled with youth militancy, corruption, unrestrained kidnapping, religiously-induced blood letting and dysfunctional social structure, but the most noticeable bequeathal of military rule has been corruption, prebendal politics and the perception of leadership from ethnic and religious perspectives. The challenge to the Nigerian political leaders today, according to Joy Ogwu of the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs (2007), is how to make-up for the leadership deficits we are experiencing today through the emergence of credible leaders who are willing to make a difference in a transformative manner.

The Leadership Question in Nigeria

There is no doubt that leadership constitutes a huge problem in Nigeria. The dearth of positive or effective leadership in many African countries appears native to Nigeria. But if we argue that leadership in Nigeria is at a deficit, we should also ask the question: why is this so? Chinua Achebe (1983), in his work *“The Trouble with Nigeria”* stated unequivocally that “The trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership. There is nothing basically wrong with the Nigerian character. There is nothing wrong with the Nigerian water, land or climate or anything else. The Nigerian problem is the unwillingness or inability of its leaders to rise up to the responsibility, to the challenge of personal example, which is the hallmark of true leadership”.

One is constrained to state that the trouble with Nigeria as Achebe has so bluntly and truthfully stated is not peculiar to Nigeria. The seminal absence of effective leadership in Nigeria as in most African states could be located in the manner of emergence of what in the first place we call African states. Nigeria, as virtually all countries in Africa is a product of arbitral colonial creation. As I pointed out earlier in this paper, what we know today as Nigeria is a collection of various independent ethnic nations with different histories, languages, cultures, religions and social structures. They existed independently and were developing at their pace. They were not subordinate to any other ethnic state. However, with the advent of colonialism, these ethnic nationalities were conquered by the colonial onslaught and later aggregated to form one country. Some of these ethnic nations could not have, under any circumstance agreed to be lumped together with others in one country. So when we talk about leadership deficits in Nigeria, we should not discountenance the evolutionary trend of the Nigerian state as the major reason for the leadership crisis in the country. As a colonial creation, Nigerians see Nigeria as a mere geographical expression. To them they were brought together by accidental circumstances and they owe no obligation to the entity called Nigeria as much as they would for their ethnic nations. In this association of strange bedfellows, the guiding principle is “get whatever you can while this relationship lasts”. This is the philosophy that conditions leadership in Nigeria. This is evident from the fact that what we have had in Nigeria are rulers and not leaders. It is a fact that nation-states are not imposed anywhere. States like Nigeria emerge out of the interactive desires of the composing units to exist as one. Parties to such nation-states could be regarded as consensual affiliates that grow out of the willingness and desire to do so and out of their ideological accommodation of compatible interests and similarities in history, religion, culture and language as the defining parameters of their historical process. Therefore states originate out of the organizational capacities of the units in that country, in their singularity and generality

and in their specificity and universality when they relate with each other. Obviously, the Nigerian state did not evolve through this process. Colonialism not only created it and named it Nigeria but also appointed its successor at the point of exit. In other words, the creators of Nigeria did not intend it to succeed because in creating such an artificial state they inevitably sowed its seed of failure.

This is totally at variance with the kind of leadership we get in Europe or North America or even Asia where the states followed a process of evolutionary trend and came to agree to disagree as to who or what group should constitute a country. In Europe, for example we see a state structure that evolved out of the free will of the people to form a country based on their history, language, religion and culture. This is why you see so many small states in Europe; you see a continent with high conurbation that you rarely know when you move from one country to another. The United States of America followed this pattern of evolution. It will be recalled that the thirteen original states agreed to exist as one country and drew up a charter which admitted any other member of the union. This pattern of state evolution cannot be said of Nigeria or any Africa country for that matter.

While lamenting the tragedies of the Nigerian civil war, Peter Smithers (1998), the Parliamentary Private Secretary to the Minister of State and the Secretary of State in the Colonial Office from 1952-59, that is during the period of the wave of independence, remarked:

During the negotiations for the independence of Nigeria the view of the Secretary of State at that time, with which I agreed, was that in Nigeria we should attempt to put together a large and powerful state with ample material resources, which would play a leading part in the affairs of the continent and the world. This was attractive but it involved forcing several different ethnic and cultural groups into a single political structure. The negotiations were complex and very difficult, the chief problem as I remember relating, significantly, to the control of the police and military. In the retrospect of 40 years it is clear that this was a grave mistake which has cost many lives and will probably continue to do so. It would have been better to establish several smaller states in a free-trade area. In exculpation it must be said that we did not then have the examples of the collapse of Yugoslavia and of the Soviet Union before our eyes. It should now be clear for all but the wilfully blind to see that it is extremely dangerous to force diverse racial and social entities into a single rigid structure...

So the point being made here is that leadership in Nigeria developed along the line of the artificial evolution of states in Africa. The concept of state formation in Africa is fictitious and so is the leadership. Frantz Fanon (1961), captures this trend in his epic work *"The Wretched of the Earth"* when he asserted "Before independence, the (African) leader generally embodies the aspirations of the people for independence, political liberty and national dignity. But as soon as independence is declared, far from embodying in concrete terms the needs of the masses of the people in what touches their lives, the leader will reveal his inner purpose: to become the general manager of that company of profiteers impatient for their returns, which constitute the national bourgeoisie".

The missionaries that came and established schools only trained interpreters who in turn saw in western education the possibility of a brighter future. The early Nigerians who went abroad to study did not study the rudiments of leadership. They were taught Classical Arts and European History. While abroad, they saw how well the British workers lived and such opportunities were there for their taking when they came back from their studies. Most of them who joined the ranks of the nationalists did not do so because of any deep ideological persuasion but saw in the colonial administration a stumbling block to occupy the comfortable apartments in the Government Reserved Areas presently being occupied by British colonial masters. So as soon as the independence was secured, most of them became so engrossed in securing their positions and prestige and would quickly run to their kinsmen to report any threat or perceived threat to that position which is now seen as that of the ethnic clan. The symptoms of this kind of leadership emergence are very visible in Nigeria: corruption, tribalism, religious politics, indiscipline, social injustice etc.

A major problem deriving from this warped evolution of the Nigerian state is the problem of leadership recruitment in Nigeria. Leadership recruitment is conducted of who you know, your religion or ethnic background etc without minding the person's qualifications or suitability for the leadership position. This is why leadership in Nigeria is described pedantically as a circus of "dog-eat-dog". In this leadership of "dog-eat-dog", the leader's preoccupation is survival or the protection of the position. Consequently, leadership in Nigeria has come to be seen as exploitation, personal or group enrichment at the expense of collective interest.

The Problem of Followership in Nigeria

Beyond the problems of leadership raised above, Nigeria is also saddled with the problem of followership. Political followership in Nigeria developed from the lopsided creation or evolution of the Nigerian state. Nigerians follow whoever they want to follow because of the person's tribal origin; his religion, the position he is occupying

or the size of the person's pocket. Having identified these various strands of followership, the Nigerian leaders maximize them to exploit the people. Nigerian leaders are never wrong in the eyes of their kinsmen. Any reprimand of a public officer in Nigeria is seen as an affront on the sensibilities of his tribal group. The philosophy is that no matter what havoc he brings to society, he is still "our son" and we must protect him to avoid the wrath of the ancestors. This is why Nigerians celebrate criminals and looters of government fund. The tepid nature of followership in Nigeria could be gleaned from two angles. The first is from the political angle. Nigerians believe that the shortest cut to affluence is through politics. In Nigeria, politics is full-time occupation not meant for the faint-hearted. Among Nigerians looting the national treasury is no crime in so far as you are not caught. Nigerians do like belonging to the losing party. So any political party that comes into power in the party to belong. This guarantees party patronage through contracts and other forms of recompense. There is this bandwagon effect in politics in Nigeria. Political parties become active during elections and as soon as the elections are over, there is massive decamping to the ruling party.

Poverty is also a very serious problem in Nigeria, a factor which the political class exploits to manipulate the followership. Rural infrastructure in Nigeria has long been neglected. Investments in health, education and water supply have been focused largely on the urban areas. As a result, the rural population has extremely limited access to services such as schools and health centres, and about half of the population lacks access to safe drinking water. Poverty and violence are often closely interconnected. Religious and ethnic tensions continue to brew in different parts of Nigeria, erupting into outbreaks of violence and leading in turn to a situation of escalating poverty and malnutrition. The move towards political liberalization has allowed militants from religious and ethnic groups to express their frustrations more freely, and with increasing violence. The Nigerian politicians pay periodic visits to these rural areas during elections not necessarily to genuinely canvass for votes or to tell the people what to expect but to show off his motorcade, retinue of security men (official and unofficial) and to distribute money and tokens to them.

Few bags of rice and some thousands of the Nigerian money compensates for the votes of these rural dwellers, which in most cases do no matter. Truth is that the Nigerian politicians help in creating and sustaining this poverty. By playing this politics of tokenism, the followers are deceived more and there is this feeling of resigning themselves to fate, believing that since the politician comes once in a while to the rural communities it was better to accept whatever he brings. Hence poverty lubricates the lethargy of the Nigerian followership, further impoverishes the people and renders them incapable of rising up to the role of critical followers. But this is not in the spirit of

genuine democratization. Genuine democratization requires the galvanization of the followership in such a way that it will be able to play its role as the guardian of democracy. The typical Nigerian politician is aware of this cyclic impoverishment and is content maintaining its perpetuation. To the typical Nigerian person, these things do not matter in so far as “our man is in office”.

Another area one sees blind followership in Nigeria is in the area of religion. Religion is such a volatile issue especially in Northern Nigeria. A thorough examination of the negative influence of religion on politics in Nigeria would reveal that politicians very often manipulate the religiousity of the people to evil ends. In Nigeria, the role religion could play in politics and vice-versa is limited by the individual’s orientation and the nature of the society and religion has continued to influence political decisions of successive governments of this country. There is no doubt that politics and religion could relate effectively in any society, but the benefits that could be derived from such relationship depend solely on the sincerity of those who are engaged in the practice of these phenomena. However, in Nigeria, this interplay between religion and politics has often generated negative impacts, because politicians in their quest to acquire power have resorted to using religion as a tool of oppression, disunity and war. The recent carnage in Jos, Nigeria is a typical example. Truth is that the Nigerian follower aids and abets leadership failures.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

There is no gainsaying the fact that Nigeria stands at a critical crossroads, confronted by critical options and choices about which way to follow. But choosing the right path to follow requires imaginative and transformational people to lead the charge for a new Nigeria and galvanize the people into action in a patriotic and public spirited effort at achieving sustainable development and human empowerment in Nigeria. The truth is that Nigeria as a country has no alternative to choosing the right path in the face of present global trend in transformational leadership and development; and when a combination of socio-political forces within and outside the country underscores the need and urgency for such a result-driven leadership. Joy Ogwu (2007), maintains that attaining such leadership requires new ideas about democratic governance in the form of more inclusive, more participatory and decentralized modes and processes of governance. The truth is that Nigeria desperately needs good and qualitative leadership to move to the next level and achieve the high potentials of the country. I strongly feel that all hope is not yet lost. Blessed with enormous human and natural potentials, I am persuaded to believe that with determination and commitment on the

part of those in positions of leadership can rise above the ordinary and inspire hope in the country.

In this paper we have been looking at Nigeria's golden jubilee celebrations and the question has been whether the golden jubilee is worth celebrating. The paper has contended that there is leadership deficit in Nigeria; that Nigeria has not exploited her enormous human and natural potentials as a result of poor leadership. The paper has also extended this blame to the timid nature of the Nigerian followership and argues that followership may yet be Nigeria's greatest nemesis to achieving her high destiny. Apart from looking at leadership and followership conceptually, the paper has done a tour de force of Nigeria's socio-political history, the aim of which is to situate the analysis of leadership and followership in Nigerian in proper context. The paper admits that leadership is indeed a problem in Nigeria but traces the origin of the leadership deficit to the manner in which the Nigerian state evolved, which in turn has defined the followership. The paper is of the view that all hope is not lost for Nigeria; that given her enormous potentials, what is needed is commitment and determination on the part of the leaders to liberate the bottled energy and creativity of the country.

Recommendations:

- a) There is need for a total reorientation of values by Nigerian leaders as well as the followership
- b) Nigerian leaders must rise to the responsibility; to the challenge of personal example, which is the hallmark of personal leadership
- c) There is need for the Nigerian leaders to embrace new ideas about democratic governance in the form of more inclusive, more participatory and decentralized modes and processes of governance
- d) Nigerians need to renegotiate their existence and agree on the best mode of existence. Only through this process of renegotiation can the country go through the proper road of state evolution.
- e) There is also need to enthrone social justice and excellence in the performance and reward system of the country in such a way that we should be able to present our first eleven at all times.

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