



Fellowship as the foundation of Corrupt Leadership in Nigeria

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Abstract. Corrupt leadership has a great influence on followership. However, it is generally believed by many Nigerians including Chinua Achebe that the problem with Nigeria is squarely the problem of leadership. The argument present to substantiate the above claim is that countries in other parts of the world that have advanced economically and politically did so on the basis of good leaders. The role played by the citizens of such countries as followers is often ignored. Nigeria, like any other country, is peopled by stakeholders who are both leaders and followers. It then behooves on every Nigerian to rise to the occasion of saving and securing Nigeria as we are all major stakeholders as Nigerians. The success or otherwise of leadership will not be in isolation of followership. Both leaders and followers are guilty in the event of the failure of the State. The support given to leaders in Nigeria, always allowing them to have their way in almost everything is a sign of poor followership. Using the critical and analytic methods, this paper observed that politics that have succeeded all over the world are those that enjoy vibrant, active and participatory followership, and argued that the kind of followership in Nigeria where by the followers swallow the pills administered to them by their leaders even when such pills are bitter, cannot lead Nigeria to oneness, economic and political greatness. The paper concludes that the guilt in the collapse of project Nigeria is to be shared between the leadership and the followership, and recommends active participation by all citizenry in the project Nigeria with more powers exercised by the followership in protecting their interest.

Keywords: Nigeria Project, Citizenry, Followership, Leadership, Social Contract, Politics.

1. Introduction

Interestingly, the problem with Nigeria or the 'Nigerian Problem' has been identified by most scholars and social commentators as the absence of

true leadership. This is just one aspect of the truth or reality. In every society that has evolved successfully, social reform and change is initiated by followership and not necessarily the leadership. It must be reiterated that every Nigerian is a major stakeholder and therefore owes it a duty to salvage Nigeria from the quagmire of corrupt leadership and irresponsible governance. The success of leadership will not be in isolation of followership. Both leaders and followers are guilty in the event of the failure of the state. The support followers give to leaders in Nigeria up to the point of always allowing leaders to always have their way in almost everything is partly responsible for the challenges of Nigeria as a State. Politics that have succeeded all over the world are those that enjoy vibrant, active and participatory followership with a vision for the success of the State. The followers in the State should question authority, and authority in the State should answer and give account of their stewardship to the followers. Leaders should be servants of the people and the State. Our observation is that Nigerians swallow the pills administered to them by their leaders even when such pills are bitter. The leaders have perfected their skills of manipulating the followership such that even civil society groups, professional bodies, religious organizations and members of the academia have fallen to the spell of poor and corrupt leadership.

Followership and leadership are mutual activities of great influence to national development in all parts of the world. Nigeria has experienced both civilian and military regimes since her independence over sixty years ago. However, her leaders have been unable to deliver to her citizens the quality of life commensurate with her numerous endowed resources. In Nigeria, government has failed to provide portable drinking water, uninterrupted electricity, good roads, effective service delivery, employment for the majority of Nigerians, housing scheme for many Nigerians, quality health care, quality education, credible electoral system, etc. Chinua Achebe (1983: 1) in *The Trouble With*

Nigeria highlighted the failure of leadership as the trouble with Nigeria. He further stressed the inability of Nigerian leaders to rise to the challenge of personal example which is the hallmark of true leadership. In fairness to Achebe, our leaders have not led by example, rather, they have given themselves to sycophancy and mere oratories which in most cases have not helped the situation but have rather aggravated it. The quality and ingenuity of a country's leadership can make or mar a country's development or growth. Leadership can decisively influence the quality of life of her people and her national power vis-à-vis annihilating them through poor governance. The perception of the followers of their leaders in Nigeria is also an issue of great importance. In most cases the followers hold the view that their leaders lack the skill required for governance, and that the leaders act not in accordance with the needs and aspirations of the people but rather in accordance with their personal agenda and interests not unconnected with imperialistic forces. Yet the followers follow the leaders in this selfish agenda.

There are cases of resistance movements in Nigeria that have been spearheaded by followers. These resistance cases are protests against poor governance and ineptitude of Nigerian Leaders. However, when a people are ravaged by poverty, poverty weakens their ability to rise up to the challenges of checkmating the excesses of their leaders. This docility will have a great negative impact on Leader-followership relationship. Leaders that are checkmated by their followers will limit the excesses of the leaders and realign themselves to public opinion. But in the midst of docility and sycophancy, leaders will get away with their misappropriations and ineptitude.

The problems posed to mankind by corrupt leadership across various polities of the world form the core of the analysis of this paper. Specifically, zeroing in on Nigeria with concrete examples, this paper examines the concept of corruption and its hydra-hardheadedness in our society and in a way determines the kind of followership experienced in Nigeria. This paper perused and synopsised the explanatory efforts already made regarding what constitutes corruption and its danger to the socio-economic system of Nigeria. In the process, and without prejudice to the issues of cultural relativism and normative narrowing, we have been able to establish that idiosyncratic philosophy, normative impediments and paucity of civic virtues among others, are causally related to corruption in Nigeria. It has equally been analytically shown with current and concrete Nigerian examples, that, corruption in

whatever form is inimical to the development of the people in any society. This paper is of the view that there is guilt shared in the collapse of 'project Nigeria' between the leadership and the followership.

2. Conceptual Clarifications

2.1 Followership

This can be described as adherence to a leader. Followership is the virtue of supporting leaders and helping them to lead well. For followers to help their leaders do well, they have a responsibility to actively participate in the achievement of a nation's goal because followership is a people-oriented behaviour, and this behaviour builds relationships between leaders and followers. Good followership is ideally a relationship build on motivation rather than control. Also, instilling values into followers is essentially to develop a culture of trust and good relationship. The balance of power between the leader and the follower, however, must be maintained in order to provide a culture of openness that promotes self-engagement. Furthermore, followership can be perceived or understood as a sector of a country (other than the government and the private sectors) that incorporates all other social institutions in a State including labour, trade unions and non-governmental organizations who, by their actions support leaders in the State. They also have the powers to resist bad leaders and influence the kind of leadership they desire. Followership, therefore, cannot be divorced from the citizens of the state. To talk of followership in the real sense of the word will mean people who directly feel the impact of leadership.

2.2 Leadership

Leadership has to do with the impact of a leader on followers. Here the leader is the focal point. It can also be described as the ability of an individual to influence, motivate and enable others to contribute toward the effectiveness and success of the society of which they are members. Leaders help everyone feel empowered and creates the enabling environment for every member of the society to be productive. It also involves solving the problems and challenges of the people, and bridging the gap between what the people desire and what they perceive. Closely on the heels of the above, we add that leadership is the ability to influence people to willingly and enthusiastically make their contributions to the achievement cum attainment of group or national objectives. To us, leadership is not only ability, art, affluence or influence; it is a process where ardent methodology is involved, which of course differs in style or approach

from one leader to another. This, to us, is due to individual idiosyncrasy since no two individuals are alike.

In relation to followership, therefore, if by leadership we mean the process which gives one person or group of people the influence to direct and control the affairs of the State, then by followership we mean the persons who made the process of leadership possible, who determine the kind of leadership they want, and who reserve the right to demand accountability from those in the position of leadership.

2.3 Corruption

Corruption as a term is uncertain and indeed devoid of any strait jacket definition. It depends on who is defining and from what perspective. If you are a typical Nigerian, you would define it as government officials looting our treasury. But corruption in Nigeria is not the exclusive preserve of politicians, civil servants, and captains of industry. Among the “common people” there is an instinctive honing of stealing skills. The corruption in most Nigerians naturally explode when they occupy positions of authority at any level either in the public or the private sector. They join the bandwagon of selfish leaders after suddenly finding themselves in the corridor of power, rather than use their positions to repair its ills; they conform to the enrichment craze. Although there is no widespread or comprehensive definition as to what constitutes corrupt behaviour, the most prominent definitions share a common emphasis on the abuse of public power or position for personal advantage. It can be broadly understood as unethical behaviour, which violates the norms of the system of social order. Corruption usually encompasses abuses by government officials such as embezzlement and cronyism, as well as abuses that link the public and the private actors such as bribery, extortion, influence peddling and fraud, etc. In this regard, corruption threatens good governance, sustainable development, democratic process, and fair business practices.

In addition, corruption includes illegal, dishonest, or wicked behaviours which are destructive of the moral fabric of society. It is the act of turning power and authority to ready cash. Corruption by political leaders has been identified as one of the major causes of poverty and failure in the development of developing countries, particularly in Africa (Odia, 2016: 111).

For Agbese (1982: 9) corruption is difficult to define, but it can be understood as the undue advantage one has as a result of the office one occupies; and

corruption affects all aspects of society be it the military or the civilians. In this regard, whatever form of seasonal gifts, free air tickets, lunch or dinner given to influence future causes of actions and transactions, both the giver and the receiver are corrupting protocol or breaching some rules and regulations in the Nigerian society.

Brownsberger (1983: 218) described “corruption as a mis-application of public goods (broadly construed) to private ends”. Edward C. Band-field’s (1996: 315) definition of corruption which is more elaborate and precise, sees corruption as “the process of obtaining material enrichment or opportunities for oneself and or for others through the use of public office (or influence) in ways other than those publicly acknowledged, through rules and procedures of that office”. This includes such behaviour as bribery (use of reward to pervert judgments or actions of a person in a position of trust), nepotism (bestowal of patronage by reasons of inscriptive relationship rather than merit) and misappropriation (illegal appropriation of public resources for private uses). Furthermore, corruption reduces economic growth, enhances inequalities, and reduces the governments’ capacity to respond to people’s needs. All these swerve down to create poverty in the society because in a corrupt system there is concentration of wealth in the hands of a tiny minority of the population.

3. Typology of Corruption

Some researchers have taken a broader approach in the discussion of corruption by dividing it into many forms and sub-divisions. These according to Taylor (1997) include:

Political Corruption: This occurs when the politicians and political decision makers, who are entitled to formulate, establish and implement the laws in the name of the people, are themselves corrupt. Here policy formulation and legislation are tailored to the benefit of politicians and legislators.

Bureaucratic Corruption: This occurs in the public administration or the implementation end of politics. It is the kind of corruption the citizen encounters daily at places like the hospitals, schools, local licensing office, police, the various ministries and parastatals etc. Bureaucratic corruption occurs when one obtains business from the public sector through inappropriate procedure.

Electoral Corruption: This includes the buying of votes with money, promises of office, special favours, coercion, intimidation and interference with freedom of election. This is very rampant in Nigeria.

Religious Corruption: This occurs when the religious leaders who superintend over the followers are themselves corrupt. It takes place when the followers are exploited for selfish interest and in the name of God; this is common in most religious organisations.

Other forms of corruption may include:

Bribery: The payment (in cash or kind) that is taken or given in a corruption relationship. These include: “Kickbacks”, “Gratuities”, “Pay off” “Sweeteners”, “Greasing palms”, “Scratching back” etc.

Fraud: This involves some kind of trickery, swindle and deceit counterfeiting, racketeering, smuggling and forgery.

Embezzlement: This is seen as the theft of public resources by public officials. It is when an official of the state steals from the public institution in which he/she is employed or appointed.

Extortion: This is the act of getting money and other resources by the use of coercion, violence or threats, and the use of force. It is often seen as extortion from those who are disadvantaged.

Favouritism: This is the mechanism of power abuse implying a highly biased distribution of state resources. However, many see this as a neutral human proclivity to favour friends, family and anybody close and trusted.

Nepotism: This is a special kind of favoritism in which public office holders prefers his/her kinsfolk and family members over other persons who are more qualified. Nepotism occurs when one is exempted from the application of certain laws or regulations or given undue preference in the allocation of resources. (Odia, 2016 and Osawaru, 2017: 37-45)

4. Nigeria and Failure of Leadership

Nigeria, for quite some time, has been encountering development challenges occasioned by leadership styles. The country is bedecked with a myriad of problems and challenges that are seemingly defying solutions. Indeed, the Nigerian situation is a paradox by virtue of the enormous resources (human and natural) at her disposal. It is commonly conceived that democracy is a platform for development of nations. Nigeria has had twenty-four years of democracy from 1999 to date yet development has continued to elude her. What could be responsible? What have been the roles of successive governments or leadership in the development of the country? Is Nigeria a case of leadership failure or is it the citizens that have failed themselves?

It is believed that the quality of leadership and the socio-political environment often determine the

nature of national development. The value of leadership in nation building cannot be understated. Leadership is the prime cause of development because of its indispensable role in a national context, which no other agency can replace. Leadership provides direction, national mission, vision and goals. For instance, the contribution of leadership to the emergence of the South East Asian nations of Singapore, Hong Kong, South Korea and Taiwan, referred to as the Asian Tigers cannot be over-emphasized. It was leadership that moved these countries from where they were once grouped with Nigeria as third world countries to nestle for a place amongst the developed nations of the world. It took clear headed and focused leadership. These leaders provided direction, set the necessary agenda and executed the needed change.

By the failure of leadership is also meant that those who are entrusted with power, those who are assigned the control of the resources of the state including human and natural resources have failed to do what they *ought* to do. The emphasis is on *ought* because the resources of the state, when entrusted to the oversight of some people either elected or appointed ought to be used for the common good of all the citizens. The resources of the state are meant to increase the happiness of the people when such are used to provide steady electricity supply, good and quality security of lives and property, good roads, water, schools at all levels including well trained and well-motivated teachers and lecturers at all levels, and other such infrastructures that aid business and investment. These infrastructures must be put in place in order to encourage entities to interplay, interact, intermingle and interface to achieve a successful economy.

This practice of making leaders assume the blame of failure and praise of success may be the reason of directing the failure of the state to the failure of leadership. This seems to be the practice in most endeavors. In sports for instance, the coach takes the praise or the blame if the team wins or loses. The teacher is praised when the students pass and blamed in the event of their failure. The parents are blamed when their children go wayward and praised when they become responsible young folks. So, when one assumes leadership, he must be prepared to take praise when there is progress, otherwise he is exposed to blame and ridicules. This way of attaching failure or success to leadership is old and universal. The role of leadership in the success of endeavors of men, especially in statecraft and in social engineering did not escape the wise men of ages past. In *the Republic*, Plato (1984), after painting a picture of what an ideal state would be, after designing a

constitution that could not be faulted on rational grounds, identified the problem of leadership. Thus, there cannot be a better society without good leaders who are both knowledgeable and moral. Plato however located the kind of leadership required for good leadership in the personality of a philosopher-king. In summary he argued that:

The philosophers must become kings in our cities or those who are now called kings and potentates must learn to seek wisdom like true and genuine philosophers, and so political power and intellectual wisdom will be joined in one; and the crowds of natures who now pursue one or the other separately must be excluded. Until that happens there can be no rest from troubles for the cities, . . . Until then the constitution which have now evolved in worlds will never grow into being, as something possible; it will never see the light of the sun (Plato, 1984:273).

This position of Plato and his discussants in the dialogue above takes us back in history on the place of leadership in the state. Some of the qualities identified in the dialogue which leaders or the philosophers possess include being in love with learning truthfulness (that is, never to admit willingly a falsehood) and to love truth, love of wisdom, to be temperate, in no wise a money-lover and never to be cowardly and mean (Plato: 1984:282-283). With all the qualities mentioned above, a leader is expected to lead well. So, we reiterate the obvious position that leadership holds all the aces in the State. Its failure is disastrous, its success is commendable. To repeat the already known fact: the State rises or falls according to the quality of the leadership.

Without doubt, the unpardonable failure of the political leadership class managing the affairs and wealth of the country had inevitably brought severe misery to many voiceless and helpless Nigerians. The goal of politics in Nigeria seems to be that of “kill and divide.” It must also be mentioned here that Nigeria’s post-independence political bureaucratic and military elites had terribly pillaged the nation’s common wealth and national patrimony with impunity, thereby denying Nigerians access to economic prosperity and quality living condition.

A noticeable consequence of corruption on the political and economic wellbeing of Nigerians has been the distortion of governmental expenditure. This often results in diversion of public investment on large-scale projects, typically military or infrastructure projects, rather than on the provision of necessary public services such as health, roads, housing, and education. Mostly, the Nigerian government at all levels spends relatively more on large and hard-to-manage projects, such as airports or

national stadia or stadiums, to make room for fraud because execution of such projects make fraud easy. Consequently, development projects are made unnecessarily complex so as to justify the corrupt huge expenses on them. This situation makes it inevitable for the limited but valuable fund earmarked for development to disappear into private pockets.

Indeed, it is difficult to think of any social ill in the country that is not traceable to the embezzlement and misappropriation of public funds, particularly as a direct or indirect consequence of the corruption perpetrated by the political leadership class since independence. The cycle of poverty keeps growing with all its attendant consequences even as the rate of unemployment remains perpetually high. By giving mediocrity advantage over intelligence through nepotism and cronyism, intellectual capital which is the bulwark of development and advancement, has continued to drift abroad in search of greener pasture. Paradoxically, the scourge of corruption has left the country straddling two economic worlds at the same time. To state the obvious, the country has found itself in the quagmire of a country too rich to be poor and at the same time too poor to be rich. Thus, this has made it inevitable for every Nigerian to be a victim of corruption.

As a consequence of unparalleled and unrivalled corruption in Nigeria, the healthcare delivery system and the education sector have become comatose and are nearing total collapse. Government spending has been considerably reduced towards these vital social sectors of the economy and others of equal importance, which are supposed to be of high priority to government. To this end, the resultant effects have been catastrophic as different forms of malpractices and corrupt practices have rubbished the Nigerian educational system, which is perceived from the outside as inadequate and, its product, substandard. More so, corruption in the health sector has also given room for counterfeit and adulterated drugs to find easy passage into the country with little or no resistance until 1999 when Late Professor Dora Akunyili took over the leadership of the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC). After her exit, what has become of NAFDAC? It would be recalled that her first point of duty was an attempt to eradicate fake and adulterated drugs. This effort almost cost her, her life when gunmen suspected to have been sent by importers of fake and adulterated drugs attacked her in 2005. Infrastructural facilities have long been in an abysmal state and to shore up its dwindling income, much of which was embezzled under successive

governments and siphoned to foreign bank accounts, government resorted to excessive taxation of the already economically deprived and impoverished populace.

There is no doubt that leadership is at the epicenter of initiating strategic vision, making such a mission, and driving such to a reasonable conclusion to better the State. In a political democracy, leadership can simply be identified with the following attributes:

(a) Leadership is not just a person occupying an office. (b) The leader must actively perform the role of his office. (c) The leader must identify, show, and lead the way. (d) The leader must mobilize and carry his followers along, and this implies that they must participate in arriving at public decisions and policies. (e) The leader must lead in such a way that his followers voluntarily (not by force of coercion) and collectively (not divide and rule) make efforts to achieve shared goals. (f) Public policies and programmes must be arrived at collectively. (g) The leader must be humane, for without humanity, leadership is but an empty function (Nwolise, 2006). Haven exposed the rot of the Nigerian State above, a good number of Nigerians would follow the Achebe bent of thought that it is simply and squarely a failure of leadership. This current of thought which have forgotten the role of followership in the success or failure of leadership and by extension the State has been the most preferred. However, the contrary view which takes the position that followership may leave a lot to be desired in the array of challenges confronting Nigeria as a nation will now be discussed.

5. The Role of Followership in the Polity

Both the leaders and the followers are stakeholders in the Nigeria project. For that reason each group owe it a duty to protect the commonwealth. Each has the right to rise against any group that wants the commonwealth to fail. The citizens should therefore be a formidable check against the possible excesses of the leaders. This is because the failure of the commonwealth is the failure of all the citizens. The citizens are equal stake holders in the project called Nigeria. And there may not be any other country which we will call our own and which will be like our own. Just as we have argued for the imperative of leadership, we can also say the same for followership. Leaders need people they will lead otherwise there will be no leaders if there are no followers. The followers are also important and they make substantial contributions to the development of the State. They pay their taxes, invest in various businesses, and they are men and women of different

professions contributing to the wellbeing of the State and building the stock of our common good. So, their contributions are meaningful and cannot be wished away.

Worthy of note is an African proverb that says: *a sleep beyond the 'four market days' is unacceptable, because it could easily be equated with death*. Better put, 'a handshake beyond the elbow is a wrestling bout'. It is on this note that every opportunity should be seized to expand the developmental space and deepen sustainable progress. If political democracy implies equality of all citizens in decision-making as against the prerogative of few privileged members of the society (oligarchy), the result will be the classical position of democracy which upholds 'popular power'. The concept of popular power is really popular in so far as politics involves the active participation of the masses in the exercise of power.

Given the fact that leadership has failed and has sustained a very complex chain of socio-economic and political underdevelopment that can only replicate itself if left unchallenged, the followers should step-up their game by actively involving in governance – be available in and for politics, be curious, concerned and critical about the way they are governed. Knowing that the Nigerian government will never put the issues or challenges of bad governance to the people, the people should grab the issues or challenges for it is theirs. The hub of this inquisitiveness lies on the fact that followership role is paramount in explaining leadership deficit in Nigeria. In fact the solutions to leadership problems in Nigeria can only come through followership. No wonder Rick Ungar (2011) posited that citizens should not "expect good leadership without good followership" because 'followership capital' is the only needed resource for socio-economic and political transformation, and taming the elite menace perpetuated through godfatherism.

There is also the popular saying that leaders are in the position of leadership because the followers have granted it. John Locke, for instance talks of fiduciary relationship, something likened to the relationship one has with his banker. Your banker keeps your money in trust and as long as the trust remains and your money is safe the relationship between you and your banker remains cordial. But in the event that your banker is no longer keeping faith alive, you are at liberty to change him without minding the natural or old relationship that existed between you two. Thus, those leaders who are true representatives of the people and serve the overall interest of the citizens enjoy the mutual relationship of the citizens. Leaders must lose their leadership role, therefore,

when they fail to protect the people they lead. This is what Locke (1952: 119) described as dissolution of government, and it is justified. To our surprise the assertion by Locke did not escape Achebe even when he strongly believed that all our woes in Nigeria are caused by our leaders only. Achebe also argued that civil society has the latitude in choosing their leaders: "But it is the duty of enlightened citizens to lead the way in their discovery and to create an atmosphere conducive to their emergence. If this conscious effort is not made, good leaders, like good money, will be driven out by the bad" (Achebe 1983: 1-2).

Some great political philosophers have thought along this line in their arguments in support of social contract or social compact. The contract is not contract to punish those who are involved. Rather it is contract in which their welfare, wellbeing and happiness are made the primary responsibility of the executors of the agreement, in this case the political leaders in the State. Rousseau argues that the social pact culminates in the *general will* such that leadership exercises the general will and nothing contrary to it. This knowledge should guide the civil society in prodding the leadership to do that which is right or get the boot. According to Rousseau (1988:76):

....the social pact establishes equality among citizens in that they all pledge themselves under the same conditions and must all enjoy the same rights. Hence by the nature of the compact, every act of sovereignty, that is, every authentic act of the general will, binds or favours all the citizens equally, so that the sovereign recognizes only the whole body of the nation and makes no distinction between any of the members who compose it.

The citizenry is an integral part of State. The State belongs to all the citizens. The State is founded for the happiness of the citizens. The citizens must protect the State and refuse to be punished, not even by their leaders whom they have elected or appointed to take charge of the day to day running of the State. The failure of the State will not be blamed on the leaders alone because the citizenry have a role to play in the success or failure of the State.

Concomitantly, the concept of political democracy is on one hand a social contract, which gives the people the option of governing themselves by choosing their leaders and, taking responsibility therefrom, constituting a court for leadership by watching, suggesting to, compelling, checkmating and even confronting; and, on the other hand, gives the leadership its legitimacy by determining and agreeing that it be rightfully constituted and therefore worthy

of obedience. To this end in tandem with Nwoli's (2006) conceptualization of leadership, followership could also be appraised to lend credence to the following hypothesis:

- a) Democracy is not offered on a platter of gold. It is usually struggled for and, when gotten, the price is eternal vigilance. Democratization is usually an unfinished business that will outlive the current leadership.
- b) If the leader shall adequately perform his/her role, such role should be pressed upon them by the general citizenry.
- c) 'The way' in a democratic setting is simply the aggregate of the yearnings of the general citizenry and should constantly be expressed through critical involvement of the citizens.
- d) If the leader must carry his/her followers along, the followers should as a matter of right be concerned and ready to participate in the political process.
- e) Exemplary leadership informs enthusiastic followership. In Nigeria given the 'political irresponsibility' of the followers, the leaders rely on their social backers for class servicing in the absence of non-shared goals pressed upon them by the followers.
- f) Public policies must be arrived at collectively. This informs leadership/followership nexus, which implies a constant greasing of the social contract.
- g) The leader must be checked into humaneness.

6. Major Impediments to Critical followership in Nigeria

Illiteracy and Poverty: Up to thirty-five percent of Nigerians of the estimated 200 million population are not literate. Illiteracy is a major impediment to effective involvement of the followers in the developmental process. The 'relevant education' exposes citizens to the knowledge requisite in political participation as well as in assessing, evaluating and contributing to the political process. More so, majority of Nigerians fall within the category of the poor. Figures in this respect range from above sixty-five percent. While analysis in this regard has usually been predicated on the resource capability of the masses, it is imperative to stretch poverty to accommodate the following dimensions which has preponderance of implications on political culture.

Intellectual poverty – this implies the nonexistence of relevant knowledge bloc and/or consumption of knowledge that is neither useful to its possessor nor the society at large. On the long run this kind of knowledge hardly equips one to understand and solve the problems of his/her immediate environment.

Economic poverty – this kind of poverty is simply lacking the economic means of livelihood and its implications in politics are that it infiltrates into the political culture of the society. The question is “Is there a Political Culture of Poverty?”. Yes, there is! No doubt, the most economically deprived people lack fundamental political knowledge due to inadequate education, coupled with other variables such as the notion that in Nigeria, government will never live up to its responsibilities of delivering good governance, the poor masses throw their voting capacity into the labour market for grasp by the highest bidder, and finally roost into apathy.

Religious poverty – this kind of poverty is linked to the peoples’ belief in the activity of God, the guardian spirit or deities as being responsible for their success or failure in life and, as a result, it has led to the upsurge of charismatic movements and their emphasis on spiritual inanities with little or no reference to intellectual or polemical development. This has reduced a larger part of the Nigerian populace to fatalistic beings. Nigerians now accept whatever befalls them as an act of God or the gods, and that it will only take providential intervention to turn the table. This quiescence has, to a very large extent, made Nigerians unthinking political beings. As a result, the minds of most Nigerians are poisoned to the effect that every action should be reacted to by resigning to fate. Hence, phrases like “Na God” (it is God) or “God dey” (there is God) when things go wrong or become difficult. Fundamentalism among the Muslim folks worsens the political situation by reducing politics to a spectator game, spiritually mediated and predetermined. In a well sold maxim, they argue, “power comes only from Allah and he gives it to whom He deems fit”. Thus, whoever emerges as the leader, irrespective of how he/she got into the position of leadership, is the will of Allah.

In all, the logic is that illiteracy and poverty make the people lack the capacity to be able to wrestle power from the ruling elite and give it to other persons who can sustain the commonwealth.

The Burden of Diversity

Nigeria is seriously torn-apart by ever increasing polarity resulting from religious, ethnic/clan, language, and ideological differences which cripple social cohesion. The burden of diversity in Nigeria does not lie in its plurality; rather it lies on its topical cum political complexities. The struggle for power and resources in Nigeria has always been ‘ethnopolitically’ enmeshed rather than ‘ideopolitically’ driven. This is pitched on the fact that Nigerians have not found a national hero in any of its

founding fathers. More so, hardly has any of the leaders lead beyond his province, or followers looked beyond the leaders’ ethnopolitical setting.

7. The Imperative of Followership in Nigeria’s Quest for National Development

The justification as well as imperative for critical followership is both a matter of moral question vis-à-vis constitutional and fundamental human rights. In the case of Nigeria, it is logical to argue that if leadership is really as deficient as enunciated by many scholars, it cannot be abandoned to correct itself, as this will be unrealistic. Thus, we propose critical citizenry as an answer to bad leadership. There is no better evidence to this than how the ‘ancient regime’ in France recovered through a historic revolution, and the recent ‘Arab spring’ that swept across the entire Arab nations and upturning practices that has long been absolved as the Arab inherent and peculiar political culture in political discourse; all dove-tailing into the holding of elections and the emergence of a democratically elected head of states in both Egypt and Libya and successfully forced rulers from power in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Yemen. The French revolution was initiated by aggrieved peasants, wage-earners, and intellectuals fed up with the status quo. In the old Soviet Union, the policy of Perestroika was taken up by the masses, and people emerging from a state of apathy and alienation, for the purification of the atmosphere in the society that had been fouled by long years of stagnation.

In comparison, the Nigerian society is far more evolved. Nigeria boasts of some of the most educated, enlightened, widely travelled, religious (largest number of pastors, imams, babalawos, social reformers etc.), and talented (athletes, artistes and performers) persons in Africa and even in the world. Quite a large number of these individuals are widely acclaimed as giants or geniuses in their fields of endeavor. Also, a few have even occupied sensitive positions in the global pedestal and performed remarkably well. Yet, we cannot hold our leaders accountable. Are the leaders in Nigeria from Mars? Don’t they come from our families, villages, local government areas, states and constituencies? Even at the most basic levels, do we demonstrate and model good followership by demanding good governance. In the electoral process, do we ensure that individuals that rightly won elections are supported through mass support in their redress process? Do we participate in the legislative process and have regard for the laws, norms customs and traditions?

When formal institutional mechanisms for checks and balances are very weak, inappropriate or absent we must resort to the basic universal methods found in every society. That is the exercise of basic attitudes and behaviours that clearly demonstrate intolerance for graft, ineptitude and other forms of leadership failure. In addition to civil disobedience, we must also stimulate social consciousness through behaviours that answers some basic but fundamental questions. For instance, is it appropriate to applaud and reward 'thieves' with honorary degrees and traditional titles? Are the monies collected in the churches or mosques for the personal and discretionary use of the pastor or imams or such monies should be disbursed with a consensus? Should strategic and national resources such as oil blocs be assigned to individuals or to states? Etc.

Every society deserves the kind of leader it gets. Even in societies where leaders were very dictatorial and brutish, the process that led these leaders into power was engendered by the prevailing sociopolitical and cultural practices of the time. A situation where a traditional ruler bows to a political appointee for patronage and favour is unacceptable. Nowadays, even elder statesmen as well as respected intellectuals are conscripted to beg for scruples from political office holders. Across the length and breadth of the country and in all levels of the society from the village level to the presidency the story is the same. Most significantly, our current political structure affords the leadership the impetus for failure. Federalism established on a distorted, pseudo foundation will not work. True federalism and fiscal policy are basic to a multi-ethnic and pluralistic society such as Nigeria. Interestingly, those in the various political parties from the east to west, north to south do not have a common ideology except the continued rape of the national treasury.

Given the current trend of events in Nigeria, it is only logical that we sit down and ask critical questions about our stake in one another and in the commonwealth called Nigeria. There is an urgent need to evolve structures at every region in the Country to discuss the crucial issues that are driving the nation to the brink of balkanization. Pray as much as we may, we cannot find sleep until we have addressed the fundamental issues that are holding us back from moving forward. What kind of political arrangement do we want? Do we continue in the present madness or cut our losses and start preparing for the inevitable?

If we say that we belong to a political party from where leaders emerge or are foisted on the people,

then clearly, we should be able to influence the leadership. It is mostly in Africa that the followership supports a candidate for reasons other than the political ideology. Followership in most instances is borne out of expediency or for purposes of gratification. After all it is common knowledge that the morality of every society is determined by the morality of the majority of the people. Every tree can only produce its kind, and unless we strive to espouse and imbibe good values and morals in the basic units (like the family and schools) of our society, leadership will continue to be what it is currently. While leadership in Nigeria has for sure been irresponsible, corrupt, self-serving, personalizing, clueless, etc, it is only critical followership that can reverse the trend. If democracy is a social contract between the governed (followers) and the leaders, then, if by any chance any member of the State decides to be apolitical, such a person lacks the locus standing to either complain about inefficiency of government or expect that government should keep its own side of the social contract.

8. Conclusion

Development in every ramification (social, political and economic) is 'people-fuelled'. The "siddon look" attitude of followership has more often than not fertilized and excessively sustained the quagmire of corrupt leadership in Nigeria. For sure Nigeria is replete with structural challenges. However, the structural challenges of Nigeria can only be worked on and corrected by those worst hit by it, that is, the general citizenry, rather than the political jobbers benefitting from the status-quo. Nigeria has spent so much in advancing development in every aspect of the life of citizens, but there is nothing to show for such development due to corruption. Thus, all persons who are affected by the decision of government should see it as a matter of right to advance the developmental course of Nigeria in all its ramifications. Our contention in this paper is that both leaders and followers have roles to play in the development of the nation. These roles should be complimentary. Groups in the State can be taken as moral centers with patriotic zeal capable of moving the socio-economic and political arrangement forward. The buck should not be passed to the leadership as if the followership is innocent, blameless and has no role to play on the matter. Even the fact that the followership is docile in politics is guilt on their part. The accusation of the failure of leadership only tries to exonerate the masses most of whom are actually guilty of abdicating their duties most times for a 'morsel of porridge'. Followers have equal task of building Nigeria. We must not resign to

the national bad habit of sitting on the fence or feeling unconcerned when crucial national issues are at stake.

We have read histories of revolutions, we have watched revolutions, protest marches against unpopular and anti-people policies, civil disobedience, and resistance against unpopular acts from the authorities happen again and again. Through these means, the states whose citizens have constantly and consistently tasked their leaders have achieved good result. But what do we experience in Nigeria? It is nothing but docile, ignorant, weak and divided followership whose capacity for resistance for many groups and unions is less than four working days. We are a populace who have allowed ourselves to be pitched against one another using natural instruments such as ethnic grouping and religion, as the device. We have become a people who want to hide under failure of leadership in order to escape from blame. We have also become followers that are always ready to support any leader, not minding how ignoble his/her acts are, simply because of wiping little sentiment of tribe, religion and accusation of marginalization. Even if we admit that the failure of leadership is the bane, one would ask: how have we tried to tackle this evil? To what extent have we confronted this single evil known to account for all our problems? It is a common wise saying that once a problem is identified, that problem is half solved. Then if we have known this problem why have we not been able to solve it? Why has it become a refrain in the lips of many Nigerians, so sweet a song that it is always evergreen? We conclude by asserting that the fact that poor leadership has continued to haunt Nigeria despite her rich human resources means that most Nigerians of all works of life have failed to live up to their bidding as citizens. For that reason, most Nigerians must receive 'I am guilty as charged' judgment and wake up to the critical task of followership to save Nigeria from total and irredeemable collapse.

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