“LEADERSHIP AND NIGERIA’S DEVELOPMENTAL CHALLENGES”

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at the Inaugural Distinguished Lecture Series of the Institute of Security Studies, Abuja.
Protocols

1. Introduction

It is with an utmost sense of humility and trepidation, undergirded by a deep sense of responsibility and apprehension that I stand here to deliver the very first lecture of the Institute Distinguished Lecture Series. This feeling of deep humility stems from the fact that the DSS found me worthy to deliver this maiden edition of a lecture series that has the potential of bringing about a massive re-orientation of the mindset and values of our compatriots in the process of building a safe and secure Nigeria of our dreams.

As we pray for and march towards a new Nigeria of our hopes and dreams, it appears the DSS is already masterfully leading the way by reappraising its functions and shaping it into a service organization that sees intelligence services as wholesomely engaged in holistic service delivery to foster national security by engaging our compatriots in a jaw-jaw process to preempt the war-war drumbeats of some of our people. Recently the Department of State Service organized a seminar on “National Unity and Stability; Unity in Diversity; Security and National Development”. The seminar received accolades all over the country. It is thus another giant step for the Department to initiate an annual distinguished lecture series at the Institute of Security Studies. I therefore whole heartedly commend the DG, DSS for his vision and passion to enthrone maximum peace and security in
Nigeria by engaging foremost nationalists as partners. The new DSS is now engaged in proactive, pre-emptive securitization process to deliver on its mandate. Without security, all our dreams for greatness as one indivisible country will crumble into a nightmare of woes. I say kudos to DG, DSS and to the leadership of the Institute. God will make yours and our dreams of an indomitable, great and united Nigeria come true.

Leadership is a very slippery concept, and even more slippery when applied to nationhood and national development. Nonetheless, efforts shall be made to pin down the sets of commons and apply same in the course of this discourse.

Let me therefore start by way of definitions of the key concepts that are both central and tangential to the task at hand. The topic is: “Leadership and Nigeria’s developmental challenges”. The issues to be teased out and their inter-linkages to be tracked are: leadership, nation building and national development.

Beginning with leadership, ordinarily, leadership can be seen as the action of leading a group of people or an organization, or even a nation, or the ability to do this. Leadership is much deeper and much broader than this simplistic definition when it comes to leading a nation.

First and foremost, let it be known that Leadership is an influence process. It has little to do with the position one occupies as the leader. But it has a lot more to do with what the person does with, and on, that position. It is a practical skill, encompassing the ability of an individual to "lead" or guide other individuals, teams, or a whole nation. I therefore want to see leadership
in line with the definition offered by The US academic environments that defined leadership as "a process of social influence in which a person can enlist the aid and support of others in the accomplishment of a common task".

I also see leadership as one remarkable thinker Amit Ray does. He said: "Leadership is not just some empty formulas but establishing deep connection at soul levels through service, integrity, passion, perseverance and equanimity." This is the real essence of leadership if you ask me.

In Social Psychology, leadership could easily pass as the most researched area, and has produced studies and theories involving traits, situational interactions, functions, behaviour, power, vision and values, charisma, and intelligence, among others.

On the whole, Leadership involves: establishing a clear vision, sharing that vision with others so that they will follow willingly, providing the information, knowledge and methods to realize that vision, and coordinating and balancing, in the case of a nation, the conflicting interests of all citizens and stakeholders.

A leader steps up in times of crisis, and is able to think issues through, and act creatively and decisively in difficult situations. In nation building and indeed in all organizational settings, Leadership is a make or mar, and therefore the single most critical factor in moving any human organization forward, be it a family, social club, firm or a nation.
Once two or more individuals come together, leadership and followership are called for. Leadership needs range from those arising from a nuclear family to leading nations as vast as Nigeria and China or India.

One big problem with leadership, however, is this: unlike management, leadership cannot be taught, although it may be learned and enhanced through coaching or mentoring. So, as the act of inspiring subordinates to perform and engage in achieving a goal, I believe that leadership is learned more in indirect ways from roles we occupy and play from birth to death, and partly inherited through traits and temperaments that are known to be innate. Leadership is experiential and exponentially adequate only when it is able to take care of the challenges confronting it.

Leadership that proves adequate in one situation may prove disastrous in another. For nations, it is even more so. This explains why a seemingly good leadership can be voted out of power or bad one retained. Historically, Winston Churchill (1940-1945) lost power to Clement Attlee (1945-1951) despite leading the allied forces to win the Second World War. Britain had become war weary and needed a sort of change, even though Churchill returned in 1951 as British Prime Minister.

From Winston Churchill example, it can be seen that what mostly prescribes the needed leadership at any point in time seems to be situation. In the last presidential election in Nigeria, General Muhammadu Buhari was elected over an incumbent Dr. Goodluck Jonathan for the simple reason that Nigerians felt at that point in time that they needed a firmer leader to tackle the twine evil of terrorism and corruption.
In the forthcoming 2019 presidential election, let me use the same situational barometers to predict that the ability of President Buhari (unless he does not run) to retain power will depend so much on situations and allied contingencies part of which would still be his personality.

The situational theory of leadership suggests that no single leadership style is "best." Situational leadership theory is often referred to as the Hersey-Blanchard Situational Leadership Theory, after its developers Dr. Paul Hersey, author of The Situational Leader, and Ken Blanchard, author of One-Minute. The Hersey and Blanchard model is a situational leadership model, which suggests that there is no single optimal leadership style, and successful leaders adjust their styles based on "follower maturity." Follower maturity is determined by the ability and confidence of the group they are attempting to lead.

In national setting, ability of citizens has to do with their literacy and poverty levels, political exposure and awareness, prevailing levels of apathy, nature of democratic culture and so forth.

Closely knit with situational leadership approach is contingency theory, which equally claims that there is no best way to organize and lead an organization or people. Instead, the optimal course of action is contingent (dependent) upon the internal and external situation. Contingent leaders effectively apply their own style of leadership to the right situation.

It is situational demands on leadership in democratic setting that would compel a retired army general like President Muhammadu Buhari, who was used to command and control, to adapt to democratic principles and tenets.
and indeed he has confessed to being a converted democrat. How far the President has fared as a democrat so far is a story for another.

The picture I have tried to paint here is: there is no silver bullet which once fired, would produce the best leadership for any nation. In other words, it is not possible to prescribe a particular form of leadership for Nigeria or for any nation. It is the interactions between the situation and the leaders’ capabilities that will yield the quality of leadership.

In the absence of any known formula for prescribing the best leadership for Nigeria, all that is left is the space to outline how the best (exceptional leaders) can emerge, how the nation can minimize the chances of toxic leaders emerging.

From this postulation, you can easily see the nexus between people and their leadership: the people partly form the situation and directly influence the kind of leaders they get. If we use the 2015 general election again as an example, it was the clamor of the Nigerian people for change that produced the crest that Buhari rode on to get back to power. This interconnection also proves to a substantial extent the assertion that the people get the kind of leaders they deserve or desire. Plato captured this condition and leadership preponderance most beautifully when he said: “One of the penalties for refusing to participate in politics is that you end up being governed by your inferiors”.

2. National Development in Perspective

Fundamentally, National development refers to the ability of a nation to improve the lives of its citizens. Measures of improvement may be material, such as an increase in the gross domestic product, or social, such as literacy rates and availability of healthcare and other social amenities. Governments draw up national development plans and policies based on the perceived needs of their citizens. Many include an emphasis on reducing poverty, affordable and available housing and community development.

No matter the view adopted, the central issue remains that the goal of all national development is to improve the lives of the citizens in question within the context of a growing economy and an emphasis on the good of the community as a whole.

National development is therefore the ability of a country or countries to improve the social welfare of the people e.g. by providing social amenities like quality education, potable water, electricity, transportation infrastructure, medical care, etc.

This is the soft part. National development is related to higher national goals. A nation being able to deal with its national developmental needs relate to what may be regarded as national competence. Like human beings, all nations are not equal; some are, indeed, “more equal than others.”

The question then is: how did the big nations get there? The answer is: fortunately in this triad: leadership, quality citizenry and conducive environment. Some would say leadership and natural endowments. I
disagree with such postulation because there are nations without natural endowments that have become at least medium powers. United Arab Emirates and Singapore are ready examples. Singapore particularly is a product of the exceptional leadership capabilities of Lee Kuan Yew, its prime minister for many years. What he did and how he did it is documented in his book, From Third World to First, which is a tour de force into what exceptional leadership can do. On the morning of 9 August 1965, the Parliament of Malaysia voted 126–0 in favor of a constitutional amendment expelling Singapore from the federation; hours later, the Parliament of Singapore passed the Republic of Singapore Independence Act, establishing the island as an independent and sovereign republic.

Recall that I had already stated that leadership is input, output and outcome process emanating from leader-situation interaction. Mathematically, we can even look at the relationships between leadership inputs and outputs as equaling or varying with outcomes and on what conditions. As simplistic as this may seem, for me, it explains what obtains when situations and leadership meet.

One thing that is quite fundamental and quintessential about all this is this: locating the place of citizens in the leadership process. Many analysts have focused on the one man occupying the position of leadership as if he alone can make things happen while the citizens wait in the wings for him or her to fail or succeed. This is one place we got wrong in Nigeria. It is not possible for any leader to succeed acting alone and without decisive inputs and roles of the citizens.
From both situational and contingency leadership approaches outlined earlier, it is verifiable that the leader occupies only a part of the leadership process. Much depends on the situation and other contingency considerations, a huge part of which is reserved for the followers or citizens.

The point being made here is basic: the people choose their leaders, directly or indirectly, so, any citizen waiting in the wing to blame the leaders that they have produced, directly or directly need to wake up. Any leader you see out there is put in by the people through their actions and inactions just as his failure or success remains a collective action.

The citizens do not need to utter a word or lift a finger to elect a leader before they share in the success or failure of their leaders; all that is required is their docility for their leaders to run away with their collective destiny. Not voting in an election therefore is a form of voting and can decide the outcomes by preventing the good ones from emerging for the simple reason that most people failed to turn out.

I often marvel when Nigerian women and the youths grumble about their marginalization, whereas both have a combined voting strength of over 60% and can produce the president they want. The National Assembly has just in a revolutionary move, passed the Constitutional Amendment christened Not Too Young To Run. The age limit to come to the National Assembly has been reduced by this legislation to as low as 25 and 35 for President. Baring financial constraints, let us see if there will be an invasion of the National and State Assemblies by the young legislators in an attempt to take their destinies in their own hands.
Leadership is a psychological process. Leaders are supposed to lead people. As long as they are in power, those people who are contiguously involved are being led to the destination they want, or to the destination the leaders want or to the destination that both the leaders and citizens want. No matter which is at play, the citizens are always involved and ultimately suffer the outcomes. It is only on rare occasions that the leaders suffer the outcomes of their actions. In Africa, Nigeria inclusive, you can be sure that the leaders are always above the law and can hardly be brought back to account for their actions. Though we do not expect this trend to continue indefinitely, for now that is what obtains.

The leaders, once they take over power, perform according to their abilities. Like Chinua Achebe said, nobody can perform above his chi, translated; you cannot give what you do not have, which is true. You can never succeed in matching apples and oranges; they are meant for different ends.

3. The Nexus between Leadership and National Development

We can then ask: is there a nexus between leadership and national development? Beyond any doubt, the answer is yes. In fact, histories of nations are telltales of the successes and failures of their nations’ successive leadership. Leaders are supposed to make their tenures sublime enough, so that upon departing, they will be able to leave their footprints on the sands of time. This often happens, negatively or positively. Leaders have succeeded in lifting their nations into prosperity. Industrialization of the western world for example is obviously a byproduct of political leaderships and political will of
their past leaders. They are products of visions and great sense of mission, which are the two main hallmarks of purposive leadership.

The nexus between leadership and national development as well as national underdevelopment is so obvious. It is better seen when Leaders negatively impact their nations, leaving them worse than they met them. That is what experts in social psychology refer to as toxic leadership. I shall return to toxic leadership fully in due course when examining how leadership may have underdeveloped Nigeria.

**The Challenge of Institutional Instability and Leadership Orientation**

Institutional and structural instability is one major impediment standing between Nigeria and development. Let me illustrate with my experience in the education sector. At the Federal Level, Government appears to be treating education with levity by the frequent change of Ministers of Education. From the inception of my tenure as the Vice Chancellor of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, in June, 2004 to the end of that administration in June, 2009, I worked with six Ministers of Education! They were:

- Professor Fabian Osuji
- Mrs. Chinwe Nora Obaji
- Dr. (Mrs.) Oby Ezekwesili
- Dr. Abba Ruma
- Dr. Igwe Aja Nwachukwu
Six Ministers of Education during my five-year tenure as Vice Chancellor leaves them with an average tenure of barely a year in office. This is a most undesirable picture and can never lead to any meaningful improvement in the already murky terrain of the Nigerian Education system. Also last year, the government sacked all twelve vice chancellors of the newest Federal universities without giving any reasons. Some of these eminent and experienced Vice Chancellors were replaced by inexperienced professors who are vastly inferior to them.

Leadership at all levels must take cognizance of the fact that the 21st century is a knowledge-driven era/economy. The path to acquisition of knowledge is education: sound and relevant education, ICT compliant education, entrepreneurial education and functional education [a system that leads to that needed attitudinal transformation]. That is the kind of education we need for global competitiveness. Our leadership must address this need, or we would continue to wallow in educational and social underdevelopment.

Let me state here without any fear of contradictions that there is no country in the world without developmental challenges. Even developed countries are still developing and going through renewals and further modernizations, and nobody knows where it will end. The developed economies are working round the clock on new inventions and discoveries. But Nigeria as a developing country has greater developmental challenges that are really a myriad. Of all the factors responsible for underdevelopment of Nigeria, I would narrow it down to three, which I see as most fundamental and primary.
All other factors emanate from these three, namely: leadership, structures/institutions and citizens.

We tried so far to locate the place of leadership in human and national affairs. The issue of structural imbalances will be briefly engaged. Then the third factor which has to do with spirituality. Nigerians are very religious people, perhaps the most religious in the world, with the highest number of churches and probably mosques as well. But we are not as spiritual, for religiosity and spirituality are not exactly the same. Herein lies the dilemma of leadership disorientation.

Most Nigerians have not evolved beyond basic existential needs of clothing, food and shelter, even amongst the educated and the rich. Most of us are not yet into the pursuit of higher needs and intrinsic values that call for altruistic service. We are still condemned to basic physiological needs. It is still all about I, me, and mine, which has led to grave primitive accumulation of wealth and unprecedented corruption in our country.

On Sundays and Fridays, churches and mosques are packed full by the same Nigerians who can do anything to make money, including ritual killings, kidnapping, armed robbery, drug faking and drug peddling; contract inflation, and all manners of stealing of government funds in large lumps.

A truly spiritual mind does not pursue happiness in such evil manner and still hope to remain at peace with his God, and himself. The high levels of greed and selfishness has blighted our nation and blinded us from seeing the beauty in other citizens and in other ethnic groups. This is crux of the challenges in national integration and unity. It has fueled ethnocentrisms and
prejudices and make us comfortable only when we are with the members of our ethnic groups in a country of over 250 ethnic groups. It has also promoted tribalism, nepotism and religious bigotry, leading to our sacrificing excellence and best practices.

On economic development, during the 1960’s, Nigeria’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP) experienced an annual growth of about 3 percent and the contribution of agriculture to this was over 60 percent. In the seventies, Nigeria generated huge income from oil and gradually and systematically underdeveloped the agricultural and other sectors. With this seeming abandonment of the other sectors, crude oil accounted for over 85 percent of Nigeria’s export receipts in the seventies. Fluctuations in the production and price of oil sent the economy into an epileptic mode, forcing a downward trend in the Gross National Product (GNP). Nigeria’s trade balance was progressively negative as growth was stunted and imports exceeded exports.

During the 1980’s, the austerity measures put in place by the government through such measures as the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) brought much hardship on the general populace. By the end of the eighties, the Nigerian economic outlook was so gloomy that the World Bank actually classified Nigeria as a low-income country.

The 1990’s did not find Nigeria faring any better. The dangerous over reliance on oil and the neglect of the agricultural sector resulted in massive importation of food products. Corruption was also eating away on the proceeds of the oil sale, leaving the masses more greatly impoverished. With
the inception of a democratic Government in 1999, the economy started stabilizing in the early 2000's. Nigeria's economic growth in the first half of the 2000’s was nearly 5 percent. The economic reforms embarked upon by the Government also later reduced the fiscal deficits. The cancellation of Nigeria's external debt by the Paris Club in 2005 was a great boost to the economy.

**On the Challenge of Reversing De-Industrialization**

There is something mortally wrong about the way Nigerian leadership responds to the crises of the ailing manufacturing sector of the economy. Some policies appear to achieve the opposite of what they were intended to accomplish. With the epileptic power sector and the woefully inadequate infrastructure and lack of an enabling environment, there appears to be a systematic, progressive de-industrialization of the economy. It is no secret that the problems facing the manufacturing sector have caused most operators in the sector to produce at less than 25 percent of installed capacity. Some have finally closed down for good, while others have relocated to Ghana and other places where the infrastructure is supportive.

This progressive de-industrialization is throwing more able-bodied individuals into the job market, increasing poverty, exposing more people to health hazards and diminishing the number of adequately engaged skilled labourers in the country. This is a challenge that leadership needs to address squarely and urgently. Failing to do so, Nigeria’s dangerously high unemployment rate will continue to soar, resulting in greater security crisis
bordering on crime, prostitution, social upheavals, kidnapping and other anti-social behaviours.

4. The colonial origins and challenges of Nigeria’s Structural imbalances

On October 1, 2017, Nigeria turned fifty-seven years old. Despite attaining such mature age, Nigeria continues to wallow in underdevelopment and haplessness. Britain gained control over the Niger areas (which Lord Lugard’s mistress and later wife, Flora Shaw, a BBC correspondent, as she then was, christened Nigeria). Britain acquired Lagos as a colony following the latter’s conquest and payment through King Dosumu.

Britain was further given the southern and northern protectorates, following the partitioning of Africa by the colonial powers. Britain in 1906 amalgamated the Lagos colony and southern protectorate and in 1914 further amalgamated the southern and northern protectorates to form and found Nigeria.

There was a trend however that continued in Nigeria till 1946 with the coming of the Arthur Richards Constitution. That trend was that the southern and northern Nigeria were separately administered, more or less. Both north and south protectorates were retained as separate and the Governor General was their only link. The Governor General administered southern Nigeria with the aid of a Legislative Council, some members of which were elected
and many more appointed; while the northern Nigeria was administered by the same Governor General using proclamations.

This point is so fundamental because I believe it is the very foundation of the nation’s problems. Why do I say so? Britain did not quite see the possibility of Nigeria becoming one nation initially or being be made into one nation. Britain therefore vacillated on Nigeria until 1946 before truly amalgamating Nigeria into one and as a federal entity. That was the beginning of regionalism in Nigeria with the 3 regional structures that the Richards constitution created, and what was more, it was the very first time that northern leaders and southern leaders would sit in the same room to talk and take decisions on Nigeria as one country.

From 1946 when this happened and 1960 when Nigeria got her independence, is a mere intervening period of 14 years. For me, 14 years appears too little for southern and northern Nigerian leaders to understand themselves and forge a nation. The nation Nigeria was therefore weaned in 1960 perhaps too early. If you consider the issues dealt with by the Willlinks Commission of 1958, it recommended that the issue of minority fear of domination by the major ethnic groups should be dealt with by a Nigerian federal government after independence. That was tantamount to passing the buck.

As it turned out, this became a major miscalculation because the Northern Peoples Congress(NPC) led federal government only agreed with its ally National Congress of Nigerian Citizens(NCNC) to carve out the Midwestern Region from Western Nigeria. It was formed in June 1963 from Benin and
Delta provinces of the Western Region, and its capital was Benin City. But the same Federal Government failed to carve out the eastern and northern minorities into separate regions. If they had done so, the fear of domination could have been cured in Nigeria and Nigeria would have emerged a full federation of 6 to 8 regions and that could possibly have averted the civil war.

Before Nigeria got her independence, the debates for the regions to be self-governing raged and by the time Chief Anthony Enaharo moved the motion for Nigeria to be become self-governing in 1957, northern Nigeria was not ready and countered the motion with the proviso, “as soon as possible”. The name Enahoro, unlike Nnamdi Azikwe, Obafemi Awolowo and Tafawa Balewa would not ring a bell with the younger generation but students of history and those that were old enough are aware of the role he played in parliament for Nigeria’s independence. The freedom fighter had suggested in his July 22, 1953, motion for Nigeria to gain independence in 1956, but the motion suffered a setback in parliament as northern members of parliament staged a walkout as a consequence of the motion. It was said then that the north was not ready for self-rule. It was Enahoro's motion that piled on pressure in the build up against colonialism and the eventual independence of Nigeria on October 1, 1960. Here is in part, the famous motion that was read on the floor of the parliament in 1953 to set the ball rolling for Nigeria’s freedom. “Mr. President, sir, I rise to move the motion standing in my name, “that this House accepts as a primary political objective the attainment of self-government for Nigeria in 1956”.

The altercations and disagreements between north and southern politicians made the northern leaders to leave Lagos Federal Legislative Assembly
quite unhappy after being booed and many vowed never to return to Lagos and never did.

Permit me to interrogate the circumstances that led to the differences that occurred that I just brought into reference. North was genuinely worried about its level of manpower development. Colonialism arrived the southern Nigerian earlier because of its coastal advantage and because its Christian religion and culture was more amenable to western culture and education. This condition made manpower much more abundant in the southern part than in the north. This condition has persisted till this day because the containment policies put in place pampered rather than help the parts of the country it sought to help meet up with other parts of the country.

The main containment policy put in place is what we now refer to as federal character principle. Quota system and catchments derive from it. The “federal character” principle has been enshrined in Nigeria’s Constitution since 1979. It seeks to ensure that appointments to public service institutions fairly reflect the linguistic, ethnic, religious, and geographic diversity of the country.

The Act was later adopted into the 1999 Constitution. The Federal Character Commission was set up and is saddled with responsibility to promote, monitor and enforce compliance with the principles of the proportional sharing of all bureaucratic, economic, media and political posts at all levels of government, a job it has done poorly.

There is nothing wrong with federal character; in fact it is a beautiful policy that would have produced a nation of many colours if only it managed not to
sacrifice merit. Sacrificing meritocracy is a major contributor to Nigeria’s developmental challenges, and as long as critical appointments are made based on ethno-religious sentiments and nepotism, Nigeria will continue to be underdeveloped.

Countries that have employed and applied federal character offer only right of first refusal, after which the chance passes to the next most qualified or next in line. But in our own experience, the slots are reserved and preserved for parts of the country where the considerations apply, without irreducible minimum qualifications being guaranteed. This was how most unqualified persons have found themselves into the nation’s institutions, academic and otherwise. This development led me to introduce the post UME screening in University of Nigeria, Nsukka when I was its Vice Chancellor.

This equity dilution has affected every facet of our national development to the point that the nation has capitulated and now has to rely on expatriate manpower while our own graduates and professionals produced within are now treated with suspicion. In the past, we talked about half-baked graduates, but today, the situation is getting worse to the point that there may be no baking at all going on in our institutions and graduates can no longer fill forms and write good letters.

For those who do not understand how far things have degenerated; before and immediately after independence, a Nigerian student was at par, possibly better than their counterparts in Ivy League institutions in the US, and undergraduate ‘A’ institutions in the United Kingdom, including Cambridge and Oxford. But today, Nigerian students and graduates will have to pass
through compulsory confirmatory retraining courses in the US and Europe before they can be admitted at lower levels or join the training for any specializations and postgraduate programmes.

Question is: how did we get here? In spite of its natural resources, Nigeria continues to flounder, fumble and stumble like a baby still learning to walk. Many have rightly said that the nation and her citizens have never enjoyed any genuine freedom or political peace or national prosperity because of tribalism, ethnic hatred and clashes, marginalization, political instability and poor leadership, bribery and government corruption, injustice, indiscipline and political irresponsibility, religious ignorance, intolerance and violence, war and moral degradation. Such people believe that these and other vices continue to mar the nation’s prospect for development and progress till today.

The common belief has been that those entrusted with the affairs of governance are incapable and this has led to their dismal performance. In other words, Nigeria has not yet made the needed level of progress because of the kind of successive leaderships we have had. Coming from this perspective, one can conclude that Nigerians have never elected true leaders, never elected bright, smart, intelligent, capable and de-tribalized citizens to lead the country. This position is not quite correct if you recall the place of citizens in producing their leaders and following them through.

You also hear many Nigerians say that men and women who have the right qualifications and moral fortitude to lead are either denied access to office or never ventured into politics at all because of the crudity and incivility of the political process. But fact is: power is never given; power is taken. Those
who want to change Nigeria must join the process and get the people to see a fresh point of view. Nigerians must become the change they want to see for positive change to occur in Nigeria.

5. Some Leadership Prescriptions for National Development and the effect of Corruption

So far, it is becoming obvious that it is not just possible to prescribe a particular form of leadership for any nation, Nigeria inclusive. What Alexander Pope said about governance is instructive. He said: "For Forms of Government let fools contest; whatever is best administered is best." The leaders-citizens interactions can be repositioned in any clime to make the emergence of good leaders and purposeful leadership possible. The best form of government, which allows for the healthiest form of leaders-citizens interaction and therefore the most amenable to growth and development, is democracy. This is a settled matter and though it comes with its costs, explains why most nations have embraced democracy.

Democracy is a government by the people; especially rule of the majority. It is a government in which the supreme power is vested in the people and exercised by them directly or indirectly through a system of representation, usually involving periodically held free elections.

Democracy has been classically defined as government of the people, by the people, for the people by Abraham Lincoln, a former president of the United States in his Gettysburg Address, a speech that has become one of the best-
known in American history. The iconic speech was delivered by Lincoln during the American Civil War, on the afternoon of Thursday, November 19, 1863, at the dedication of the Soldiers' National Cemetery in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania; four and a half months after the Union armies defeated those of the Confederacy at the Battle of Gettysburg.

Abraham Lincoln's carefully crafted address, secondary to other presentations that day, was one of the greatest and most influential statements of national purpose. In just over two minutes, Lincoln reiterated the principles of human equality espoused by the Declaration of American Independence, a new birth of freedom that would bring true equality to all of its citizens and also for the principle of human equality. Lincoln thus proclaimed that “government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.” Democracy is therefore about the rule of law, and not rule of men. Democracy is hence about equality of all men, as well as justice and equity.

Beyond this polemic and popular definition and postulation offered by Lincoln, democracy opens up a polity for the emergence of the best hands to be on the ploughs of nation building and development. This is still not happening in our democratic experience.

Democracy takes a lot to be truly democratic. The first requirement for the making of a democracy is availability of democrats themselves. Without democrats, democracy will remain an empty dream as people cannot give what they do not have. We may then ask: are Nigerians democrats for them to lay claim on having a democracy? Smarting from long years of military
dictatorship, most Nigerians have imbibed military culture and have become small autocrats who easily trample on the rights of others.

This mentality has bred the culture of impunity, which you find in all political parties, big and small, and has equally led to a complete absence of internal party democracy. The implication of the absence of internal party democracy is the enthronement of oligarchy in place of democracy. Yes, what obtains in our democracy is by far more oligarchic in the sense that a handful of men would sit in Abuja to decide who and who fly the parties' flags for all elective positions in the name of the so-called powers of the National Working Committees.

Because of lack of internal party democracy, those who are imposed on us as leaders are mostly corrupt and incompetent and successively beget others like themselves. Most of our present leaders are largely characterized by unbridled selfishness, blind egocentricity, voracious appetite for ill-gotten wealth, Machiavellian orientation, boundless corruption and shameless opulence. We now have a political class that is largely ideologically bereft, morally bankrupt, socially irresponsible, politically barbaric, intellectually fraudulent, and spiritually anemic. There is, indeed a huge leadership crisis, a gigantic 21st century leadership challenge for Nigeria. Unfortunately, the enthronement of nepotism, tribalism and religion in our leadership selection process has worsened an already horrible situation. Thankfully, there are a few pockets of excellence amidst the prevailing decadence, and there is hope for us if we embrace excellence.
As long as the power of the party members to elect their flag bearers is compromised, whoever emerges from such tainted process is not of the people and his or her allegiance will never be to them. Such victory remains a pyrrhic victory, which ultimately serves very narrow interests that have little to do with the people. This simple analogy is for us to see that the very foundation of our democracy is faulty and has forced on the polity leaderships that have not been accountable and that are both inept and corrupt; making ours more of a civil rule than a democratic rule, and the two are quite different. This is the worst form of corruption because it perpetuates mediocrity and ineptitude in leadership to the detriment of the whole nation.

Corruption and lawlessness thrive in Nigeria because the structures and systems condone them, and checks and balances are very weak. The foundation of corruption in Nigeria is the culture of impunity where citizens who have attained certain political and social positions, can get away with almost any crime. This has dangerously vitiated the fight against corruption and the desire to have a decent society.

It appears that the institutional framework established by the Nigerian Government to deal with corruption has not made any appreciable change in the corruption industry. The anti-corruption agencies like the EFCC and the ICPC appear, as in the Igbo adage, to be sent on an errand with a basket of salt while the sender sends along a torrential rain to beat the salt and its carrier! The agencies are trying to cope in a situation where even the National Assembly appears to revel in frustrating them. The work of the Bureau for Public Procurement (BPP) is quite commendable, having saved the Federal Government hundreds of billions of naira. The EFCC has also
reportedly recovered billions of naira stolen by public officers. In spite of all this, however, corruption continues to thrive as if it is a genetic problem.

Corruption is driven by greed and avarice, oiled by pathological selfishness and self-centeredness, fanned and watered by society’s eulogizing of those who have “made it” through any means, celebrated by relatives of masters of corruption who give them many titles, and tolerated by governments whose essential ware-in-trade is corruption, and who need such crooks to aid them in the election rigging processes.

At the university level, corrupt practices hold sway in some circles. Grade sorting, sexual harassment, misappropriation of student union dues, cultism, prostitution, plagiarism, examination malpractice, etc, are regular features in our tertiary institutions. These corrupt practices are inconsistent with Nigeria’s rebranding project.

For the same reasons, the measures being put in place to facilitate prosecution of corruption cases by the Chief Justice of the Federation, His Lordship, Walter Onoghen is most commendable. But fight against corruption has to do more on the prevention side, and the cultural reasons why corruption and stealing of government funds in large lumps do not appear to be a big deal to most Nigerians need to be studied and adequate campaign mounted by government to reverse the unfortunate trend. Unless Nigeria finds a way to root out corruption, hope of developing our nation shall remain a mirage. The reason being that it is the funds meant for development that corruption wipes out and drains and funnels into private pockets. Corruption is thus a huge contribution to Nigeria’s development challenges.
What is more, such stolen monies are hardly invested in Nigeria to create jobs. Chances of industrialization are very dim when corruption fuels capital flights. Corruption is a devious form of theft. Corruption creates fluke millionaires and billionaires who contribute very little or nothing to the economy, except perhaps in the banking industry, if such laundered monies are even in the banks. A lot of this ill-gotten wealth is probably not within the banking system but simply stashed away in private vaults, or even grave yards. It is corruption that aids the imposition of inept and incompetent leaders on the polity. In my opinion, incompetence is worse than corruption because it begets corruption.

Dealing with a hydra headed system such as ours certainly requires an extreme form of leadership. But there are many situational factors that would not allow the good ones to easily get to power. Our system is still anchored on rentier and reward system where those who become anything politically must be connected to the powers that be and to those dispensing favours. In other words, our system reserves even the most critical of positions and offices as political settlements; jobs for the boys. This in itself is also corruption. It is only in rare occasions that our leaders truly shop for true experts to fly into certain sensitive positions.

Nations are built by best brains and where it gets to certain critical solutions, politics ought to take the backseat. I recall that President Barack Obama, a Democratic president, had to appoint Chuck Hagel, a Republican topnotch secretary of defense. Such bipartisan and even apolitical decisions are often needed in nation building efforts.
Although, it is difficult to prescribe the type of leadership, certainly firmness and creativity would be required in all purposeful leaderships. In all forms of leadership, be they transformational, transactional, servant leadership and so on, I always see leadership on a continuum. I have deciphered two extreme forms of leadership and the rest forms can then be placed anywhere in-between. The two extreme forms of leadership possible in all human endeavours, including leadership of nations are: toxic leadership and exceptional leadership.

In his book, "Petty tyranny in organizations," Blake Ashforth discussed potentially destructive sides of leadership and identified what he referred to as petty tyrants, i.e. Leaders who exercise a tyrannical style of management, resulting in a climate of fear. Fear in leadership situations can be counterproductive and affects productivity negatively when taken to the extreme. Fear is a hallmark of Toxic leadership.

Toxic leadership simply refers to any leadership that leaves a place worse than it met it. If one assumes a leadership position even in so bad a situation, if you cannot change it to the better, by all means do not make it any worse than you met. That would be toxic leadership.

Toxic leadership is a combination of self-centered attitudes, motivations, and behaviors that have adverse effects on subordinates, the society, and mission performance. This leader lacks concern for others and the climate of the organization or nation, which leads to short- and long-term negative effects.
This is a destructive leadership behaviour, which is the systematic and repeated behaviour by a leader, that violates the legitimate interests of the people and by undermining and/or sabotaging the goals, tasks, resources, and effectiveness and/or the motivation and citizens well-being,

Summarized, a toxic leader is a person who has responsibility over a group of people or an organization, and who abuses the leader–follower relationship by leaving the group or organization in a worse-off condition than when they first found them. Many countries in Africa have suffered large doses of toxic leadership over time, the result of which is massive underdevelopment of the continent and widespread corruption.

The phrase – Toxic Leadership - was coined by Marcia Whicker in 1996 and is linked with a number of dysfunctional leadership styles. Other names include the little Hitler, manager from hell, the toxic boss, boss from hell or toxic manager. Their leadership style is both self-destructive and ultimately corporately harmful as they subvert and destroy institutions and structures.

But in a nation, for toxic leaders to emerge and do damage, there has to be a Toxic triangle. To understand and prevent toxic leadership, one has to do more than study the leader. A leader alone, no matter how cleverly devious or fiendish, cannot last long. A toxic leadership triangle - destructive leaders, susceptible followers, and conducive environments - combine to produce the poisonous results. I propose that any one or more of the following traits would be a red flag that a person might not be ready for a leadership position: Lack of empathy, lack of patriotism, too willing to compromise, too bossy, wishy-washy, poor judgment, lack of humility, and lack of passion for excellence.
You will notice that in the toxic triangle, you have susceptible citizens and a conducive environment. Susceptible citizens are uninformed, gullible citizenry who may or may not have an idea of their suffering but have no idea of how to get the problem solved. Such citizenry is perfect for toxic leadership. Propaganda and misinformation easily work with them. They are the ones politicians will promise to build bridges for where there are no rivers and they jolly well agree, and applaud, applaud!

The environment is conducive for toxic leadership also where there are no institutions and systems of leadership accountability. In a variegated society such as ours where leadership selection is tainted with religion and ethnicity, leadership accountability can equally be blocked by such primordial sentiments and clearly non-performing, toxic leaders can be kept in power for the simple reason that he represents such primordial interests. These factors also play decisive roles in leadership recruitment process and therefore have become a major stumbling block in national development in Nigeria and Africa.

These primordial factors that assist in the recruitment of toxic leaders have equally blocked the recruitment of effective leaders; leaders that can make the needed difference; leaders that are confident and focused; leaders that can make important decisions no matter how unpopular; leaders who are uncorrupt and transparent; leaders that have integrity, inspirational leaders who can move the nation forward and treat all citizens as equal; leaders with Passion and are innovative and charismatic. These are some of the qualities a leader must possess to lead a multiethnic nation such as Nigeria. Nigeria does not need an ethnic jingoist or religious bigot.
The Challenge of Servant Leadership

The challenges covered so far may be regarded as hardware parameters because their outputs are essentially empirically determined or measurable. The issue of servant leadership is a software parameter because its output and character are easily discernible but not directly empirically quantifiable. Both the hardware and the software parameters are critical, symbiotic and indispensable. Where the software is good and elegant, the hardware produces results that are desirable and lasting. Where the software is faulty or inelegant, the hardware produces less than desirable results. The challenge of servant leadership is a software parameter that has the potential to revolutionalize the entire hardware system to produce optimally. The result is transformational as opposed to mere transactional leadership.

There is no one sentence definition for servant leadership. As is often quoted, “the taste of the pudding is in the eating.” Servant leadership is primarily a principle of leadership that believes that the leader is first and foremost a servant of his people or followers. Servant leadership sees leadership as a trust that should never be betrayed. It sees leadership from the perspective of influence and not that of coercion, intimidation, bullying, threats, dictatorship, etc. Servant leadership sees leadership as an opportunity to serve, using one’s giftedness and acumen to bring about the greatest good to the greatest number of the people. Servant leadership embraces the principle that the leader is a primus inter pares and not a commander. Servant leadership has little room for ego wars that undermine the needs and welfare of the people.
It is obvious from these remarks that I believe that servant leadership is more a matter of the heart’s disposition than the mind’s manipulative ways. The reasons are not far-fetched. First, the issue of integrity is purely a function of the heart’s disposition, it doesn’t come by reading, studying or even wishing. Integrity is a function of the heart’s determination to think right, act right, walk the path of truth and transparency and remain accountable at all times. Servant leadership is integrity personified. As a servant is always accountable to his master, a servant leader is always accountable to his people. He doesn’t consider accountability as an impingement on his authority. After all, power belongs to the people and authority belongs to those the people have called to lead them. Obviously, the challenge of servant leadership is a grave one in Nigeria. The model servant leader is The Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. In one clear example we saw Him washing the feet of His disciples with the instruction to His followers to follow His example.

Servant leadership also is a call to the pursuit of excellence. As a result, servant leaders have a passion for excellence in performance and service delivery. Servant leadership does not engage in the “use and dump” philosophy of pedestrian or even transactional leadership. Servant leadership mentors, and is amenable to mentoring. It raises up other leaders and does not feel threatened if a subordinate is more gifted. Servant leadership cherishes people of excellence and relishes working with them, giving them opportunities to grow and exercise their skills without feeling envious, jealous or threatened. Servant leaders see altruistic service as a
requirement and, so eschew corruption. Although servant leadership is considerate, compassionate and empathetic, it is also firm, resolute, diligent, and law abiding. It has little tolerance for mediocrity; it rather models excellence. It is always proactive, accommodating and tolerant of constructive criticism.

Servant leadership considers the compromising of the people’s need and welfare for personal gain a betrayal of trust and a treasonable offence. It places the people’s needs always above selfish goals and desires, as well as parochial interests.

Are servant leaders made or born? Can we find such leaders anywhere? There are no easy answers. Servant leaders are not perfect, but through practice of servanthood in leadership they grow to maturity. In that case one who invites divine assistance for conversion of the heart to the heart of a servant, one who commits to the principles outlined above; one who is humble, teachable and eager to do right has a good chance of becoming a servant leader. God is waiting for those who so desire to approach Him and He will give them a new heart. Nigeria is in dire need of servant leaders. This is the greatest leadership challenge of Nigeria today.
6. The challenge of Restructuring Nigeria and the Crisis of Leadership

There is an ongoing clamour for restructuring Nigeria. Some groups have also emerged calling for outright breakup of the country. The latter has angered the leadership of Nigeria for daring to demand to be allowed to exit the country. The President in his Independence speech called the groups calling for breakup especially IPOB irresponsible, and averted their attention to the grave consequences and the over 2 million that died when Biafra attempted to break away between May 30, 1967 and January 10, 1970.

I do not envy President Muhammadu Buhari who fought the war of unity and also the one hearing about breakup 50 years after, and having to think and be apprehensive about the prospects of Nigeria breaking up in his time. This reminds one of the famous statement by Winston Churchill, British Prime Minister as he then was, when the dismemberment of the British empire stared him in the face. Churchill had said: “I have not become the King’s First Minister in order to preside over the liquidation of the British Empire.”

Of course no President wants to be the last President of his country. Mikhail Gorbachev was certainly not happy when the USSR collapsed in his time as President, and so are others who were Presidents when their countries failed. We pray that Nigeria never collapses. We are better together.

Nations fail when the leaders fail to do the needful and negotiate and stir their troubled nations to safe grounds. Some have relied unnecessarily on force to keep their nation one, and with Operation Python Dance II already in active mode in the southeast and with the promise to launch similar
operations in the South south and south west (Operation Crocodile Smile it will be codenamed), I suspect the government is still relying on show and use of force to keep Nigeria one. There are better and more modern methods.

Yes, use of force to some extent can keep a nation together and it has so far worked in keeping Nigeria one since the civil war. The Nigeria civil war in itself was fought to keep Nigeria one. General Yakubu Gowon who led the federal government had then declared: “keeping Nigeria one is a task that must be accomplished”, and it earned him the appellation, Go On With One Nigeria, an acronym that miraculously tallied with his very name – Gowon.

When we consider the cost of waging that avoidable Nigeria civil war and the cost of military deployments in about 30 states in Nigeria, to say nothing about the humongous amount being spent on the fight against Boko Haram, the officers and men lost, and what dynamo effect such would have if deployed to the provisions of social amenities, you can understand why Nigeria is still poor.

But can we for all intent and purposes say the nation is making progress as it is? But before I delve into the issues that have made restructuring a veritable singsong today, let us take a brief moment to consider a few bright spots. Although there is so much to lament about Nigeria after our 57 years of nationhood, there are still so much to be thankful to God for and for which we shall ever remain grateful.
• God’s goodness, love and mercy to us in spite of our unworthiness and misuse of His blessings.

• Nigeria stands today a united country despite so much travails and ethno-religious conflicts that have threatened to destroy us as one people under God.

• Nigerians are still very loving and peaceful people; our resilience as a people of faith in our nationhood, and our indomitable will to survive are exemplary.

• We are very richly endowed with diverse natural resources, including human resources, agricultural and mineral resources, oil and gas, etc.

• The absence of natural disasters, such as earthquakes, tsunamis, hurricanes, tornadoes, typhoons, landslides, etc.

• The great men and women who have offered altruistic service and given so much to their fatherland.

• Our youths who have remained mostly law-abiding in the face of provocations from a bitterly cruel socio-economic environment and under blistering deprivations.

• Nigeria’s big brother role in the West African sub region that has helped to politically stabilize the region.

• The ingenuity of some of our compatriots in various professional endeavours, the world over.
• Our sons and daughters who are winning laurels abroad for their technological knowhow and expertise.

The list is by no means exhaustive and we need to thank God that there is so much grace amidst our woes and failures. There is no doubt that the Divine Presence is still with us as a people, and that if we heed His voice, our hope for a strong, virile and developed country will be realized. Although the atmosphere is that of despair and despondency and the demographics are alarming and disparaging, there is hope if we mend our ways and take on the challenges of leadership in more creative and constructive ways. We have cried enough, but done little. We have engaged in perpetual motion but little movement, the proverbial barber’s chair. When we moved, it was often in a recursive mode, two steps forward, three steps backward. It is now time to think ACTION, do ACTION, walk ACTION and fly ACTION. As the Americans would also say: let us walk the talk!

Nigeria is not yet a failed nation. But Nigerians should not hold on to the erroneous notion that the nation is indissoluble and indivisible without ensuring certain prerequisites as safety nets.

Fact is: the link between north and south Nigeria is still fragile and sadly so 57 years after independence. When the northern youths issued a quit notice and later suspended without withdrawing it, this fact became quite obvious once more. In addition, the use of denigrating, insultive and unprintable language by the leader of IPOB has made an already bad situation much worse. The weak link between the regions of the country seems to be only
economy. Then I asked myself; if oil is found in commercial quantities in the northern troughs and basins or crude oil suddenly loses its value in international market, will north and south Nigeria still have enough motivation to continue as one nation? This is a question that I would rather urge each and every one of us to answer.

When the Colonial Master was dethroned, the Nigerian politician who took over, found the instruments of colonization, and the lure of power too attractive to forgo and from there the concept of GRA politics got entrenched in the mind of the average Nigerian politician. He rules from a detached platform where he is completely out of touch with the feelings of his people. Yet we are practicing democracy, which is supposed to be the government of the people, by the people and for the people. Little wonder that in spite of the fact that this nation is blessed, the average Nigerian still wallows in abject poverty. What has all the petrodollars gotten for Nigerians? Once our politicians are nestled in the comfort of their GRA, their eyes become blinded to the plight of the people, their ears blocked to their cries and their hearts hardened to the pains and the agonies of their subjects. This is easily noticeable in the titles and the accolades we heap on them: The Honourable, Your Excellency, Distinguished, etc, In these, we invoke the same spirit of colonization that alienates leadership from the feelings of their people. Ordinarily, who would pick offence with honouring our leaders? Hardly any! But when we begin to see the kind of inept and indifferent leadership structure that we now have, it makes a review of every relationship with the ruling class mandatory and expedient.
The crisis of leadership in Nigeria today is a sad commentary to the labours and sacrifices of our founding fathers, who were harassed, beaten and imprisoned for daring to stand up to the excesses of our colonial overlords. Were the dead allowed to rise again these patriarchs would be shocked back to their graves when they behold the Nigeria made by modern politicians, their children. No wonder Nigeria, with all her vast natural resources and billions of US dollars accruing to her every year is classified a poor country; a land where millions, in the rural areas and in the urban squalors, eke out a living out of deep agony and misery. Nigeria’s situation calls for a great lamentation! When you take a critical view of the nation’s resources in virtually every area of life: human, environmental, agricultural, and large deposits of oil and gas to mention this few, you will be shocked to find that the poverty and the high level of unemployment in this country are all artificially induced scourges on the people as I had earlier observed. This is why we must restructure Nigeria as soon as possible.

As I pondered over the problems in Nigeria I came to the painful realization that the real problem in this country is the kind of governments we run and the people who run them. What is even more painful and distressing is that most of the ills that have bedeviled Nigerians since the advent of the oil boom have been inflicted on them by the Government. And without any fear of contradiction, I make bold to say that poverty in this land is artificial; unemployment too is a self-inflicted scourge. Under God’s provisions for this land there is no reason for such misery. These all contribute to the deafening calls for restructuring of our polity.
But for those of us who cherish the beauty of one Nigeria there is a strong need to integrate our nation. There seems to be clashes of civilizations militating against the unity of our nation. Islam and Christianity have not quite meshed and jelled well in our nation as may have happened in some other countries.

Nigeria has had various systems of government – unitary, parliamentary, military and democratic presidential system. Since the return to presidential democratic government in 1999, Nigeria has not yet maximized its potential to the fullest, but still wallows in religious and sectarian violence, political leadership failure, corrupt courts and judges, security challenges and human right abuses. The fault-lines appear to be expanding. Boko Harm terrorism, though deescalated significantly, is not letting up at all and changing tactics.

Due mainly to structural constrains and poor leadership over time, despite the many economic reforms that the nation has embarked upon; not much has been accomplished to uplift her citizens. Apathy is growing and the disconnect between the government and citizens is ever strong.

Days ago, I watched a programme Street Wise on AIT and the reporter was asking Nigerians on the streets to sing the national anthem. Not surprisingly, most of them if not all muddled it up. It speaks volumes on how civic responsibilities go on in our country and also tells us the nature of the environment where we hope democracy will grow and where we are planning indoctrination.

Nigeria is popularly labeled as the “Giant" of Africa only in terms of population because all other indicators of a prosperous and healthy nation do not exist.
in Nigeria. In fact, according to Global Peace Index, Nigeria ranks top among the most corrupt and most dangerous countries to live in Africa. It is also rated as one of the most corruption endemic countries in the world. In addition, recent ranking of Nigeria in the Mo Ibrahim governance indices is painfully worrisome.

In terms of prosperity, economic dominance, life expectancy and so on, Nigeria does not even make the list among the top ten in Africa. Nigeria is also ranked highest among the top terrorist countries in the world because of Boko Haram (3rd deadly) and Fulani herdsman (4th deadly) terrorist organizations according to Global Terrorism Index – all operating and resident in the Northern Nigeria. To make matters worse, Nigeria recently branded IPOB a terrorist organization, which means that, by our own admission, Nigeria now houses three terrorist organizations in the world, perhaps the only country to so qualify. It is no virtue at all. This is a very dangerous record which is capable of truncating the global respect Nigeria has been begging to redeem of recent.

Nigeria has also the lowest primary school completion rates in the continent and the largest percentage of the 100 million children, mostly girls; who are out of school worldwide. At the annual meeting of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2005, the following conditions - good governance, democratization, economic and political reforms, reduction of poverty, population explosion, fight against poverty and hunger, pandemic diseases, terrorism, conflict and wars and domestic peace, security, prosperity, and the rules of law were listed as key important challenges facing Nigerian and most of the African nations.
Still on education, it is important to note that despite the Universal Basic Education (UBE), which prides itself with the motto: “no child will be left behind”, Nigeria was recently rated as harboring the world’s highest concentrations of illiterate populations in the north east. Of course, with about 10 million out of school children (of school going age of 6 to 16), also one of the highest in the world, it is evident that our country has not done well in education, as in many other sectors of the economy. I weep when I see the dilapidated conditions of many schools in Nigeria. The condition of some of the primary schools, where the pupils sit on bare floor with roof blown off and windows without shutters and some sit under the trees, will make any sincere person shed tears. Yet, these are the young ones we are preparing to lead the country and guide the future of the nation. Quality education is the pillar and engine for societal development and progress and any nation that ignores educating her young people properly is destined for failure and doom. Again, it is believed that a restructured polity will address these maladies more effectively.

I am not harping on education because I am teacher; it is because one sure way to destroy and permanently disfigure a nation is to destroy its educational system. Nigeria continues to exile her brightest minds, scholars, engineers, doctors, educationists, scientists, poets, writers and media professionals, philosophers, social thinkers, human rights activists, pro-democracy activists, and its young citizens who have taken flight from the country in what has come to be known as brain drain. Oil is not Nigeria’s greatest export commodity, it is human resources. To reverse the trend, we simply have to change the conditions chasing them away from our clime.
This is a nation that has politicized education which is the foundation, pillar and engine of economic growth and prosperity, in a world that is knowledge driven.

We have become a nation that does not maintain its infrastructures or build new ones but prefers to embezzle and launder public money overseas, money destined for Federal projects, State programmes and projects, community and rural development, etc. For this reason, we must all support the President in his effort to root out corruption from our polity.

The challenges and problems facing Nigeria are also convoluted. Apart from the social and economic problems confronting the nation, new kinds of challenges are surfacing daily — intractable problems and challenges that gnaw on its foundation and erode the gains in nation building — namely, ethnic strife, hate speeches and clashes, religious conflicts, terrorism, political instability, poor governance and corruption, lack of infrastructure, public healthcare crisis, poverty and unemployment, crime, violence, lawlessness, injustice, political thuggery, looting of public treasury, money laundering and debilitating political corruption, massive fiscal corruption, parasitic attitude of citizens, incompetence, impunity, rascality, callousness, lawlessness, absurdity, stupidity, foolishness, poverty and terrorism, moral decadence, military brutality and human right abuses, and many other challenges. All these are massive challenges militating against our development and crying out for sustained and adequate leadership intervention; intervention that is just, equitable, fair and not coloured by nepotism, religious bigotry and prejudice.
Back to the issue of Restructuring of Nigeria. At independence, Nigeria was on an enviable trajectory to becoming a developed country. Unfortunately, however, we took some wrong detours. What exactly went wrong? Between 1960 and 1966 (the first republic that is), the 4 regions that were the nation’s federating units grew exponentially. Eastern region under the premiership of Michael Iheonukara Okpara, was rated the fastest growing economy in Africa. Western region under Chief Obafemi Awolowo as premiere grew and was strong enough to launch the first colour television station in Africa and even before Ireland in Europe. The Northern region under Sir Ahmadu Bello, was so strong in agriculture and in some other areas where it had comparative advantage. Unlike the 36 states masquerading and operating today as federating units, the regional economies grew in leaps and bounds because the federalism practiced then was truly federal and fully permitted self-determination. These giant strides were scuttled by the imposition of a Unitary system of government as opposed to the constitutional federal system that was being followed.

Now, with over 60 items on the exclusive list and only about 14 items of the concurrent list, Nigeria’s federalism is far more unitary than federal. It certainly has a cephalous head and very tiny legs and therefore abnormal. At the same time, many of those operating this flawed system are suffering from what I term “aerocephallus”- a condition of overbloated ego and head containing only hot air and no substance.
The result is clearly showing, as over 27 states are almost insolvent and had to be saved thrice by federal government with bailouts to the tune of over 1.6 trillion naira. In a federal system, the federal government is not a Father Christmas or mother hen. All federating units must be capable of fending for themselves and contributing meaningfully to the center.

For the avoidance of doubt, before the Nigeria civil war, the regions retained 50% of what they earned and 50% went to the federation account out which 30% is redistributed and 20% retained by the federal government. Today, the reverse is the case as federal government collects all revenues and retains nearly 50% and redistributes less than 40% while over 10% goes to issues like debt servicing and other statutory matters.

I am glad that President Buhari has said that talks about restructuring is legitimate and asked the proponents to pass through constitutional amendment processes via the national and state assemblies. While commending the President for his progressive posture and position on this germane issue, I must point out that the constitutionally prescribed process may not be adequate enough if the restructuring being pushed will be far-reaching enough. For example, if Nigeria would go for the merging of states and unicameral legislature, do we expect the National and States assemblies to vote for their own disbandment? It may not be possible for self-preservation reason, which is the first law of nature. This presumption has again thrown the active participation and in fact championship of the matter to the President himself.
I am not so optimistic that the President will be so enthused and be a fast friend to this proposal. After all, he is part of the military class that centralized power as a way of keeping the country one. His reluctance and even outright rejection should be understood in this light. Command and control is the military way of doing things. But alas! We now have a country so let us build it. If Nigeria is clearly a federal environment, unitary approach will not work and has not worked in Nigeria.

If I were President Buhari, therefore, I would cause a piece of legislation into being to set boundaries on restructuring. For me, whatever 2/3rd accepts should be implemented automatically insofar as it does not include the dismemberment of the Nigeria nation state.

I cannot say what and how restructuring may be. But I do know and firmly believe that we need to bend towards each other; this is the only way to avoid breaking up. We certainly need each other.

From Southern Cameroon in Cameroon, to Catalonia in Spain to Kurds in Iran to Scotland in the United Kingdom, the call for revision of the nation-state is ringing out loud and clear. Kurds and Catalonians have all voted to exit their mother nations while the first attempt by the Scots failed and they are gearing up for yet another trial. Many may theoretically see the development as the unraveling of the liberal state model. But the example of southern Cameroon is similar to the feeling of alienation fueling the separatist agitation by IPOB.

The issue driving the demand for self-determination in Cameroon, as far as I can see, is that the military destroyed regionalism and centralized
governance to the detriment of the English speaking region. This is not too different from causes of the agitations for restructuring in Nigeria and calls for separation. I am therefore of the firm view that a well restructured Nigeria will end all agitations or make them dormant. In the USA there are still groups calling for secessions but they are no longer potent. I expect the same to happen to Nigeria if we do the needful. Nigeria will then emerge from this precipice much stronger, more united and ready to thrive as one indissoluble, indivisible nation indeed as contemplated in the constitution, not in mere words or compulsion by force.

Maybe we might need to pause at this time to ask ourselves, where this nation would have been if Nigeria had the best possible leadership and had put her acts together after the civil war. Perhaps, instead of BRIC nations (the newly emerging world economic powers), the acronym would have been BRINC [Brazil, Russia, India, Nigeria and China].

It is most unfortunate that while the nations of the world are putting their heads together on how to catch up with the tide of the 21st Century evolution, Nigerian politicians are busy perfecting the art of stealing billions of Naira and rigging elections. I hear there is now a book on how to rig election written by a former public office holder! We have just spent the second decade of the century and we have seen that the world has entered into a volatile stage where change and uncertainty have become the order of the day.
7. ‘Leadership Triad’ and National development

I want to begin the conclusion with what I chose to call ‘Leadership Triad’ and its implications for Nigeria’s development. Time will not permit me to espouse fully this pet theoretical postulation on leadership, national development and nation building. I will rather show briefly how three related components combine to yield up the growth and development of any nation. I will leave the aspect of testing and validating the proposition to my colleagues in the social sciences, especially in psychology, sociology and political science in the hope that they will remember to credit me for coining the term and pointing them in that direction.

By ‘Leadership Triad’ I mean the tripod upon which the progress of any nation lies – Leadership, Citizens and the Environment. I believe that the three interact in nation building in form of a grid, where the three must be at their best for the nation to grow and develop optimally. Where any of the three components is lacking, it constitutes a clog on the wheel. Each is either positively or negatively disposed or dormant. Where one is negative, it draws the other two in opposite direction, causing a centrifugal force while pulling away, thereby slowing them down or halting them down altogether.

If you apply the model to the Nigerian situation, we have always blamed leadership for the underdevelopment of Nigeria. This assumption is not quite correct. The leadership, no matter how well-intentioned and capable, cannot move the nation forward all by itself. The citizens must pull their weight and the environment (the structures and institutions) must be conducive.
It is however true that leadership can compel the other two to move and that is why it is leading. Citizens can also compel actions as well as Environment when the instructions work regardless of whose interests it work against or favours. The citizens will have to be educated to be useful to themselves and to the society. It is a function of leadership to initiate and implement formal and informal education of citizens and this has not been going on in Nigeria. NGOs have equally come in handy in filling this yawning gap. We have to educate our people to be first and foremost Nigerians, to live and die for Nigeria. In this seeming governmental responsibility, the citizens need to be serious about their own future and demand it from their government through advocacy. Docility and apathy which pervade the entire political landscape will not make way for development. It breeds irresponsible leadership and poverty.

On the environment, here I am referring to structures and institutions of governance; functional, relevant, proper and enduring institutions. Barack Obama in his Ghana speech as President of the United States, alluded to this when he challenged Africans to grow institutions and not big men. Unfortunately, Nigeria is so busy growing big men and kowtowing to them in hero worships.
8. Nigeria in the Eye of The World

The Nigeria project is such a lifelong romance with Blackman’s destiny, if you ask me. Nigeria offers a special hope to the black people and this hope should not be dashed because it is not misplaced. The value of Nigerian nation seems to be better appreciated by the outside world than by her citizens. This is understandable as a prophet is said to be without honour in own home.

But the real reasons Nigerians do not value their country and have full attachment to her are found in the shabby ways and manner their country treats them and handles their welfare. Within the country, the whole essence of government appears to have been eroded and the citizens left on their own and are forced to fend for themselves in practically every aspect of life. Provision of adequate security is the raison d’etre of any government properly so-called. Where insecurity reigns, neither the government nor the governed can be at peace, and without peace, there can never be development. Of course, insecurity is also a serious disincentive to foreign investment.

It appears that Government officials are overloads unto the citizens they are serving. You cannot have an ordinary letter treated without pushing by greasing of palms. Etiquettes and courtesies are scarce commodities in the public service. ‘Oga is in a meeting’ has become a national refrain in the public service so much so one begins to wonder whether these Ogas do not do any other thing except meet all day, and producing no results to justify their “oga-ness”.

LEADERSHIP AND NIGERIA’S DEVELOPMENTAL CHALLENGES
Social amenities are practically nonexistent. Pipe borne water is a rare sight in Nigerian cities and the rural communities still rely on ponds and streams that are often contaminated and shared with animals, as source of drinking water. With the near collapse of the public schools, parents have to bend over their backs to send their children and wards to private schools while public officials whose responsibility it is to fix these schools send their own children abroad for proper education. I wonder why the Senate defeated the bill proposing the prevention of public officials from sending their children overseas for schooling, sponsored in the 7th Senate by Senator Bashir Garba Mohammed Lado from Kano Central.

Nigerians now have to pay for their own security by raising vigilante services and neighborhood watches, provide their own power (Nigeria is believed to be the highest importers of generators the world over).

Outside Nigeria, Nigerians are not faring any better. Many youths are leaving the country in droves in search of greener pastures elsewhere around the world. Many of them travel via Sahara Desert, unsuspecting of the hazards of their perilous journey and only a few make it to Europe while the rest die en-route or end up being trafficked. Nigeria is now a country of origin, transit and destination for trafficked persons, supplying prostitutes and drug peddlers to Europe (especially Italy). These young girls are treated like animals, dehumanized and made to go through hell to survive once trapped out there. Many died as a result and those who managed to survive live in perpetual posttraumatic stress disorders and subhuman conditions.
Nigerians who legally and illegally migrated receive little or no help from Nigerian embassies as most of them are inhumanely treated by their host countries. Travelling out of Nigeria, many Nigerians are subjected to humiliating treatments even in Africa. Recall the incidents of Nigerians being disinfected on entry into South Africa on account of yellow cards and even on some international airlines. You can imagine being sprayed with chemicals because you want to enter another country or board an international flight.

Many countries are hostile to Nigerians, especially in Africa where the nation has committed so much human and material resources in propping up many of the nations. Countries like South Africa, Libya and even our close neighbour Cameroon have not treated Nigerians fairly. South Africa’s case is so pathetic when one considers the champion role Nigeria played in the dismantling of apartheid. Yet, South Africa is where Nigerians have suffered the most xenophobic attacks in Africa.

What the Nigerian citizens have suffered round the globe and in their country has been responsible for lack of patriotism amongst them.

Patriotism is a dual emotive process which prescribes a transactional interaction between citizens and their nation. JF Kennedy as President told Americans not to ask what America can do for them but what they can do for America. This postulation is also true measure while trying to extract commitment from citizens in nation building. But the nation must also be there for her citizens to justifiably expect much from her citizens. This has
not been the case in Nigeria, so nobody should be surprised why Nigerians are not found among most patriotic people in the world.

Africans (and the world) do not want Nigeria to fail – but do nothing to help her succeed for varying reasons. First, Africa is excited at the prospects of Nigeria for being the biggest black nation on earth. This in itself is a source of pride to the average Black and they look forward to the emergence of Nigeria as a black power. They will not support the dismemberment of Nigeria if they can help it. Nigeria also demonstrated maturity when President Goodluck Jonathan played the key role of a master statesman by conceding victory to President Buhari in words that helped to heal a fractured nation.

But the boisterous and hard driving nature of Nigerians and our loquaciousness have also earned us hard knocks amongst our African brothers and have been largely responsible for the antagonisms we face everywhere we go, including the unfortunate xenophobic attacks they have come under, especially in South Africa. Nigerians are seen by Africans as arrogant, aggressive and callous. This perception may not be too far from the very nature and characteristics of the average Nigerian. But it does not justify the inhuman treatment they often receive from their hosts at citizenry level. I see it more as envy against our people generally for being go-getters, and for which I would advise a more humble disposition and learning to make less noise and stopping being arrogant and bullish.

To check the hard times Nigerians go through abroad, like former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Professor Bolaji Akinyemi once noted, Nigeria has to seriously interrogate and review her ‘Big brother’ foreign policy for Africa. I
would rather advocate a more reciprocal approach, a Good Neighbour foreign policy, where friendly and unfriendly African and other nations receive our attention in commensurate measure.

The world has high hopes for Nigeria also, and would want to see the country together. The world is happy with Nigeria for her commitment to world peace and outstanding contributions to peacekeeping missions everywhere since colonial times.

The world is equally worried about the humanitarian crisis that would naturally attend a violent breakup of the Nigerian nation. As a country of over 180 million people, the world knows that any cataclysmic eruption in Nigeria can destabilize the entire West Africa sub region as millions of Nigerians would pour in there and cause upheavals. Europe will also bear a lot of the brunt should that happen.

However, Africa and the world are not too eager to help Nigeria for the simple reason that Nigeria and Nigerians carry on as though we need no help. We live like a rich nation whereas we are not. Income per capita and human development index of Nigeria are among the lowest in the world, so what is the basis for carrying on as a rich nation? As at 2015, GDP per capita of Nigeria was $2,758. As at that time, inflation (CPI) was still 9% (May 2015) with 33% living below absolute poverty line. This is a vast population very likely to go to bed hungry. So, Nigeria is obviously a poor country, even though it is richly endowed.

National security is a concept that a government, along with its parliaments, should protect the state and its citizens against all kinds of "national" crises through a variety of power projections, such as political power, diplomacy, economic power, military might, and so on.

The concept developed in the United States after World War II. Initially focusing on military might, it now encompasses a broad range of facets, all of which impinge on the non-military or economic security of the nation and the values espoused by the national society. Accordingly, in order to possess national security, a nation needs to possess economic security, energy security, environmental security, etc. Security threats involve not only conventional foes such as other nation-states but also non-state actors such as violence, narcotic cartels, multinational corporations, and non-governmental organizations; some authorities include natural disasters and events causing severe environmental damage in this category.

Some Measures taken to ensure national security and hence foster national development include:

- using diplomacy to rally allies and isolate threats
- marshalling economic power to facilitate or compel cooperation
- maintaining effective armed forces
- implementing civil defense and emergency preparedness measures (including anti-terrorism legislation)
- ensuring the resilience and redundancy of critical infrastructure
• using intelligence services to detect and defeat or avoid threats and espionage, and to protect classified information
• using counterintelligence services or secret police to protect the nation from internal threats. Safeguarding the sovereignty, territorial integrity, citizenry and socioeconomic functionality of a nation from an aggressor intent on undermining a particular valued aspect of a nation through violent or unjust means.
• Using intelligence services to douse tensions by giving opportunities to restive populations to air their views in a responsible manner without the use of hate speech. The current DSS has so far excelled in these functions.

From the vast scope of the National security, you wonder if there is anything under this sun the offices of the NSA and DSS are not covering and this could be the reason the trial of the former NSA is not making much headway.

For the offices of NSA and DSS to succeed they have to keep making forays in the area of preventive and preemptive security, as exemplified in inaugurating this annual lecture series of national security and development. This is a most laudable action by the DG, DSS and the Institute.

These bodies should continue to press for peace, for without peace there cannot be development and stability of the country.
10. The Nigeria of our Dream

Permit me to paint a picture of the Nigeria of our dream and to chip in a word too on how it may be made realizable. Population projections by 2050 is grim for Nigeria if the country doesn’t grow and develop really fast. By 2050 (Medium variant), India will have 1.570 billion people, China 1.46 billion, United States 391 million, Pakistan 344 million, Indonesia 327 million, Nigeria 278 million, Bangladesh 265.8 million, Brazil 247 million, Democratic Republic of Congo 195.3 million, Ethiopia 188.5 million, Mexico 164 million

Some UN sources project that Nigeria would become the 3rd largest nation on earth after China and India and overtaking United States and so forth by the same 2050. This projection is also predicting the quadrupling of the challenges that would confront the nation. I predict an astronomical food security challenge which leadership needs to brace up to in order to avoid catastrophic outcomes.

It is not just about a large population of people who would be a liability to the world, constituting a menace at home and abroad, reputed for negativities and avarice. No, not that Nigeria! We have to build a nation of quality citizens through relevant education, attitudinal change and civic reorientation, who are capable of changing the earth positively. We need a nation that will be fully respected amongst the comity of nations, not for its sheer size and potentialities but for its kinetic energy and capacity as a minimum of a global medium power and ranked at par and possibly better than other emerging world powers such as BRIC nations. Nigeria
of our dreams should be able to alter this acronym to BRINC in the foreseeable future. I believe we can.

We need a Nigeria where the citizens are totally positively reoriented, fully patriotic, producing virtually all they need and consuming what the produce, while exporting the balance to earn foreign exchange.

Nigeria of our dream would be the giant of Africa indeed, commanding respect in Africa and the world, not demanding it. Margaret Thatcher, a one-time prime minister of Britain put this point in context when she said: “Being power is like being a lady. If you have to say you are, you aren’t.”

Nigeria of our dream should be such a clime where spirituality will replace religiosity, where there is genuine fear of God and respect for human virtues and values. Human value is low in today’s Nigeria. Violent deaths are everywhere, justifying the ranking of our country among the most unsafe places to live in the world.

Nigeria of our dream should not be utopic but real. It should be a place where citizens are happy and working to eke out a living in honest ways and pursuing their happiness in honour and dignity. It is where basic security is guaranteed, where police is truly a friend and seen as social capital and source of succor by citizens.

Nigeria of our dream should be a nation where tribalism, nepotism, religious bigotry would not determine one’s placement in public office, but where excellence is preferred over primordial tendencies. It should be a nation where true democracy replaces the current Machiavellian
processes in the emergence of leaders, and internal party democracy is seen as an irreducible minimum in the emergence of flagbearers.

Nigeria of our dream should be a country with zero tolerance for corruption and espousing the Mahatma Gandhi’s maxims, especially being conscious always of what he said about seven things that destroy us. Notice that all of them have to do with social and political conditions. Note also that the antidote of each of these "deadly sins" is an explicit external standard or something that is based on natural principles, institutions and laws, not on social values. These destroyers are:

Wealth without Work
Pleasure without Conscience
Knowledge without Character
Commerce (Business) without Morality (Ethics)
Science without Humanity
Religion without Sacrifice
Politics without Principle

Nigeria of our dream shall be the pride of every black man, an example to the world, and the final possibility of the black world.
11. Conclusion

Nigerians have to stand up and claim their country. As we have no other country to call our own, Nigerians need to understand that Nigeria is what we make it. If we truly want a great country, we have to work for it. We have to give the country a fighting chance to succeed. The current attitude towards our country where nobody is managing for sustainable national development must cease for the Nigeria of our dreams to emerge.

Nigerians have to put behind the hangovers and sad feelings about the Nigeria civil war, which have continued to alienate the citizens from one another. It is time to forgive one another, even if we do not forget. Let us work to enthrone a just nation, an egalitarian society for the benefit of all Nigerians and Africans, and the black race.

Nigeria has to step out of the shadows of colonial masters too, and start truly as an independent nation without necessarily severing ties with anybody or nations. For now, Nigeria is a consumer nation, still tied to the apron strings of the western powers. Other countries with similar colonial experience have all moved on. An example is India which gained independence from Britain only thirteen years before Nigeria (1947). Today, India manufactures almost everything while Nigeria imports down to toothpick. Unless a slave matches his master he will remain his favorite slave.

Finally, I reconfirm my unshakable faith in the workability of the Nigeria project. I also want to insist that only true democracy and true federalism will save and ensure her growth and development. While true democracy,
which begins with internal party democracy, will ensure the emergence of genuine, committed leaders who will be true to the country and accountable to the people, fiscal federalism will unleash the full potentials of Nigeria and her beauty in diversity. True federalism will compel Nigerians to return to work, productivity and healthy competition. True federalism will help Nigeria and Nigerians to produce what we need and consume what we produce.

It is good and responsive governance, strategic repositioning of our national priorities, massive efforts to bridge the yawning infrastructural gaps that will give our youths the hope, boldness, and courage to embrace one, indivisible Nigeria as their homeland of pride. Restiveness amongst our youth will continue to gnaw on the fabric of stability, and should be contained wisely through demonstrable good governance. Therefore, in our quest for national stability, there should be no room for unguarded inflammatory and hateful rhetoric that kindle and sustain the unhealthy mutual suspicion amongst the federating units of our country. Anyone who fans the embers of war and disunity is committing an offence against our yet unborn generations and against divine providence.

One very critical, undeniable, and incontestable universal fact which is in favour of our unity, even in diversity, is that the summation of all the outputs of individual units will never ever match the synergized output of the integral whole. This is a universal truism, and no amount of argument can change this truth. In other words, Nigeria, as one country will be geometrically greater than the summative greatness of our different components if we chose to go our separate ways.
Nigeria is variously and extravagantly endowed by God, such that guided and strategic synergy could launch the country into an era of huge and robust economic growth. The various federating units are naturally endowed with a wide range of natural resources that most countries of the world could only dream about. We are better together, stronger together, and more efficient in a guided symbiotic relationship with each other. Nigeria has the critical mass of human resources and potential necessary to launch us into an emancipating industrial revolution. What is lacking is the will to put the requisite socio-political and material infrastructure in place. Once this is done, the eagle will soar, and no entity can stop it. We can conquer our developmental challenges by addressing our triad of leadership challenges proactively.

Above all, let us build a God-fearing nation. The Holy Scriptures tell us that without God we can do nothing and unless He guards a nation, the watchmen watch in vain. Nigeria is a Giant asleep. Even our cote of arms prophetically encoded our divine destiny. The Horse represents boundless energy, hence, horsepower is used to measure capacity. The eagle represents spectacular vision and capacity to soar to incredible heights with an ability to renew itself at old age. So shall it be with Nigeria. We will regenerate the colossal and massive energy that God built into our preponderant human and natural resources. We will solve our problems with divine wisdom waiting to be tapped. We will dismantle all the forces that make us operate sub-optimally. We will renew our strength and mount up with wings as eagles. We will guard our unity by being just,
fair and equitable. We will become a world power and make our Creator God proud that He made us. With God as our Helper we will achieve all this.

Long live the Federal Republic of Nigeria!

Thank you for your kind attention, and may God bless and keep us all and our dear nation, Nigeria.