

The All African Game:
***Rotimising* the Politics of Poverty and the Poverty of Politics in Nigeria**

**The 4th Inaugural Lecture
of the Federal University Lokoja**

By

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Wednesday 30 June 2021

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My Academic Trajectory

In 2018, I wrote to the Vice-Chancellor requesting to present my inaugural lecture, possibly as part of the activities marking the convocation ceremony for that year. Three years after, here we are fulfilling that mission. Whatever must have occasioned the time-lag, as we often say, is part of history. But the same words from the Holy Book God gave me when I completed my Doctorate in 1999 resonated in my mind as I made the final preparations for this lecture. These words are found in the Book of Ecclesiastes 3:11: “He (God) has made everything beautiful in its own time”. So it is with gratitude and praise to the Almighty God who has destined this day to be, and, the current Vice-Chancellor, the Chief Host, who facilitated it that I welcome you all. It is in the name of that same Great God, the Father, The Son and the Holy Spirit that I begin this lecture.

Vice-Chancellor, distinguished ladies and gentleman, my academic journey has been completely a product of grace and the benevolence of the Most High God. It began with my first assignment soon after graduation from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN) in 1984. At the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) office in 1985, I boldly walked up to the Anambra state Coordinator, where I was deployed and demanded that I be posted to a tertiary institution as my place of primary assignment (PPA). By divine providence, he obliged and I found myself as a Corps Lecturer in the Department of Government of the then Anambra State College of Education Awka. There the foundation of my teaching career was laid.

I enrolled for the Master Degree programme in 1986, which I completed in 1988. The major motivation for the sponsorship of this programme was the tale I sold to my late mother that the University of Ilorin had promised to employ me immediately after graduation, as her expectations of my securing a job after the NYSC scheme in 1985 was not forthcoming. With her dwindling financial fortunes occasioned by her sudden illness, I resorted to this fake promise of a job after my postgraduate studies in order to arouse her interest and investment in my new academic pursuit. But how prophetic I was, as the University of Ilorin, with the support of my Department, offered me a job as an Assistant Lecturer few months after completing my Masters programme following an interview on 29 December 1988.

I assumed duties as a young University Lecturer on February 8, 1989 and seven years after (1996), I was Senior Lecturer. From that period began what would alter the course of my academic journey, and this I refer to as the politics of promotion and the promotion of politics to the professorial cadre in the University from 1999 (when I was due) to 2005, when God declared that His ways are not the same as ours, mere mortals. I was on sabbatical at the Delta State University, Abraka, between 2003 and 2004,

when I responded to an advertisement to join the services of the prestigious Covenant University, Ota. There I was offered a Chair of a Full Professor after a rigorous interview and external assessment in 2005 without having to pass through the Readership cadre.

God's faithfulness was with me in that University, where I was saddled with various administrative duties, including Headship of Department, two-term Dean of a College, and Chairmanship of various Statutory Committees. By 11 January, 2011, I was redeployed as the Pioneer Vice-Chancellor of the sister Landmark University in Omuaran, Kwara State. That position was confirmed following a competitive interview in April, same year. Again, God's Hand was upon the assignment, as we moved into the new institution that could only boast of physical facilities. On that journey from Covenant were two young Assistant Lecturers and another fresh graduate of Architecture, all from Covenant to assist in the take-off plans. The Registrar-Designate was a Data Analyst from the Covenant University's Management Information System (MIS) section. But today we can look back with pride and proclaim that indeed God was on our side. Surely, we were not the best team to start a University, coupled with other institutional and human challenges, but with commitment, dedication and sincerity of purpose, we were able to thread where angels dreaded. We recruited staff for all the eleven pioneer programmes, sourced, and using the proprietor's extensive network, got students from across Africa, including Zambia, Kenya, Cape Verde, Malawi and Ghana. Students' records were heartwarming, just as staff research output were tremendous. We embarked on aggressive revenue generation drive for the young University to augment the financial support of the proprietors. The grace was such that by 2014, Landmark University was ranked 5th among Nigerian (and 56 in Africa) Universities in the Webometric ranking.

With the completion of my four-session term in August 2014, soon after the July 2014 maiden convocation, came another moment of decision in my life- whether or not to return to Covenant University. I opted to remain in Landmark to help nurture the Department of Political Science and International Relations as a Professor, doing what I love, teaching my students and raising the younger academics. I was on this assignment till May 2015 when a greater quest for self fulfilment necessitated my sojourn in Federal University Lokoja (FUL); and here we are today.

Since coming on board FUL as a Professor in 2015, we have taught courses across all the undergraduate and postgraduate levels, supervised students' projects, collaborated with the younger staff in researches culminating in publications in high impact factor outlets. They include my works with younger colleagues in the department including Segun Joshua (2015), Ibrahim Yusuf (2017), Abdullahi Muawiya (2018) and Segun Oshewolo (2020), among others.

In areas of community impact, we have handled delicate national assignments as Collation or Presiding Officer with different Nigeria's Electoral Commissions at various elections since 1999. We have also served on different panels and committees established to proffer solutions to nagging national problems. In all these, we have demonstrated the University's core values of integrity and responsibility, coming out of each assignment unscathed.

My Research Focus

Vice-Chancellor, my understanding of an inaugural lecture is that the Professor whose day it is, speaks ex-cathedral. Therefore, I take that liberty to dwell on a topic very dear to my heart in my field of

Comparative Politics, namely the Democratisation Process. I have approached this task metaphorically using the sporting arena as my analytic tool, and coming in my “coat of many colours” by exploiting my trans-disciplinary background in Political Science, History and Business Administration.

As a young Political Science student in UNN, I was fascinated by the idea of what I called Peripheral Capitalism and its impact on Nigeria’s development strategies. This formed the kernel of my final year long essay in the University in 1984. In that work, I interrogated such neo-liberal strategies as technology transfer, foreign aid and direct foreign investment, especially the import-substitution strategy, and their efficacy as pathways to Nigeria’s development. There, we concluded that Nigeria would only be great if leaders with capacity knew and demonstrated the way towards self-reliance. The basis of our conclusion was that the aforementioned strategies were merely perpetuating the culture of dependency and the expropriation of the nation’s resources in an asymmetric and exploitative international capitalist order (Ajayi, 1984). The findings are still relevant today for a nation in search of the appropriate development paradigm.

I developed that branch of Political Economy in my M.Sc. dissertation in 1988 at the University of Ilorin, where I worked on Structural Dependence and its effect on Nigeria’s Non-aligned Foreign Policy. Here, my focus again was on how the near or total lack of self-reliance and the dependence of the country’s political economy on the West constituted a major impediment to its policy of non-alignment in the then bipolar international system. We drew attention to some germane issues of international politics in which Nigeria was unable to come clean as the non-aligned country it professed it was. Rather, in most cases it demonstrated obvious collaboration with the western capitalist countries, on whom it was structurally dependent. Some of such issues were the Anglo-Nigerian Pact under the Tafawa Balewa regime and Nigeria’s reactions to the assassination of Thomas Sankara by his trusted allied, Blaise Compoare among several others (Ajayi, 1988). I emerged the best in that foundational M.Sc Political Science class in 1988.

My interest in Democratic Politics, which later became the subject of my Doctoral thesis at the University of Ilorin followed the annulment of the 1993 Presidential election in Nigeria by the General Ibrahim Babangida administration. In that work, carried out in the Department of History (now History and International Studies) of the University, I undertook a political history of the role of the organized labour in Nigeria’s democratic journey from 1900-1993. In a nutshell, the study was in two parts. First it looked at the process of democratization, and second, it examined the various roles of trade unions at achieving that (Ajayi, 2000).

The impetus to this voyage of discovery occurred that same 1993 when I had the privilege of winning the Fulbright fellowship that took me to the Department of Government, University of Texas at Austin, United States of America (USA). At Austin, through the inspirational guidance and tutelage of the legendary Toyin Falola, Professor of History and African Studies and the Jacob and Frances Sanger Mossiker Chair in Humanities, the Department of History of the University of Texas became my second home, where I turned out to be one of Falola’s disciples. There I saw in clear terms the trend in multi and inter-disciplinary brand of scholarship. Falola’s categorization of “history as past politics and politics as present history” changed completely my mindset, and thus began a new phase in my

academic trajectory, for which I remain unapologetic, especially to those who have refused to see beyond their isolated academic cocoons.

I returned to Nigeria in 1994, and by 1995, I began the Doctorate programme through the efforts of late Professor Ade Obayemi, Drs. S.A. Adebola, Z. Apata and my friend, Yemi Akinwumi, all in the then Department of History, and Dr. E.A. Davies of Political Science, University of Ilorin. I completed the programme in 1999. Evidence of my humble success in that endeavor could be seen in the several publications in reputable national and international outlets from my Doctorate research. These publications traverse such areas as: Labour in the pre-colonial era (Ajayi, 2003); The Role of Labour under Colonial Rule (Ajayi, 2003); Labour's Role in the Struggle for Independence, notably the role of Michael Imoudu, and, the Labour/National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC) Alliance (Ajayi, 2000); Labour in the Post-Independence Era (Ajayi, 1999, 2001); Labour and the Struggles for a Minimum Wage (Ajayi, 2003, 2019); and Labour's Pro-Democracy Mandate (Ajayi, 1995). This as succinctly narrated, is the background to my studentship of the Democratisation School, and my Doctorate from the Department of History, the products I intend to share with you in this lecture.

Vice-Chancellor, in 2007, two years after my Professorial Chair, I delivered the 11th edition of the Covenant University's Public Lecture. In that presentation, I engaged the audience on my thoughts on the Nigerian political space. That lecture, which was well received was captioned "The Soccer Pitch and the Political Arena in Nigeria," and it forms the background of today's inaugural lecture on "The All African Game". I do hope that at the end of the day, I shall have succeeded in *rotimising* some salient aspects of Nigeria's democratic political culture, and, by so doing, advance the discourse on African politics. *Rotimising*, a new addition to political vocabulary, as used in this context, simply connotes Rotimi's reflections on the poverty of African and particularly, Nigerian politics.

Life as a Game

Life itself is a game, with its associated risky curves. Politics is life, and therefore a game. Politics, Aristotle informs us, is all about man in a social relationship, an environment that differentiates him from the gods or beasts in the forest. No wonder the Holy Book classifies the Kingdom of God (which some see as this world), as a violent entity which only the violent can possess.

To be sure, politics is as old as human creation. When the Almighty pronounced in His Majestic splendor the creation of man in His own image, it was a major political masterstroke that underline the centrality of power and authority in social relationship. All other creations from day one to the sixth day when God rested also exemplified the place of vision, purpose and rationality in this game of politics, which every serious political actor must internalize.

When God gave Adam dominion over all of such creations, the politics of who gets what, how and why, and the authoritative allocation of values, which Harold Lasswell and David Easton (1965) respectively spoke about was merely in action. When God further handed down to Adam and Eve the commandments governing the Garden of Eden, the rule of the game of politics, which today we call

the constitution was only being enacted. And, in God's decision to send the two offenders out of the Garden, including other penalties that followed, the same pattern of sanctions that attend the non-adherence to the rules of the game of politics today was just being demonstrated. But God as the greatest political scientist is summarized in the biblical account of Isaiah Chapter 9:6-7 below:

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.

The account of the Gospel of Luke, Chapter one verse 33 also amplifies the above wherein it is stated that, "and He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there shall be no end.

These verses of the Holy Book dwell on the locus of power and authority on one hand, and on the other, the institution of government as a machinery for conducting the affairs of the state, as ordained by God from the beginning of creation. Politics is all about power, authority and influence, the how and why of resource allocation, decision making that are binding. (Ball, 1988). It defines the essence of our living as social interaction that breeds our daily conflicts and their resolution.

The All African Game

The "All African Game" brings to mind the periodic gathering of sports stars across the African continent to showcase their talents and compete for glory. The once thriving fiesta hosted in Rabat Morocco in August 2019, (South Africa in 1999 and 2013, Nigeria in 2003, 2011 by Mozambique, among others) brings fond memories of great athletes in desperate search of global recognition and national pride as they exhibited strong nationalist passion on the field. From the different gatherings have emerged icons in the world of tennis, sprints and soccer, among others. How can we forget the exploits in Marathon of great stars as the Haile Gebrselassies of Ethiopia and Wilson Kipsang Kiprotich of Kenya; or such kings of tracks as David Rudisha of Kenya, Kofi Okyir of Ghana, Olusoji Fasuba of Nigeria and Frank Fredrick of Namibia? Or the outstanding qualities on the tennis courts of the great South Africans- Kevin Anderson, Wayne Ferreira, Donald Mcmillan and Eric Sturgess.

But of all the sporting events, none seems to generate more euphoria in Africa as soccer or football. While it is easy to forget the exploits of the above-mentioned stars, legends like Kanu Nwankwo, JJ Okocha, Samuel Eto'o, Michael Essien, Stephen Keshi, and Didier Drogba, may not be easily forgotten for their impacts on the famous soccer pitch. Take a moment back to every African Cup of Nations, the English Premier Leagues or the World Cup, and the passions these events usually generate on the continent. Consider for a moment the fanfares and high expectations that usually follow Brazil or Spain to the pitch, the emotional attachment of the world to those countries and indeed every great team on the field of play.

Let us pause to contemplate the huge material, financial, human, psychological and physical investments that often precede every soccer tournament; its beauty, glamour, friendship and carnival-

like atmosphere; the joy of a glorious football outing, and the bitterness, weeping and at times bloodshed that accompany a loss. Recall the national anger that usually follow the elimination of Nigeria from major football competitions, and the heroic welcome accorded every victorious team from such tournaments.

We shall always remember the sensational last-minute goal by Sergio Aguero in the 3-2 drubbing of Queens Park Ranger that gave the 2012 premier league title to Manchester City at the expense of their local rival, Manchester United. Same was the photo-finish that climaxed the race for the 2019 edition of the English premiership title between Manchester City and Liverpool, and, the big come back of Liverpool in their 4-0 defeat of Barcelona at Antfield to cancel an earlier 0-3 deficit at the Camp Nou.

How can we forget in a hurry the national pain suffered in 1977 through Godwin Odiye's own goal in the crucial Nigeria-Tunisia match that eventually put paid to Nigeria's qualification for the World Cup; Escobar of Columbia own goal in the USA 1994 World cup that cost him his life upon his return to his country; the national pride that came with the 1996 Olympic victory of Nigeria's Dream Team; or the exploits of the national team in the 2013 African Cup of Nations held in South Africa.

Soccer, no doubt, has become a household name across the globe. It is a game that has defied all linguistic, tribal, ethnic, cultural and religious barriers, and helped to unite the world centrifugal forces. Indeed the "god of soccer", as has been widely acknowledged, has taken over the souls of many nations. No wonder, in Nigeria's governmental circles, especially the management of sports, it is football first and then, other games, whether in terms of financial, administrative or policy commitment to the games. Recall the persistent legal squabbles over the presidency of the Nigerian Football Federation between Ahmadu Pinney and others, which many saw as a fall-out of the scramble for the soul and huge potential in the federation. No wonder, Mike Awoyinfa, the cerebral Nigerian journalist, captured the game of football in this eloquent prose:

God (who) created the world and made everything celestial in the shape of football. Football is a game for the poor and the rich alike. A game for the young and old. A game full of suspense and drama. A game described by the great Pele as the "Beautiful Game". A game so beautiful yet so cruel and heartbreaking. A game from which life's vital lessons are learnt. A game that teaches management, leadership, strategy and team building better than any book. A game that more than anything unites and fuels the spirit of patriotism- the love of the country and its people. A game like no other. A game that many preachers love and even use regularly in their sermons to the delight of the congregation who all resonate easily with football. A game once described as a religion and the opium of the people.

Deducing from Awoyinfa's poetic rendition above, we submit that politics, like football consists of the following characteristics:

- Shapes the world we live it
- A game the rich and poor participate either as a player or spectator
- A phenomenon that defies every form of age barrier
- Manifest in different levels or categories of participation: social, non-social, continuous, episodic, covert or overt (Milbrath 1965:195)

- Characterized by suspense and drama. In Africa, we say, “in politics, it is not over until it is over”
- Can be beautiful and at the same time cruel and heartbreaking, depending on which side of the divide an actor is
- Teaches team spirit, management, leadership, strategy and patriotism.

Therefore, in this presentation, we have anchored our submission not only on these elements of the game of football, but also go further to propose that the context, content and outcome of the political arena, like a typical game field, is determined by five major factors, namely:

- The structure of the game, which encompasses the pitch, the rules of engagement or code of conduct on the field, especially the nature of rewards for each team and the treatment of offenders.
- The game’s superintendent authorities, the umpires or referees as they are called, the same way we have the Federated International Football Associations (FIFA), Union of European Football Associations (UEFA), Confederation of African Football (CAF) or Nigerian Football Federation (NFF).
- The coaching crew and their game plan, talking about leadership, political ideologies or purpose-driven politics, including the place of mentors in politics.
- The quality, conduct of players and their patterns of play.
- The spectators stand or the supporters club.

Building upon and drawing inferences from the above components of the game of soccer, we proceed in the lecture to state that African, and indeed Nigerian Politics is fundamentally rooted in the nature of the following five indices:

- The character of the state (the configuration of the field of play)
- The quality of leadership
- The citizenry or political actors
- The *grundnorm* of politics (the rules governing the game)
- The structure and ideological content of political parties

The Game Called Politics

Politics, from the perspective of John Spanier, is a “Game Nations Play”. Ever since Emil Borel propounded the Game Theory in the 1920s, and further developed by John Von Neumann, the theory has enjoyed wider acceptance by scholars interested in explaining the behavior of the economic man or the rational actor, and more importantly, the task of making “rational decision strategies in situations of conflict and competition, when each participant or player seeks to maximize gains and minimizes losses.” The theory analyses the elements of conflict and cooperation in decision making, using mathematical models to political studies.

In these games, there are two or more players; the decisions of each player “are contingent upon the decisions of others;” and, there is an inter-dependence of whatever decisions are made by the different players participating in the game. This is because it is not possible for any one player to make a choice

without giving considerations to the choices made by the other players. Thus, the task before each player is to ensure that decisions are based on expectations of what action the other players would take at any given time. The import of this is that the game entails elements of consistency and rationality among actors because such actors have partial control over the strategic factors affecting their environment.

The use of game theory in political studies is based on the following assumptions:

- That the game is usually well defined.
- That the game has an explicit set of rules.
- That the information available to the players is specified at every point.
- That the scoring system is complete. (Verma, 1975:342)

Also central to the theory are two vital components, namely, the players and strategies or tactics. The players, also known as decision makers could be individuals or institutions, are assumed to be rational with well-defined objectives, and are endowed with resources to checkmate competing forces. To guide the deployment of these resources are rules. These are the ground norm, the prescription and proscription. An example may be the various laws enacted to regulate the electoral process. The strategies consist of the “overall programme of actions which a player, under adverse or conflict conditions, adopts in order to achieve a desired outcome or series of outcomes.”

The game theory further argues that “each player has a scale of utilities, according to which he prefers some outcomes, so long as he plays the game at all.” The player also has a range of options among different moves he can make, and there are particular expectations of such moves. Even though their knowledge of outcome of their actions are uncertain, the theory further argues that if players must play well, “they must know what they know and what they do not know, and they must know what they can and what they cannot do.” (Deutsch, 1978). However, we must note that the assumption of the theory that a player can strategize in a manner that takes care of all possible contingencies has little application to real life situation.

The outcome of whatever strategy is adopted gives rise to the different forms of game we know. Examples include (a) the zero-sum game, (b) the non-zero-sum game, (c) the zero-sum n-persons games and (d) the non-zero-sum n-person games. In the zero-sum game we have only two players, and the gains of one are always equal to the loss of the other. In b and c, two or more persons are involved, and the players may share the division of the award, and the gain of one need not be equal to the loss of the other. In d, where there are three or more players, it is possible for two or more players to cooperate against the others by pooling resources and making collective decisions during the play. This is the idea behind coalition and realignment in politics or “ganging up” on the front runner in order to stop his chances of winning. (Verna 1975: 345)

No matter its inadequacies, game theory has found relevance in analyzing major issues of national and international politics. It is used for, instance as analytical tool of strategic studies to explain the phenomenon of wars, diplomacy and bargaining, But it is in explaining the dynamics of national politics, especially issues of electoral politics, voters behavior, political alliances and elite conspiracy that this theory has been found useful as we have tried to do in this lecture.

Politics like the game of soccer is about supremacy. Both entail the struggle for the control, use and retention of power even though the nature of such power differs from one context to another. Central to the issue of politics is the element of conflict, which is inevitable where two or three are gathered—whether in the family, peer group associations, religious bodies, especially our churches, educational institutions, business organisations or public service. Hence, the popular saying that politics is about conflict and its resolution. That human interaction cannot always be conciliatory is given. What really matters is how every society establishes acceptable method(s) of regulating conflicting human conduct.

A serious game of soccer is certainly not a tea party. That is why we have the leagues that separate the men from the boys. Again, this is where the age-long view of politics as “the authoritative allocation of value” or “who gets what, how and why” is derived. What this means in essence is that the degree of power or privileges an individual or group is able to control is largely determined by his ability to subdue opposition in the contest for such power. Similarly, the way and manner political conflicts are resolved differentiates one society from another.

A fall out of this is the general notion of politics in many of the advanced nations as highly developed, well organized with highly differentiated institutional structures and procedures. Here, the institutions to regulate conflicts are not only in place, they are empowered to perform this role and their decisions are legitimate to the extent that they are generally accepted by the people. This is in contrast with the picture of many developing countries, where the structures and institutions of government are underdeveloped, dysfunctional and in some cases comatose. Consequently, these institutions fail to inspire the confidence and loyalty of citizens, who are compelled to seek extra-legal means of seeking redress. In such climes, politics is seen mostly from a pejorative perspective, to mean everything distasteful and ignominious about the society.

Also, in the same manner of soccer, politics is a dynamic phenomenon. Both are not ends in themselves, but means to particular end. Politics connotes a process whose end or purpose is the good of society. Therefore, like football, the game of politics is to be celebrated and enjoyed, and to achieve this, politics like every other game, is governed by set rules and regulations. Laws are put in place to guide the conduct of men on the field. The laws are known and acceptable to all parties in a contest. Along with these regulations are established patterns of reward and punishment for players.

However, unlike other sporting activities, politics is a tournament that must always produce a winner, especially in a final competition, no matter how slim the margin of victory. Hence, in politics, we often say that even one vote counts. Where a winner does not emerge, the organisers of the game must schedule another contest. This has a biblical validation in the Holy Book, which explains the significance of the race of life in this way “Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run that ye may obtain.” (1 Corinthians 9: 24). Therefore, like the final game in any soccer event, political contests are inconclusive until a winner emerges, and in Nigeria, it is simply a zero sum game where victory for one is a loss to another.

Similarly, like every other game, politics has its umpires. The referees in every political contest are expected to be impartial, owing no allegiance to any of the players. Also, the field of play must not only be level and green (like every modern stadium); it must be seen to be so. The goal posts are well known and they are not shifted in the middle of a game. In other words, strict adherence to established norm of every game becomes a precondition for the legitimacy of the outcome of any contest.

In addition, soccer has grown from the amateurish form to its current professional status embedded with all the skills, commitment, organizational prowess and financial strength required to host a successful competition. The job of coaching a modern team, for instance, relies more on the packages that information technology has to offer. Thus, it is becoming increasingly clear that the game of politics is more of a serious business that cannot be left in the hands of amateurish political class. The alternative may not necessarily be the ideal Plato's "Philosopher King." However, the realities of the ever increasingly complex globalized world, especially the myriad of domestic and international social, economic, security and political issues and challenges world leaders have to contend with today, indicate that to be a successful political leader requires more than a basic education or an ability to read and write. But what exactly is the state of this game of soccer called politics in Africa, and Nigeria in particular? The next section addresses this puzzle.

The Politics of Poverty: Africa at the Beautiful Gate

African politics is essentially not without its contradictions. The predicament of the continent can be likened to the biblical account of the lame man by the gate called 'Beautiful' in Chapter three of the Book of the Acts of the Apostles, simply referred to as Acts in the Holy Bible. The story is that of a man residing in a place called Beautiful but who "all his life had never been able to walk, and he was very poor, his friends carried him every day to this place, and there he sat, hoping that some of those who went into the temple might take pity on him and give him a little money" (Verses 2-11). The striking analogy here is that for Africa, despite its huge and generous endowment of natural, human and material resources- oil, gold, bauxite, iron ore, food crops of all kinds- the beautiful continent has remained at the lowest rung in all indices of development, waiting for benevolent aid givers, like the man at the beautiful gate, to liberate it from the pangs of underdevelopment. Africa has been one huge edifice of splendor and beauty surrounded by hunger, frustration and general helplessness of the people. The huge deposits of some of the best natural resources like gold, oil, copper, zinc, uranium, is yet to translate into improved standard of living for the people.

Michael Parenti (2020), the foremost American Political Scientist, has consistently argued that there are no poor countries but poor people. Nonyerem (2020) also drew our attention to Africa's social and economic significance in relations to other continents of the world. For instance, as Nonyerem noted, Africa's total area space is larger than the combined land spaces of Europe, China and the United States of America. Africa, he further noted, occupies 60 percent of world Arable land, has 90 percent of Raw Material Reserve, 40 percent of Gold Reserve, 33 percent Diamond Reserve and 95 percent Platinum Reserve.

Nigeria is the fifth largest supplier of crude oil imports to the United States, making it of "direct strategic importance to the US government" (Piombo, 2003). Oil accounts for about 20 percent of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), 95 percent of her foreign exchange earnings, and close to 80 percent of government revenues. In addition, there are 65 sites in Nigeria where gold has been located, apart from the huge reserves of tin and iron ore that have been left unexploited. Even though the agricultural sector has long been neglected, Nigeria is equally blessed with vast fertile, arable land for the cultivation of diverse cash and food crops, with the sector accounting for about 33 percent of

GDP. All these are indications that in terms of potential powers, Nigeria seems to have more than its fair share of world resources especially when compared with smaller economies of the world.

A cursory look at typical statutory allocations to the three tiers of government in Nigeria reveal the following staggering amount shared by the Federation Allocation Committee (FAC) amongst the three tiers of government, but with no meaningful impact on the lives of the citizens.

Yearly Revenue Shared by Federation Allocation Committee (2005-2020) in United States Dollars

S/n	Year	Revenue
1	2005	24.63b
2	2006	30.45b
3	2007	33.66b
4	2008	50.71b
5	2009	33.91b
6	2010	44.87b
7	2011	73.46b
8	2012	68.79b
9	2013	61.93b
10	2014	54.09b
11	2015	31.1b
12	2016	20.2b
13	2017	20.43b
14	2018	17.85b
15	2019	26.59b
16	2020	20.53b

Also, the Table below shows the distribution of the revenue among the federal, state and local governments for a particular month, July 2019.

**Distribution of Revenue Allocation to State Governments by Federation Account Allocation Committee for the month of May, 2019
shared in July, 2019**

S/ no	Beneficia ries	Nos of LG As	Gross Statutory Allocation	Gross Total	Net Statutory Allocation	Gross VAT Allocation	Net VAT Allocation	Total Gross Amount	Total Net Amount
1.	Abia State	17	N3,001,625,75 5.95	N3,608,442,58 7.38	N3,136,420,25 7.93	N953,277,203 .10	N953,277,203 .10	N4,567,639,00 6.63	N4,095,616,67 7.18
2.	Adamawa State	21	N3,193,213,62 5.61	N3,193,213,62 5.61	N2,712,648,10 5.15	N982,114,146 .44	N982,114,146 .44	N4,180,238,42 0.57	N3,699,672,90 0.11
3.	Akwa Ibom State	31	N3,222,887,90 8.88	N14,004,951,9 35.85	N12,937,829,5 19.58	N1,094,764,6 88.21	N12,937,829, 519.58	N15,127,618,0 87.57	N14,060,495,6 71.30
4.	Anambra State	21	N3,187,231,51 5.81	N3,187,231,51 5.81	N3,042,352,39 4.38	N1,098,400,5 12.81	N1,098,400,5 12.81	N4,290,533,47 7.62	N4,145,654,35 6.19
5.	Bauchi State	20	N4,145,654,35 6.190	N3,834,346,29 8.30	N2,757,483,65 5.97	N1,130,304,1 77.02	N1,130,304,1 77.02	N4,970,547,08 2.69	N3,893,684,44 0.36
6.	Bayelsa State	8	N2,836,326,41 5.89	N11,070,569,4 63.07	N9,523,798,05 2.94	N846,905,906 .78	N846,905,906 .78	N11,938,925,6 18.06	N10,392,154,2 07.93
7.	Benue State	23	N3,594,947,52 2.27	N3,594,947,52 2.27	N3,042,150,65 9.09	N1,080,569,7 91.15	N1,080,569,7 91.15	N4,681,045,76 4.00	N4,128,248,90 0.82
8.	Borno State	27	N3,982,686,64 8.31	N3,982,686,64 8.31	N3,641,113,55 5.26	N1,066,256,6 23.99	N1,066,256,6 23.99	N5,055,068,00 3.24	N4,713,494,91 0.19

9.	Cross River State	18	N3,223,437,54 4.59	N3,223,437,54 4.59	N1,771,110,23 6.82	N945,585,227 .62	N945,585,227 .62	N4,173,979,90 0.25	N2,721,652,59 2.48
10.	Delta State	25	N3,254,772,48 2.41	N18,251,856,1 57.83	N17,080,694,8 25.78	N1,154,220,4 81.54	N1,154,220,4 81.54	N19,442,975,6 57.66	N18,271,814,3 25.61
11.	Ebonyi State	13	N2,867,818,37 4.76	N2,867,818,37 4.76	N2,623,783,98 4.61	N884,143,020 .58	N884,143,020 .58	N3,756,371,63 8.35	N3,512,337,24 8.19
12.	Edo State	18	N2,997,329,82 5.19	N4,609,976,99 4.38	N4,004,559,04 9.16	N1,089,506,5 12.24	N1,089,506,5 12.24	N5,707,419,04 3.64	N5,102,001,09 8.42
13.	Ekiti State	16	N2,866,200,08 1.57	N2,866,200,08 1.57	N2,201,309,57 3.14	N915,460,865 .53	N915,460,865 .53	N3,786,068,70 1.43	N3,121,178,19 3.00
14.	Enugu State	17	N3,223,715,74 9.01	N3,223,715,74 9.01	N2,943,264,84 7.64	N1,020,022,0 26.38	N1,020,022,0 26.38	N4,248,695,33 1.26	N3,968,244,42 9.89
15.	Gombe	11	N3,019,363,84 6.36	N3,019,363,84 6.36	N2,207,076,87 9.17	N892,968,591 .09	N892,968,591 .09	N3,916,975,73 2.99	N3,104,688,76 5.80
16.	Imo State	27	N3,332,847,45 9.98	N4,102,056,98 9.68	N3,159,268,20 6.21	N1,166,689,7 53.95	N3,159,268,2 06.21	N5,275,507,55 4.57	N4,332,718,77 1.10
17.	Jigawa State	27	N3,584,786,61 2.17	N3,584,786,61 2.17	N3,394,447,84 3.81	N1,117,623,9 61.58	N1,117,623,9 61.58	N4,707,923,39 8.50	N4,517,584,63 0.14
18.	Kaduna State	23	N4,199,994,46 4.27	N4,199,994,46 4.27	N3,780,648,80 3.13	N1,323,201,8 37.45	N1,323,201,8 37.45	N5,529,655,21 7.10	N5,110,309,55 5.96
16.	Imo State	27	N3,332,847,45 9.98	N4,102,056,98 9.68	N3,159,268,20 6.21	N1,166,689,7 53.95	N3,159,268,2 06.21	N5,275,507,55 4.57	N4,332,718,77 1.10

17	Jigawa State	27	N3,584,786,61 2.17	N3,584,786,61 2.17	N3,394,447,84 3.81	N1,117,623,9 61.58	N1,117,623,9 61.58	N4,707,923,39 8.50	N4,517,584,63 0.14
18	Kaduna State	23	N4,199,994,46 4.27	N4,199,994,46 4.27	N3,780,648,80 3.13	N1,323,201,8 37.45	N1,323,201,8 37.45	N5,529,655,21 7.10	N5,110,309,55 5.96
19	Kano State	44	N5,084,560,88 3.87	N5,084,560,88 3.87	N4,598,694,25 6.42	N1,742,546,5 08.00	N1,742,546,5 08.00	N6,834,926,62 8.02	N6,349,060,00 0.57
20	Katsina State	34	N3,940,389,97 8.64	N3,940,389,97 8.64	N3,620,926,39 9.49	N1,230,466,6 59.99	N1,230,466,6 59.99	N5,176,916,32 4.10	N4,857,452,74 4.95
21	Kebbi State	21	N3,384,814,65 0.45	N3,384,814,65 0.45	N3,081,609,73 3.38	N988,999,059 .67	N988,999,059 .67	N4,379,019,01 0.17	N4,075,814,09 3.10
22	Kogi State	21	N3,542,879,09 5.96	N3,542,879,09 5.96	N2,957,363,28 4.29	N977,259,403 .01	N977,259,403 .01	N4,525,586,87 6.69	N3,940,071,06 5.02
23	Kwara State	16	N2,853,421,45 3.90	N2,853,421,45 3.90	N2,356,943,48 2.05	N888,047,412 .12	N888,047,412 .12	N3,745,856,96 8.88	N3,249,378,99 7.03
24	Lagos State	20	N4,294,241,51 6.74	N4,294,241,51 6.74	N1,367,376,54 9.54	N8,963,733,9 05.76	N7,963,733,9 05.76	N13,264,579,2 74.67	N9,337,714,30 7.47
25	Nasarawa State	13	N2,956,150,75 7.55	N2,956,150,75 7.55	N2,574,406,36 5.83	N838,925,319 .75	N838,925,319 .75	N3,799,622,16 1.29	N3,417,877,76 9.57
26	Niger State	25	N3,797,044,02 8.36	N3,797,044,02 8.36	N3,200,254,60 9.03	N1,089,431,1 13.33	N1,089,431,1 13.33	N4,892,314,38 4.17	N4,295,524,96 4.84
27	Ogun State	20	N2,978,106,09 4.44	N2,978,106,09 4.44	N1,768,789,10 2.41	N1,107,262,5 86.06	N1,107,262,5 86.06	N4,089,948,52 8.26	N2,880,631,53 6.23

28	Ondo State	18	N2,984,006,05 6.14	N4,081,037,67 8.78	N3,403,354,51 6.32	N1,002,180,1 89.06	N1,002,180,1 89.0	N5,090,146,93 9.41	N4,412,463,77 6.95
29	Osun State	30	N2,923,511,49 0.20	N2,923,511,49 0.20	N505,432,012. 14	N997,059,629 .77	N997,059,629 .77	N3,925,067,01 0.02	N1,506,987,53 1.96
30	Oyo State	33	N3,595,344,72 1.16	N3,595,344,72 1.16	N2,910,429,23 0.95	N1,534,831,0 67.10	N1,534,831,0 67.10	N5,135,704,84 9.67	N4,450,789,35 9.46
31	Plateau State	17	N3,347,384,41 5.98	N3,347,384,41 5.98	N2,404,121,92 0.97	N978,177,963 .19	N978,177,963 .19	N4,330,710,11 7.56	N3,387,447,62 2.55
32	Rivers	23	N3,457,056,03 2.32	N11,613,892,7 65.36	N10,812,965,8 25.34	N1,403,007,9 26.16	N1,403,007,9 26.16	N13,039,188,8 25.31	N12,238,261,8 85.29
33	Sokoto State	23	N3,532,797,42 4.08	N3,532,797,42 4.08	N3,221,082,79 8.76	N1,029,390,7 32.18	N1,029,390,7 32.18	N4,567,621,03 0.00	N4,255,906,40 4.68
34	Taraba State	16	N3,087,812,55 2.16	N3,087,812,55 2.16	N2,670,345,75 4.44	N886,751,754 .12	N886,751,754 .12	N3,979,312,86 4.9	N3,561,846,06 7.21
35	Yobe State	17	N3,183,138,36 0.36	N3,183,138,36 0.36	N3,061,222,71 9.85	N914,341,421 .27	N914,341,421 .27	N4,102,374,93 6.00	N3,980,459,29 5.49
36	Zamfara	14	N3,189,917,51 5.61	N3,189,917,51 5.61	N2,156,275,92 1.13	N978,663,964 .72	N978,663,964 .72	N4,173,487,05 9.95	N3,139,845,46 5.47
37	Abuja FCT	6	N851,501,003. 27	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Total		N122,718,918, 220.41	N167,812,041, 794.82	N140,631,554, 932.11	N46,313,091, 942.72	N59,148,735, 226.29	N216,801,342, 804.04	N186,229,084, 562.51

When these economic and political potentials are added to its demographic strength, particularly a population close to 200 million, Nigeria certainly qualifies as a giant in Africa. We are told that one out of four Africans is a Nigerian, and the country has remained a pillar at the sub regional level, with high visibility in the politics of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). But it is equally true that these resources have not translated to a stable political and economic system. So, what obtains is a paradox of political savagery in the midst of potential and economic abundance. For instance, in spite of oil wealth, unemployment has not only remained an albatross, with an estimated 80 million Nigerians unemployed, sixty years after political independence, the structures and institutions of government are still at a very low stage of development.

The United Nations Report of April 2019 put the current population of the world at 7.7 billion with Nigeria accounting for over 200 million, representing 2.6 percent. The same Report also situate the world population projection at 9.7 billion by 2050. By that same year, Nigeria's population is projected at 400 million. Also, since 2010, it was found out that Nigeria's population has continued to grow steadily at 2.6 percent yearly, which unfortunately does not correlate with national development and poverty index. As Nigeria's population grows, it was discovered that more than half of the population get poorer. While 60.9 percent Nigerians were in absolute poverty in 2010, the figure fluctuated between 43 and 50 percent in 2018. (sunrisedaily, Channelstv.com, 15 July 2019).

Talking about poverty rate, the Statistician General of the Federation and Chief Executive of the National Bureau of Statistics, Dr. Yemi Kale, at the 2019 Annual Public Lecture of the Department of Economics, University of Lagos stated that the Nigeria's poverty rate had risen to 62.6 percent, and attributed this to the rising income inequality in the country where the top 30 percent of income earners accounted for 58 percent of consumption in 2016 compared to 55 percent in 2004. But more instructive, according to him, is the inability of the country to achieve growth that is all-inclusive and job creating, leading to unemployment and the myriads of anti-social and deviant behaviours, kidnapping, robbery, killings, advance fee fraud, banditry and other forms of conflict across the land.

In June 2018, as a country we woke up to a new vocabulary in our political dictionary, "the poverty capital of the world", when the Brookings Institution projected that Nigeria had indeed taken over that title from India, with the former's 86.9 million extremely poor people. That same year, Theresa May, the Prime Minister of Britain also opined that Nigeria was "home to the largest number of poor people in the world". Statistics indeed showed that "91 million Nigerians now live at extreme poverty", with three million slipping into extreme poverty between November 2018 and February 2019". The implication of this is that this category of Nigerians now live "below the poverty line of \$1.90 or N693.5 per day" (see World Poverty Check). By year 2020, Nigeria had become "the most corrupt West African country" on Transparency International's 2020 Corruption Perception Index". In Sub-Saharan Africa, it ranked 13 of 49 countries assessed (Okogba, 2021).

Late April 2021, the Chandler Good Government Index (CGGI), which rank countries according to "government capabilities and outcomes", placed "Nigeria as the third worst on earth, ahead only of Zimbabwe and Venezuela" (Olumhense, 2021). 104 countries were captured and Nigeria came out in the 102nd position. Africa's best representative on that list was Mauritius, which emerged in the 38th position. For the ranking, data were collated from numerous sources, including the World Bank, United Nations and World Trade Organisation. The parameters included the following: Financial Stewardship; global influence and reputation; attractive marketplace; strong institutions; robust laws and policies, leadership and foresight; and helping people to rise (Ibeh, 2021).

Oil proceeds, far from being the catalyst for rapid socio-economic development of the country, has remained a curse. The scenario in states where the natural resource is produced appear to be worse in spite of their huge revenue base especially from the derivation principle. These oil-bearing states typify the bundle of contradictions the Nigerian state has become.

For instance, it is on record that a total of N6.589 trillion accrued to eight oil-producing states under the 13 percent derivation principle enshrined in the sharing formula for federal revenues between 2009 and 2019. Within that period, the proceeds of oil accruable to these states were as follow:

Proceeds of 13 Percent Derivation Principle to Oil Producing States in Nigeria

Abia	N55.87 billion
Akwa Ibom	N1.33 trillion
Bayelsa	N1.388 trillion
Delta	N1.16 trillion
Edo	N118.85 billion
Imo	N1.28 trillion
Ondo	N189.277 billion
Rivers	N1.057 trillion

In spite of their huge revenue base, Rivers, Imo, Akwa Ibom and Delta rank among the states with most unemployed people as shown in the figures below.

Most Unemployed People by States in Nigeria

1. Rivers:	1.7m
2. Kano	1.4m
3. Kaduna	1.3m
4. Lagos	1.3m
5. Imo	1.2m
6. Akwa Ibom	1.1m
7. Delta	1m

They are followed by:

8. Niger	708k
9. Kogi	677k
10. Katsina	651k

(Source: LFS Q2 2020).

Similarly, the LFS Q2 2020 Report further listed the following states with the highest unemployment rate in Nigeria.

UNEMPLOYMENT RATE BY STATES IN NIGERIA 2020

1	Imo	48.69
2.	Akwa Ibom	45
3	Rivers	43.71
4	Delta	40.32
5	Kaduna	39.84

6	Taraba	39.41
7	Kogi	36.04
8	Abia	35.55
9	Plateau	35.21
10.	Niger	33.80

Also the ten states with the highest number of poor people are as listed below:

States with the Highest Number of Poor People in Nigeria

1	Sokoto	87.73
2	Taraba	87.72
3	Jigawa	87.02
4	Ebonyi	79.76
5	Adamawa	75.41
6	Zamfara	73.98
7	Yobe	72.34
8	Niger	66.11
9	Gombe	62.31
10	Bauchi	61.53

Politically, as a nation, we keep on echoing the worn-out tune of nascent democracy after six decades of political independence. While the country grows in age, its political structures, processes and institutions have remained at the level of toddlers, and at best, in the words of Kayode Fayemi, engaged in “democratising poverty”. An adult that crawls for six decades cannot but suffer some deformity and that is what seems to be the pathetic state of the nation as we look back to sixty post-independence years of wasted opportunities and dashed hopes.

It is most pathetic, to say the least, that one hundred and fifty seven years after the British formally established their political suzerainty over the area now known as Nigeria with the 1861 annexation of Lagos, and more than a century of the amalgamation of the Northern and Southern protectorates, we still measure the successes of our political leaders by such mundane parameters as number of roads, schools or hospitals built; or the number of citizens ‘empowered’, a much abused terminology in Nigeria. We rarely empower our people by creating the environment that would facilitate their escape from the poverty cycle; rather we provide palliatives that keep romancing their abject penury (motor bikes they can hardly maintain, grinding machines that soon become obsolete, fabrics that fade rapidly in response to harsh weather condition, foodstuff that barely feed a family of four, and monetary inducements that hardly address any fundamental need.

The citizens too, out of deprivation, celebrate every mundane hand-out from their oppressors or so-called leaders, including innocuous political appointments (Special Assistants, Personal Assistants etcetera) most of which are without clearly defined mandate, responsibility or office.

Poverty erodes a person's dignity, and the political leaders in Nigeria perfectly understand this logic by exploiting it to their maximum advantage. Else, how do we explain the purchase of votes and voter's card for a paltry two thousand Naira, or inducing voters with mundane items like wheel barrows, onions, salt, pepper and other household items earlier mentioned? Definitely, the reason couldn't have been anything other than a debilitating poverty.

Tales from Africa and the African Condition:

Life Expectancy

As it is with Nigeria's socio-economic conditions, so it is with most other African countries. For example, see below the data published in 2016 on health-adjusted life expectancy, showing some African countries by average life expectancy according to the World Health Organization.

Life expectancy at birth (years), UN World Population Prospects 2015

State/Territory	Overall	Male	Female
Tunisia	74.60	72.30	77.04
Algeria	74.42	72.14	76.84
Mauritius	74.15	70.67	77.74
Morocco	73.61	72.60	74.62
Cape Verde	72.97	71.05	74.65
Seychelles	72.94	68.69	77.91
Libya	71.47	68.79	74.41
Egypt	70.84	68.71	73.05
Western Sahara	67.61	65.89	69.81
Senegal	65.81	63.86	67.61
Madagascar	64.50	63.02	66.00
Namibia	64.34	61.58	66.95
Botswana	64.12	61.80	66.51
Tanzania	64.04	62.55	65.55

Gabon	63.65	63.15	64.07
Rwanda	63.14	59.65	66.30
Ethiopia	63.13	61.30	65.02
Sudan	63.08	61.60	64.60
Eritrea	63.07	60.90	65.18
Mauritania	62.77	61.29	64.25
Djibouti	61.61	60.04	63.24
Congo	61.42	59.95	62.92
Ghana	61.03	60.06	61.97
Malawi	60.97	59.86	61.98
Niger	60.65	59.85	61.55
Kenya	60.62	59.08	62.17
Liberia	60.25	59.29	61.21
Gambia	59.83	58.54	61.21
Benin	59.20	57.77	60.61
Togo	59.01	58.28	59.68
Zambia	58.75	57.16	60.33
Democratic Republic of the Congo	58.10	56.67	59.53
Burkina Faso	58.07	56.73	59.33
Guinea	58.04	57.58	58.49
Uganda	57.25	55.67	58.83
Mali	57.23	57.44	56.98
Equatorial Guinea	57.13	55.87	58.57
South Africa	57.11	54.85	59.11
Burundi	56.07	54.18	58.04

South Sudan	55.06	54.10	56.03
Somalia	54.88	53.28	56.51
Cameroon	54.87	53.74	56.02
Zimbabwe	54.78	53.60	55.95
Guinea Bissau	54.72	53.00	56.50
Mozambique	54.63	52.94	56.18
Nigeria	52.29	51.97	52.61
Angola	51.68	50.20	53.17
Chad	51.13	50.08	52.18
Côte d'Ivoire	50.97	50.21	51.85
Sierra Leone	50.19	49.65	50.74
Central African Republic	49.53	47.83	51.25
Lesotho	49.50	49.19	49.59
Swaziland	49.18	49.69	48.54

Unemployment Rate

The figures above become less surprising when juxtaposed with the unemployment rate in some of these countries as shown in the World Bank Report. See table below.

Countries by Unemployment Rate

Name of Countries	Unemployment rate (%)
Algeria	11.2
Botswana	20.0

Cameroon	4.4
Central African Republic	6.9
Chad	22.6
Djibouti	40.0

Egypt	11.3
Equatorial Guinea	8.6
Gabon	28.0
Ghana	11.9
Kenya	42.0

Lesotho	28.1
Libya	13.0
Mali	8.1
Mauritania	11.7
Mauritius	6.9
Morocco	10.7
Mozambique	24.5
Namibia	34.0

Nigeria	18.8
Rwanda	13.2
Senegal	48.0 (30.0 among adults aged 24 and under)
Sierra Leone	8.6
South Africa	27.2
Sudan	19.6
Tunisia	15.9
Zambia	15.0
Zimbabwe	11.3

If indeed development is measured by the prevalence and access to these aforementioned major determinants of standard of living, then it is safe to conclude that Africa definitely has a longer way to go in the comity of nations. Let us look at more.

Water

The Africa Water Vision for 2025 pointed out that in Africa, there is a gross inadequacy of access to basic water supply and sanitation services, with about 65 percent of the rural populace having no access to adequate water supply. About 73 percent of same population are also without access to adequate sanitation. The picture in the urban areas is not different, where 25 percent and 43 percent do not have access to adequate water and sanitation respectively. It is not surprising therefore that water-borne diseases are prevalent in the continent, with 40 countries afflicted by schistosomiasis, cholera and infant diarrhea. The major tragedy is not the availability of water resources but the lack of financial and technological means to access these resources. (ECA, 2019)

Education

Similarly, in the area of education, statistics reveal that in 2018, there were 258.4 million out of school children, adolescents and youth with Africa accounting for the highest; 2 million (54 percent) of the 59 million out of school children came from Sub-Saharan Africa. For adolescent, it is 37 percent, and 58 percent for youth. Also, a study by UNESCO on school resources and learning environment reveal the state of decayed infrastructure, low quality of teaching, unimaginable class size and dearth of learning materials across educational systems in Africa. The study further reveals that in Malawi, The Central Africa Republic (CAR) and Tanzania, average class size is more than 70 pupils per class; 50 students per class in primary schools in a third of the countries with data, and 40 pupils or more per class in the vast majority of single grade classes. Also in Cameroun, 14 students share the same textbooks, 5 in Chad and South Sudan and 4 in Equatorial Guinea. In the midst of this sordid state is the quagmire of high rate of attrition of teachers across all levels of education in Africa, notably in Nigeria, Benin, Congo and Ghana. (UNESCO, 2019)

Health

In the area of health, it is on record that Africa, with “11 percent of the world’s population accounts for 24 percent of the global disease burden” (IFC, 2005). Half of the death of children under five in the world are from Africa, just as 60 percent of the world population infected with HIV, and, more than 90 percent of the 300-500 million cases of malaria in the world are in Africa. Other killer diseases include pneumonia, diarrhea, measles and tuberculosis. Similarly, the continent accounts for 19 of the 20 countries with the highest maternal mortality ratios in the world as basic health facilities are not only lacking in a continent that can only boast of less than 1 percent of the global health expenditure and 3 percent of the world’s health workers. Little wonder therefore that in several countries of Africa, traditional and faith-based miracle healing methods have taken over the role of the state in the health sector as non-communicable diseases including hypertension, diabetes and heart diseases are on rampage across the continent. The Coronavirus pandemic ravaging the world has further exposed the parlous state of the health sector in many of these states.

Teenage Pregnancy

In the same vein, teenage pregnancy in Africa represents one of the highest in the world, and this ugly phenomenon cannot be divorced from issues of low-level education, poor socio economic condition, urbanization, among several others. (Opeyemi and Bellingham-Young,

2019). The Convention on the Right of the Child to which many Sub-Saharan Africans are signatories is only observed in the breach, given the pathetic state of the girl-child in particular, whose access to basic education is hampered by physical and sexual abuse. (Human Rights Watch, 1999, 2001). Today, Africa is considered as the epicenter of rights violation in education. By 2002, the out of school children of primary school age in Africa was put at 53 million, which was about 25 percent of those in that age bracket. The situation grew from bad to worse such that the 2015 date set by the international community for universal primary education was a mirage for Africa because by that date, Africa accounted for 75 percent of the world's out of school children. Also, and more pathetic, of these African children that made it to the primary school, only 50 percent complete the cycle, and those that do receive poor quality education where little or no learning takes place (World Bank, 2000). In Zambia, for instance, about 75 percent of its primary school leavers are classified as functionally illiterate (Kelly, 1998).

Inter-Group Relations

In the area of inter-group relations, Africa has equally not fared better. From Nigeria to Sierra Leone, Liberia to Rwanda and Kenya to Sudan, Congo to Somalia, among others, we have witnessed the collapse of the institutions and structures for regulating societal conflicts, with its attendant bloodshed, population displacement, mutual distrust and loss of lives and property. How can we forget in a hurry, among others, the bestiality of Field Marshall Idi Amin of Uganda and other military and civilian tyrants against their own people, the Rwanda genocide of the 1990s, the 30-month Nigerian civil war (1967-1970), numerous bloody religious and ethnic uprisings, or the latest Boko Haram insurgency in the country, the Liberian imbroglio, the Al-Shabaab menace in Somalia and its frequent attacks in Kenya, the Sierra Leone and Sudanese civil wars, and reports that Sudan harbors elements of the most violent terrorist organisations in the world, Al Qaeda?

Religion, Prophets and the Politics of Prophecies

If there is one area the gullibility of Africans and particularly Nigerians have been so abused, it is in the area of religion. In other climes, science is used to advance the spread of religion, but in Africa, religion is deployed to limit or stifle the growth of science. Today we are witnessing what I prefer to call the new wave of 'reverse Christian evangelism', where Africa is importing a new brand of Christianity, especially the Pentecostal bent, to the same Europe and America that first brought the religion to our shores.

While science has helped in conquering fears imposed by fake religious doctrines in the developed world, in Africa, the emphasis on witches, wizards and generational curses have slowed down the advancement of science, as the people have suddenly turned to miracle seekers, hopping from one denominational gathering to another.

In the 1970s and 80s, the major emphasis of religious gatherings in Nigeria was on righteousness as a ticket to the kingdom of God. Today, failed governmental policies in vital sectors of education, health and other basic infrastructure has given a new coloration to religious bodies as social security networks and providers of these basic necessities of life.

The implication of this is that in an attempt to catch up with others in their fold, today's Prophets are in fierce competition with one another to establish the best schools, universities, the state-of-the-art hospitals and grandiose housing projects that are mostly superficial and unaffordable

by a vast majority of the people. Spirituality is not only taking the back seat; materialism has become the dominant ideology of most of these religious houses.

Similarly, we are witnessing what has been eloquently captured as the “trinity of religion, ethnicity and politics” in Nigeria where churches, mosques and shrines are fast becoming religious wings of political parties depending on the personal idiosyncrasies of the spiritual leaders. In driving this ideology, some of these so-called spiritual leaders have turned their pulpits and shrines to Election Monitoring offices where outcomes of electoral contests are easily predicted. Unfortunately, many of those prophecies never came to pass. Was God lying? Definitely No. See the Book of Hebrews Chapter 6 verse 18: “*That by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie...*” So, what happened? Man’s contraptions as the voice of God, which the Bible warns us clearly in Deuteronomy 18:22, “*When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, if the thing which the LORD hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him*”. Let us take a few examples.

In the build-up to the 1983 general elections, Nigerians were woken from their sleep by a prophecy from a certain metaphysician, Godspower Oyewole, who affirmed that the name of the winner of that year’s presidential election was revealed to him in the Holy Bible. Expectedly, all eyes were turned to both Nnamdi Azikwe of the Nigeria’s Peoples Party (NPP) who also went by the name, Benjamin, and Obafemi Awolowo of the Unity Party of Nigeria, also known as Jeremiah. But that was not to be as Alhaji Shehu Shagari of the National Party of Nigeria (NPN), was re-elected for a second term. The prophet’s rationalization was that the name, Shagari was the same Shamgar the Bible referred to in the Book of Judges Chapter 3 verse 31. But we all know that Shagari is the name of a village in Sokoto state, Nigeria.

Also, in 1999, the Senior Pastor of the Latter Rain Assembly, Pastor Tunde Bakare, was in the news when he told the nation that Chief Olusegun Obasanjo would not be sworn in as president in 1999. According to the pastor, he had seen “the crown hovered around the President’s head a couple of times, moved closely as if to settle down, and just as Nigerians clapped and cheered, the crown flew off”. He further narrated how “the second crown came along and that this time, it was consternation of the nation that the crown seemed to settle on the President’s head squarely.” His interpretation was that Obasanjo would not live to be sworn in as Nigeria’s elected president. But Obasanjo did not only become president in 1999, he went ahead to win a re-election in 2003 and so ruled for eight (8) years.

In 2003, the Senior Pastor of the Household of God Church, Ikeja, Lagos, Chris Okotie, took the nation by storm when he told the world that God had asked him to vie for the Nigerian presidential election held that year and that he would win. Okotie did not only lose, his Justice Party was not even rated among the serious contenders following its poor showing at the polls. Since then he had run in all successive presidential elections (2007, 2011, 2015 and 2019) and failed. In 2015, he had declared in what amounted to a political grandstanding:

I will run in 2015, God willing. God spoke to me about my participation in the political process, which was why I took the step in the first place. He has not said anything contrary. I don’t want to talk about our strategy for now, we have learnt from our past experience, we don’t want to talk about it for now.

He contested again, but lost.

Also, in 2015, Theophilus Olabayo of the Evangelical Church of Yahweh, Maryland, Lagos, had predicted that the governing All Progressive Congress (APC) would lose the Lagos State governorship election. The party went ahead to win the election.

There were other political prophecies in 2015. But one of the most memorable was that of the popular Catholic Priest and Director, Adoration Ministry based in Enugu, Nigeria, Rev. Fr. Anthony Mbaka. He announced to his congregation that then President Goodluck Jonathan would lose his re-election bid to Muhammadu Buhari. That came to pass. But in the 2019 election, he predicted a Buhari loss and the emergence of Ibrahim Dankwambo, then Gombe State Governor as the nation's new president. This time, he was wrong (See also Adibe, 2018).

Undaunted, the cleric continued to use his pulpit as a platform for political communication. He was at the center of the controversy that surrounded the 2019 Imo State governorship election when he predicted the victory of Hope Uzodinma at the election tribunal. Uzodinma who challenged the emergence of Emeka Ihedioha as the elected governor was eventually declared winner by the Supreme Court.

Similarly, on the outcome of the 2019 presidential elections. Pastor Samuel Akinbodunse, a Nigerian pastor based in South Africa, had prophesied that Buhari would not only lose but also die before the election. In his words:

Please Nigerians, warn Buhari that he is going beyond his boundary. That the Lord said his tenure is once and not twice. If not, he will not see the election o (sic). If you know him and how to email the Presidency of Nigeria, please write him a text. If he made a mistake to campaign for elections, before they vote, he will die. And I am saying the truth. Tell him the same voice that spoke when people said Jonathan would be the President of Nigeria, the same voice is speaking to him that he must not make that mistake. Let him eat whatever he wants to eat inside sugar that he is now and leave the sugar 'jejely' (sic). If not, he will die. That is just the message.

Akinbodunse, in another sermon, had told his congregation a revelation from God that Nigeria's president in 2019 was a youth whose name starts with letter 'S'. He did not only ask Buhari to step down for the youth, but also called on Olusegun Obasanjo to support the incoming 'youth' president. .

Another pastor of the Christ Apostolic Church, Akure, Ondo State, Simeon Akorede had equally predicted Buhari's defeat in that year's presidential election. According to the prophet, "God revealed to me that the incumbent president Muhammadu Buhari is not given the grace to govern Nigeria for a second term".

The revelation of Prophet John Ogundele of the Recreation Word Apostolic Church, Lagos about the same presidential election was entirely different from others. To him, neither Buhari nor Atiku would emerge winner of the election. Ogundele stated before the congregation:

You may be calculating in your mind that if Buhari doesn't become the President, then it will be Atiku because Obasanjo supports him". "Let me tell you as a prophet of God that among Obasanjo, Atiku and Buhari and those who you think are influential, God said He had withdrawn power from them. None of them will get on to the seat of power.

Still on the 2019 election, the Presiding Bishop, Divine Seed of God Chapel Ministries, Ibadan, Oyo State, Wale Olagunju, had prophesied that Buhari would lose the election to Atiku Abubakar. In his words,

Let me congratulate President Muhammadu Buhari for winning the ticket of his party, the All Progressive Congress (APC), and let me also make it clear to him that he will lose to Atiku Abubakar. Let me also congratulate Atiku in advance because he will win the next presidential election come 2019.

A funny dimension was added to the theater of predictions when Prophet Fakolade of the Divine Intelligence Ministry revealed former Governor Babatunde Fashola of Lagos State, and Buhari's Minister of Works, Housing and Power (as he then was) as God's Choice for the Nigerian presidency in 2019.

All the predictions were false as Buhari won his re-election bid polling 15,191,847 votes to defeat Atiku who got 11,262,978. So what happened? We cannot only hazard a guess. Firstly, because God does not have the capacity to lie, the prophecies did not emanate from Him. Secondly, because the Almighty God will never be at the center of confusion, He couldn't have been the source of the conflicting prophecies from the preachers. Thirdly, are we to believe that while God initially intended a Buhari loss in that election, He availed the President another opportunity for redemption by allowing him to stage a come-back in 2019? Lastly, should we even imagine for a second that while God actually spoke to these prophets, human contraptions and the biblical principalities and powers the Holy Book refereed to, conspired to truncate the will of God? These are puzzles theologians could assist to unravel.

To be sure, the predictions of election results in Nigeria are not limited to the churches. For instance, Ramas Azuzu, the Founder and Spiritual Leader of Liberation Temple of the Absolute God predicted that Yahaya Bello of the APC would win the Kogi State 2019 governorship election. According to him, "*Since the election build-up, I have been asking questions at the spiritual realm. I consulted the spirits, the ancestors and the oracles; what they all told me is that Governor Bello, would be re-elected to complete his second term in office*".

The spiritualist had also stated:

Though, before the spiritual consultation, I had a dream where the father of Governor Bello was raining blessings before a large congregation, saying God Almighty has accepted and endorsed his son to consolidate on the ongoing economic achievement of President Muhammadu Buhari-led Federal Government. “In 2015, I prophesied Buhari victory against Goodluck Jonathan, it worked. In the 2019 Presidential election, I also predicted the second term victory of President Buhari, it worked. Again, I prophesied the emergence of Governor Fayemi of Ekiti and his Osun State counterpart, Mr. Oyetola, respectively in 2018, where they both defeated their closest rivals, it also worked. So, Governor Yahaya Bello of the APC will also defeat his arch-rival, Engr. Musa Wada of the People Democratic Party PDP in a landslide.

However, on his part, Augustine Bola Adegunloye (Egbeji), Oloogun of Nigeria, a traditional priest, who had predicted that Bello’s opponent in the gubernatorial election, Engr. Wada, would emerge victorious. The Native Doctor, as the traditional priests are also known, also invoked a death sentence on Governor Bello if he attempted to rig himself into power. Bello did not only win but also alive.

On the contest for the Kogi West senatorial seat between Dino Melaye and Smart Adeyemi, the priest also gave it to Melaye. But what he forgot to add was the politico-legal drama that would follow that victory; that the loser would head for the election tribunal where Melaye’s victory would be up-turned; that a re-election would be ordered that would produce Adeyemi as the new winner; and that another tribunal would eventually emerge following Melaye’s protest to seal Adeyemi’s victory.

The above narrative is the level of absurdity religion has been subjected to in Nigeria, which unfortunately has come to define its politics. As Akaraiwe (2019) noted, “beyond poverty of mind and pocket, we have a serious case of poverty of expectation and ambition and we have been robbed of capacity to dream in a manner that drives progress because of counter-productive, brain numbing religious experiences”. This, according to him, is traceable to “decades of being fed that God is a magician who allows you sleep as a pauper and wake up wealthy without having to lift a finger to work”. It is this mental construct that has unfortunately found its way into Nigeria’s political arena.

Again, we cannot divorce this religious anomaly from the general social and economic malaise besetting the nation as earlier pointed in our work. Religious indoctrination, as we have seen overtime in Nigeria, could only have been possible in an atmosphere of ignorance, illiteracy and deprivations. The failure of the Nigerian state is reflected in the contemporary role of some religious organisations as providers of educational, health, material and infrastructural needs of the people. Today, religious followers see their leaders as “alternate governments” and therefore believe as unblemished whatever comes out of them. Today, some of these leaders are regarded as deities by their ever-growing members and consequently find themselves competing for

supremacy with the legal-rational authority of the state especially where policies and programmes of state do not suit their whims and caprices. With the messianic aura around them and an unbending followership, these religious zealots have actually succeeded in bringing governments at all levels to their knees, often with major social, economic, security and political implications.

For instance, it is only in Nigeria that glaring cases of injustice, dishonesty and callousness wear the tag of divine ordination that most people would rather than question prefer to live with. Leaders who steal the people's votes are usually the first to “dedicate” their so-called victory to God as the source of their triumph. They also seek to legitimize their obnoxious policies through the same God as the source of all authority, just as the citizenry willingly surrender to this dangerous propaganda. While divine ordination of kings could be attributed to the earliest period, politicians today have exploited it to supplant popular wishes, and by extension the democratic tradition and practices. Some have elevated this art further by directly playing god. They have become the undisputable emperor and lord of the manor, the sole repository of knowledge who must reason for the rest of society.

This group possesses an obsession for power, a mental disposition, and project a world view that seems to render insignificant the wisdom of Solomon. They are all-knowing and infallible. To them, divergence and criticisms, the cardinal principles of democracy, are aberrations that must be suppressed. They would rather prefer a drift toward a one-party state than allow opposition to flourish. That is reason that in spite the registration of over ninety political parties in Nigeria, the APC and PDP have remained the dominant parties, and the latter the only major opposition able to withstand the continued onslaught and dominance of the political space by the ruling party. This attitudinal disposition is however inimical to the emergence and sustenance of an ideal democratic political culture.

The Poverty of Politics:

The Colonial Impact

As we interrogate what we call the poverty of African politics, it is pertinent to start by providing insights into how the continent got enmeshed in the contradictions discussed in the preceding sections. So, How Did Africa Get Here? And, answers to this must begin with an exposition on the history of her exploitation by powerful global forces.

So much has been said concerning Africa's historical past, especially the place of slavery and colonialism and their impact on Africa's predicament. But suffices it to say that a study of contemporary developments in Africa cannot be done in isolation of their historical dynamics. Even though it may appear trite to blame every deformity in the polity on colonialism, the impact of that singular epoch on the continent's social, economic and political formations cannot be over-emphasised. (Ekeh 1975, Mazrui, 1986). The pillage of Africa's massive human and material resources by international capitalism, according to Parenti (2020), left devastating impact on the people and their societies. This malady was best captured in the following words of, Jack Chirac, former President of one of the colonizing powers, France:

As we bled Africa for four and half centuries. We looted their raw materials, then we told lies that the Africans are good for nothing. In the name of

religion, we destroyed their culture. And after being made rich at their expense, we now steal their brains through miseducation and propaganda to prevent them from enacting Black retribution against us.

Colonialism with its exogenous character laid the foundation for the dislocations and arrested development we find in trade, industrialization, education, and political party activities, and in particular, the emergence of a parasitic, unproductive bourgeois class, whose only credential to prominence was their appendage to the metropolitan powers (Ake 1980, Nnoli 1981, Onimode 1982). This same class of leaders who took control of political power after independence constituted major economic liability to the continent because they did not only lack the requisite economic and political skills, their collective performance as leaders indicated that they were certainly not in charge of the development agenda. Hence, the continent found itself romancing poorly conceived, half-baked, badly implemented and uncoordinated economic policies, ranging from mixed economy, indigenization, nationalization, to a so-called import substitution strategy. Africa became a theatre for testing spurious economic theories the leaders and implementers hardly understand. No wonder the results of these worn out measures were large scale underdevelopment and decreasing standard of living of the people.

In 2016, a study conducted by a non-governmental organization outlined the level of decimation of Africa's resources by these imperialists. The result showed that at that year's market prices, about 101 companies mostly British own 305 billion dollars' worth of platinum, 267 billion dollars' worth of oil and 216 billion dollars' worth of coal. Those companies also "own mines or mineral licenses in 37 African countries, and control vast swaths of Africa four times the size of United Kingdom" (Nonyerem, 2021). Similarly, in 2019, Global Justice Now Report hinted on the mind-boggling capital flight on the continent. While 161.6 billion dollars entered into Africa that year, 202.9 billion dollars left the continent. In 2017, total aid to Africa was 19.7 billion dollars, but the continent's debt repayment for the same period was 18 billion dollars. In the area of remittances, about 32 billion dollars annually come into Africa from the diaspora. But quite significantly, multinational corporations operating in Africa also siphoned 32.4 billion dollars in profits and other illegal outflows. Africa's debt burden is compounded by the absence of any tangible proof for the 25-75% of their Gross Domestic Product African governments do borrow. A deduction from all these is that Africa is underdeveloped because Africa's resources is under the control of predatory external forces.

The Post-Colonial Leadership Gap

However, decades after colonialism, the question is why have successive rulers failed to change the tide? Africa has always been unlucky with one set of leaders after another. Indeed, those who have mounted the saddle of leadership have turned out to be our rulers and tormentors rather than our leaders; people who had little or no regard for our hopes, fears and aspirations, and whose words indeed were considered sacrosanct and unchallengeable. These are men and women whose gods are their pockets and bellies; those who would rather sell the entire commonwealth than leave the political stage better than they met it. This was what prompted Chinua Achebe when he correctly noted that, "part of the hoax called independence is to give us leaders who do not understand what happened to us" (Vanguard, January 2006).

It is quite understandable for the men in uniform who use our guns not only to seize political power but also to exploit our collective helplessness and fear of the bullets to steal the nation and our heritage blind. But it becomes more worrisome and pathetic to find the self-styled democrats, who ostensibly begged to serve us by soliciting our votes, to turn around to abuse our benevolence by inflicting the worst form of savagery on our joint treasures. Although the question may also correctly be asked whether we had actually had leaders who came to office

by popular vote, given the manipulations and malfeasance that had been our experience with electoral politics in Africa.

While the military junta employed brute force and intimidation, and their monopolization of the instruments of violence to appropriate our natural resources, the civilians have exploited our collective docility, poverty and ignorance to corner and pillage the nation's purse and resources. We have had men and women in positions of authority, who are largely insincere and uncommitted to any national cause. We have had persons who would rather exploit our tribal, ethnic, religious and other primordial differences to perpetuate their nefarious hold on political power and by extension the national economy. This is part of the dilemma of leadership Africa has had to grapple with since the white man began the withdrawal from the political terrain in the 1950s.

But like in every game of soccer, political contest devoid of tested and competent players is akin to a rudderless ship on its way to sink. Imagine a football tournament without a captain, a defender, or a striker and the direction such a game would soon take. Or imagine further one with these aforementioned men but where the mission of every player on the field is to score at the same time for the team. Definitely such team is on its way to disaster. Or worse still, where the roles are not properly delineated and the strikers are defending, the defenders are in the wings, and the mid-fielders are struggling in front of the post to score. That unfortunately is the picture African politics eloquently depict. On the political terrain are actors, most of whom lack the requisite political skill and sagacity, who are unknowledgeable about the fundamental elements of governance and basic economic principles, lacking in any worthwhile leadership traits, but are in perpetual struggle to outdo one another in appropriating the entire democratic dividends for their personal aggrandizement.

In Nigeria, today the country appears to be sitting on a keg of gun powder with numerous centrifugal forces that appear to be tearing the body polity apart. Some of these include issues of democratic consolidation and the rule of law, respect for constitution and constitutionalism, intra-party wrangling, defections and the resort to the use of impeachment as a weapon to settle political scores, the numerous succession battles across the states and the center, internecine feuds, tribal, religious and ethnic hatreds culminating in wanton destruction of lives and property, armed banditry, kidnapping and robberies.

This in retrospect is the quagmire of that soccer arena the African, and particularly the Nigerian political scene has come to represent, as we briefly examine some salient issues on this football pitch, and highlighting in the process the peculiarities of the Nigerian political situation.

THE POVERTY OF THE GAME COMPONENTS

The Poverty of the Players

Today, soccer is becoming more sophisticated both within and outside the field of play. Every aspect of the round leather game- management, finance officiating, field- as earlier mentioned, has come under the influence of new approaches and technology, the latest being Video Assisted Referee. Let us juxtapose this with African politics, where the tactics, method, purpose have remained rudimentary and the dramatis personae, the recycled, crude, immobile and indolent class that has held the continent hostage for decades. For instance, a look at leaders of some African countries and the years they spent in office reveal the following:

- Teodoro Obiang Mbasogo has been in power in Equatorial Guinea since 1979. His son Teodoro Obiang Mangué is the country's Vice-President.

- In Angola, Jose Eduardo dos Santos held the country by the jugular for 38 years between 1979 and 2017.
- Also, Paul Biya has remained the demi-god, ruling by decrees in Cameroun since 1982, that is, for thirty-seven years. Note that the same Biya was the Prime Minister for seven years under President Ahmadou Ahidjo.
- In Cape Verde, Prime Minister Jose Maria Neves ruled for 15 years between 2001 and 2016 before handing over power to Ulisses Corria e Silva.
- Idriss Deby ruled for over 30 years in Chad Republic from 1990. He “won” a re-election for another term of five years on 19 April 2021, but was killed the following day when he visited troops engaging “rebels based across the border in Libya”. A military council headed by his son has taken over power and promised to govern for 18 months.
- Similarly, is Eritrea under Isais Afewerki since 1991;
- Djibouti has been under under Ismail Omar Guelleh since 1999; in April 2021, he won his fifth term in office with over 98 percent of the vote
- Ali Bongo Ondimba of Gabon since 2009;
- Paul Kigame of Rwanda since 2000, even with his acclaimed but controversial sterling performance, especially in the face of an intolerant political environment devoid of the rule of law;
- Denis Sassou Nguesso in Congo Brazzaville since 1979-1992; and 1997-to date; March 21, 2021, he was re-elected with 88.4 percent of the votes to extend his 36-year rule. Nguesso lost the first multiparty election in Congo in 1992, but forcefully removed President Pascal Lisouba in 1997 in the aftermath of a civil war. He “won” re-election in 2002 and 2009. In 2015, he altered the constitution that placed the age limit for the President at 70. The two seven-year term was replaced with three five-year terms to enable him continue in office.
- Faure Gnassingbe in Togo since 2005;
- Uganda under Yoweri Museveni since 1986.
- Thomas Boni Yayi (Benin) and Ian Khama (Botswana), both ruled their countries for ten years;
- Blaise Compaore was in the saddle as president of Burkina Faso for twenty-seven years (1987-2014) before he fled to Cote De Voire through the assistance of France. This followed the bloody violence that greeted his controversial attempt at a constitutional amendment that would have granted him a fifth term in office.
- Joseph Kabila has been in charge of DRC, Congo Kinshasa since 2001.
- In small Gambia, Yahya Jammeh was the Alpha and Omega for 23 years before he was forcibly ejected from the seat of power by a combination of forces of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Yahya Jammeh, like the political comedians most African leaders are, once claimed he had developed the cure to AIDs using his secret herbal mixture and spiritual healing powers. Today the Truth Commission set up by his successor is unravelling allegations of torture, sexual molestation, suspicious deaths in government custody and other sundry violations of human rights during Jameh’s infamous 23 years on the throne. He was alleged to have left with over one billion dollars to Equatorial Guinea where he is seeking asylum. (“The African Report.com)
- How can we forget in a hurry Jammeh’s counterpart in Ivory Coast, Laurent Gbagbo, his 30 years on the ‘throne of his forefathers’, and his unwillingness to respect the opinion of his people to vacate that seat until the military came to rescue the ugly situation? While his opponents insisted that the constitution prevented him from seeking another term after his two-term presidency, Quattara had maintained that under the 2016 constitution, his previous years in office were a nullity. Thus, in 2020 and amidst

political uncertainty characterized by electoral violence and misconduct, Quattara was elected for another four years in office.

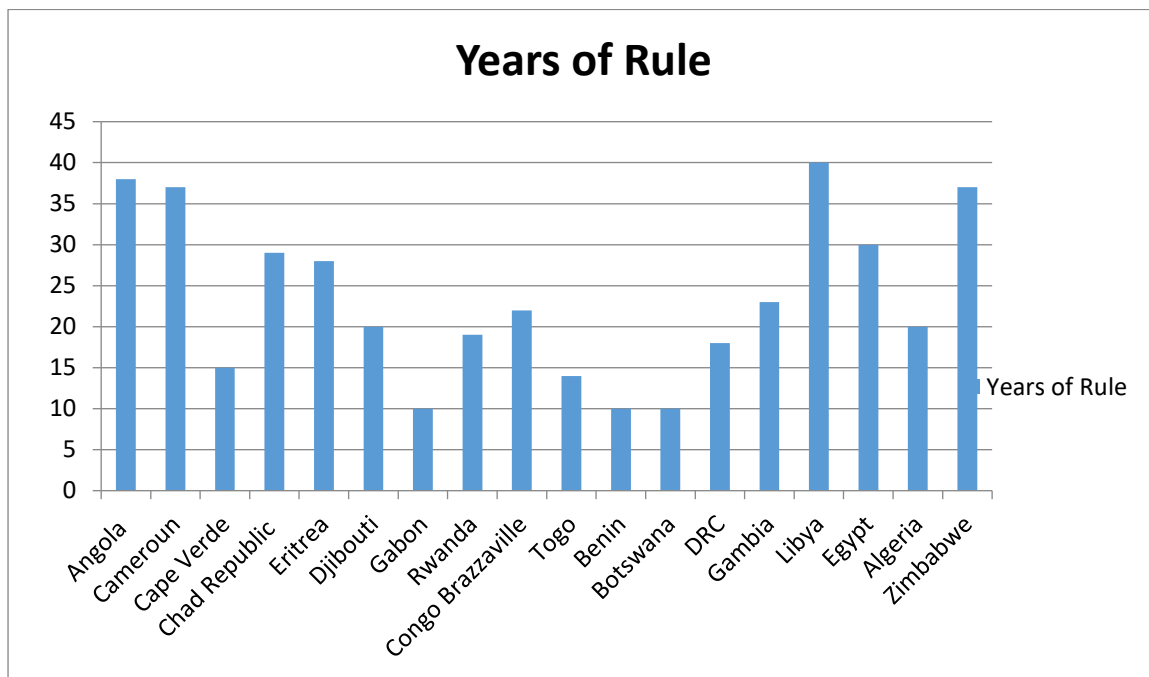
- Even in Western Sahara, a product of sub-nationalistic agitations, Mohamed Abdelaziz ruled for 40 years until 2016 when the incumbent, Brahim Ghali took over power.
- Thanks to the Arab Springs that altered the political equation in North Africa, and terminated the reign of absolutism, thus ending Muamar Ghaddafi's 40 years regime in Libya and 30 years of the 91-year old Hosni Mubarak of Egypt.
- On August 2 2019, following popular pressure and protest, the Algerian President, Abdelaziz Bouteflika, was also forced to resign after twenty years in power. The Chief of Army Staff, who was once the President's strong ally had declared "no more room to waste time" and called for immediate action to remove the President.
- The same fate also befell Sudan, whose absolute ruler for 30 sordid years, Omar Al Bashir, was equally forced out of power in April 2019. On March 23, same year, Bashir had declared a state of emergency for one year, dissolved federal government, all state governors and directed the National Assembly to stop further deliberation on amendments seeking to allow him contest the presidency for another term.
- Alpha Conde has spent ten years in office, having taken over power in 2010. Conde at 82 successfully amended the constitution to allow himself to run for a third term. He "won" the election amidst violence that claimed several lives.
- Then, the legendary Robert Mugabe who was in the forefront of the struggle for the liberation of Zimbabwe, took over the mantle of political leadership as President in 1980 and ruled for 37 years before he was forced out by the military in 2017. He died two years after at the age of 95.

The above narrative is captured in both tabular and graphic forms below:

Tenure of Some African Leaders

S/N	Name of Leader	Country	No of years in Office
1.	Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo	Equatorial Guinea	42
2.	Muamar Ghaddafi	Libya	40
3.	Mohamed Abdelaziz	Western Sahara	40
4.	Jose Eduardo dos Santos	Angola	38
5.	Paul Biya	Cameroon	39
6.	Robert Mugabe	Zimbabwe	37
7.	Yoweri Museveni	Uganda	34
8.	Laurent Gbagbo	Cote D'Voire	30
9.	Idris Derby	Chad	30
10	Omar Al Bashir	Sudan	30
11	Isais Afewerki	Eretria	29
12	Blaise Compaore	Burkina Faso	27
13	Yaya Jammeh	Gambia	23
14	Denis Sassou Nguesso	Congo Brazaville	36
15	Ismail Omar Guelleh	Djibouti	22
16	Paul Kigame	Rwanda	20
17	Abdelaziz Bouteflika	Algeria	20
18	Joseph Kabila	Democratic Republic of Congo	19

19	Faure Gnassingbe	Togo	15
20	Jose Maria Neves	Cape Verde	15
21	Ali Bongo Ondimba	Gabon	11
22	Boni Yayi	Benin	10
23	Ian Khama	Botswana	10
24	Alpha Conte	Guinea	10



Source: Author, 2019.

Africa and Gerontocracy

Also, in Africa, the poverty of the players is reflected in what seems to be a correlation between the age of these leaders and their unproductive years in office. Again, see table below the ages of Presidents of some selected African countries.

Age of Selected African Leaders

S/N	Name	Country	Age
1.	Isaias Afwerki	Eritrea	70
2.	Ismail Omar Guelleh	Djibouti	70
3.	Ibrahim Boubacar Keita	Mali	71
4.	Omar al-Bashir	Sudan	72

5.	Pakalitha Mosisili	Lesotho	72
6.	Yoweri Museveni	Uganda	72
7.	Akufo Addo	Ghana	72
8.	Denis Ngueso	Congo	73
9.	Muhammadu Buhari	Nigeria	76
10.	Jacob G. Zuma	South Africa	74
11.	Alassane Quattara	Cote d'ivoire	74
12.	Jose Eduardo dos Santos	Angola	74
13.	Teodoro Obiang Mbasogo	E. Guinea	74
14.	Hage Geingob	Namibia	75
15.	Peter Mutharika	Malawi	76
16.	Alpha Conde	Guinea	81
17.	Ellen Johnson Sirleaf	Liberia	78
18.	Abselaziz Bouteflika	Algeria	82
19.	Paul Biya	Cameroun	83
20.	Beji Caid Essebsi	Tunisia	90
21.	Robert Mugabe	Zimbabwe	92

This absurd form of gerontocracy is certainly unacceptable in an era where the average age of most leaders of world industrialized nations is 40. For instance, it took the collapse of his government and the loss of majority in parliament following allegation that he was privy to the murder of his wife for the 80-year old Prime Minister of Lesotho, Thomas Thabane, to resign from office in May 2020. Thabane ruled Lesotho between 2012-2015 and 2015-2017. On both occasions, he succeeded the 72-year Pakalitha Mosisili.

Unfortunately, compounding the challenge of gerontocracy disorder is the penchant of some of these leaders to transfer power to their offspring in utter disregard of democratic principles and what is fast becoming Africa's "hereditary republicanism". The political dynasty in Togo is a classical example, where Faure Gnassingbe is on his third term in office, having succeeded Gnassingbe Eyadema. At the end of the former's current tenure, the family would have ruled the impoverished state of Togo for forty-eight years.

In Gabon, is President Ali Bongo, the adopted son of former President Omar Bongo. August 2019 witnessed a trending video of the sixty-year President Ali Bongo who had suffered stroke about a year earlier and on a walking stick. Rather than vacating office, he preferred to be physically supported and sandwiched between presidential aides to state functions including reviews of military parades. The younger Bongo had ruled Gabon since 2009 when he took over following the demise of his adopted father Omar Bongo who ruled the country for forty years.

Also was the emergence of 29-year old Joseph Kabila as the President of the Democratic Republic of Congo on January 16, 2001, following the assassination of his father, Laurent Kabila. Laurent Kabila had three years earlier (May 17, 1997) overthrown the government of Mobutu Sese Sekou. In Mauritius, Pravind Kumar Jugnauth succeeded his father, Anerood Jugnauth, as Prime Minister on 9 May 2009.

The difference between these countries and the family dynasties in Kenya and Botswana is that for the latter category, the offspring came on board long years after the exit of their fathers from office. (Kenya: Uhuru Kenyatta 2013, 2017 and Jomo Kenyatta 1969, 1974; Botswana: Ian Khama 2009, 2014 and Seretse Khama 1965, 1969, 1974, 1979).

In Uganda, speculations are high that General Muhozi Kainerugaba Museveni has been positioned to succeed his father, President Yoweri Museveni. The younger Museveni is currently the head of the Special Forces Group. A major component of this body is the Presidential Guards Brigade that protects the President and the country's constitutional monarchs.

To be sure, family succession in democratic politics is not an aberration, as the examples of the Kennedy, Bush and Clinton families in the United States, to mention but a few, clearly show. But what seems abhorrent is the pattern of emergence of these successors in Africa, which goes against all norms of fairness, equity and justice in candidate selection and participatory politics.

Players and Corruption: Siamese Twins

In the midst of this malady of a governance error is the monumental corruption that pervades the African polity, and the long stay in power of these maximum rulers has further accentuated

these corrupt tendencies rather than ameliorate them. Available evidence shows that for African political office holders, the lust for power and its attendant greed and unbridled access to the public treasury seems to grow with the number of years they stay in office.

The insatiable appetite for the national treasure aligns with Montesquieu's famous statement that "Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely". Else, how could one possibly rationalize Sese Sekou Mubutu's outlandish lifestyle and wealth traceable to direct stealing of Zaire's copper; or the ex-labour leader turned President Fredrick Chiluba of Zambia, and the millions of dollars of public funds traced to him after leaving office. Similarly, were former warlord, Charles Taylor of Liberia, the "socialist" Jacob Zuma forced to vacate office on account of corruption, and of course the legendary Sani Abacha. There are other numerous politicians that have been proven guilty of violating the public trust in Nigeria. (Alamesiegha, Ibori, Dariye, Igbinedion, etcetera).

Little wonder that the African Union once declared that about 25 percent of Africa's official Gross Domestic Product was lost to corruption. When on 31st January 2007, Nuhu Ribadu, then Chairman of Nigeria's anti-corruption outfit, the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC), noted at the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) parley held at the University of Ibadan that about 220 billion British pounds or 550 billion American dollars of development assistance to Nigeria "has been stolen from Nigeria by Nigeria's past leaders", little did we know that his lamentation was a child's play to the pillage that awaits the nation in the hands of its leaders. The loot according to Ribadu, was 600 percent of what was expended in actualizing Europe Marshall plan after World War 11. What this means as Ribadu put it is that the stealing in Nigeria by its past leaders "could have recreated the beauty and glory of western Europe six times all over in this country." Within that period, 18 billion naira was recovered from a former head of the country's police and another 5 billion dollars of looted funds recovered across the globe by the EFCC.

Today, the amounts run into billions of the US dollar. For instance, Diezani Allison-Madueke, former Minister of petroleum has been accused of organizing the diversion of \$6 billion from the Nigerian treasury. This is about N1.2 trillion. In April 2017, Ayodele Oke, the former boss of the National Intelligence Agency, and his wife were declared wanted by the EFCC following the discovery and seizure of \$43,449,947, 27,800 pound and N23,218,00 from an apartment at Osborne Road, Ikoyi, Lagos.

Similarly, General Sani Abacha, who ruled the country between 1993 and 1998 probably presided over the most corrupt administration in Nigeria's political history. At a time, Transparency International put the total amount stolen by the maximum ruler at five million billion dollars, stashed in Switzerland, Jersey Island in United Kingdom, United States and Liechtenstein. Of this amount, \$750 million was recovered by the General Abdulsalami administration. The Obasanjo government recovered \$1.2 billion in 2002, \$149 million from New Jersey Island, UK in 2003, \$500 million from Switzerland in 2004, and another \$458 in 2005 from Switzerland. Also, from same Switzerland, the Jonathan government recovered \$1 billion and \$380 million in 2012 and 2015 respectively. The government also recovered \$227 million from Liechtenstein and \$48 million from the United States both in 2014. The Buhari

government, on its part recovered \$322 million from Switzerland in 2017 and \$308 million from Jersey Island, UK in February 2020 (Business Day, May 11, 2020).

On James Ibori, former Delta state governor, the British government accused him of laundering more than \$200 million of resources under his watch. Following his trial and conviction, Ibori was jailed and his assets (properties, automobiles and cash) value at millions of pounds were seized by the British authorities. Early March 2021, the world was awoken by the news of the return of 4.2million pound of Ibori’s stolen wealth by the British to the Nigerian government.

Militarisation and Ideological Bareness

One factor that has reinforced this abnormality of corruption in the polity is partly the long years of militarisation of African politics. When the first military coup in West Africa took place in Togo on 13 January 1963, little did we know that a recurring decimal that was to truncate Africa’s development trajectory had just begun. Before then was the revolt by the young army officers also known as The Free Officers Movement in Egypt in 1952. The July 23 Revolution as the Egyptian uprising was also called, abolished the constitutional monarchy and established a republic. From that period, more than 200 coups, whether successful or not had taken place on the continent, with 30 Presidents/Prime Ministers killed. Burkina Faso, which topped the list is regarded as the coup capital of Africa, with six in 1980s alone, two led by Blaise Compaore, who as we earlier pointed out, ruled for 27 years before he was toppled by another set of military juntas in 2014. See table below for the 13 African countries with the highest frequency of coups.

S/N	Country	Frequency of Coup
1	Burkina Faso	10
2	Nigeria	8
3	Burundi	6
4	Chad	6
5	Ghana	6
6	Comoros	6
7	Mauritania	6
8	Sudan	6
9	Ethiopia	5
10	Libya	5
11	Sierra Leone	5
12	Central African Republic	5
13	Benin	5

Other famous putsches that had major implications for the continent were the 1969 Gaddafi coup in Libya, the overthrow of Milton Obote by Idi Amin in Uganda in 1971 and the absurdity in Equatorial Guinea in 1979 where Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo removed his uncle, Macias, and executed him by the firing squad. He later ruled for 30 years.

There are only 14 of Africa’s 54 countries where the praetorian guards seem to have maintained their sanity. In these countries, coup has never taken place, and they are mostly in the Southern part of the continent where military rule is unpopular. The reason is not far-fetched from the economic and focused military strength of South Africa. South Africa’s status as an

economically dominant, militarily strong and ideologically assertive country confers on it a regional or sub-regional power, and ensures political stability across its regional or sub-regional bloc. Similarly, in Cameroon, Kenya and Morocco where coups have been recorded, none has ever succeeded.

Back home, of Nigeria's 60 years of political independence, the military ruled for 29 years, 1966-1979 and 1983-1999, arising from six different coups that produced eight military heads of state: Aguyi Ironsi January 1966-July 1966; Yakubu Gowon 1967-1975; Murtala Mohammed 1975-1976; Olusegun Obasanjo 1975-1979; Muhammadu Buhari 1983-1985; Ibrahim Babangida 1985-1993; Sani Abacha 1993-1998; Abdulsalami Abubakar 1998-1999.. The details of the coups will not detain us here.

However, as Nordlinger postulated, the performance of the military in areas of social, economic and political development certainly leaves much to be desired. What sometimes are generally flagged as "development" in Africa are mainly at the superficial level- state creation, provision of infrastructure- that do not address the issues of justice, fairness and societal well-being, and in fact could be traced to increase in national revenues or the existence of some natural resources like oil in Nigeria or Libya, where such 'development' had taken place.

Also, in the words of Nordlinger, it is perhaps in the formulation of political ideology that the military has failed most, demonstrating in the process their low capacity to govern. We saw ample evidence of this in the Ibrahim Babangida's regime in Nigeria during his endless transition programme. Then he established the two political parties, the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and the National Republican Convention (NRC). He also proceeded to fund their operations, appoint their officers and establish their offices in all the 774 local governments, and the various state and federal capitals. The purpose, according to the government, was to create what it called "new breed" politicians for the country, a process that suffered from illogical conception and totally at variance with the realities of the class character especially the factor of elite circulation in politics. These were in addition to the ideologies of "a little to the left" and "a little to the right" that the same military junta foisted on the two parties respectively. The end-product of these eight years of political engineering and rigmarole was the culture of mediocrity and corruption of the new actors it bestowed on the nation's political landscape, with the impact still reverberating today.

The situation in Nigeria is replicated in the ideological barrenness of most African regimes, where we come across some nebulous concepts propagated as political ideologies, or as in some cases, where ideologies are simply non-existent. Take a look at some.

In South Africa, the South Africa Communist Party ideology is Communism, Marxism-Leninism; Inkatha Freedom Party- Conservatism, Zulu Minority's interest. In Zimbabwe, the African National Union adopts Left wing Populism, while for the Zimbabwe African Peoples Union, it is Socialism/Left wing nationalism. In Ivory Coast, for the Ivorian Peoples Front, it is Social Democracy, and for the Democratic Party of Cote D Voire, it is Conservatism/African Nationalism. In Ghana, we have the following: Democratic People's Party (Nkrumaism); National Democratic Congress (Social Democracy); New Patriotic Party (Conservatism). However, we must acknowledge these parties for coming out with an idea, no matter how vague, because in Nigeria, none of the over 90 political parties could be identified with any Guide or Blueprint for Action that would pass for an ideological statement. The primary objective of these so-called Nigerian political parties, in the words of Dwight D. Eisenhower is simply "a conspiracy to seize power" using any means.

Players and Attitudinal Poverty

One particular feature of every game is the uniqueness of the players who in our present context are the political actors. To be sure, the attitudinal disposition of the political class in Nigeria leaves much to be desired. I once came across this caption, “Nigeria is a nation ruled by very poor people with money, they are poor in value, character, duty, empathy, love and compassion.” (Dakutu, 2019). The Nigerian way of doing things cannot but produce peculiar Nigerian results as the political terrain has demonstrated over the years. We believe that when Aristotle postulated his philosophy of man as a political animal, he did not reckon at the extent to which that “animal called man” (Obasanjo, 1998) and his brutish instincts would be allowed to determine the political direction of countries like Nigeria. Whether within the leadership or followership in Nigeria, political actors have always exhibited their animalistic tendencies in a manner that compares favorably with the typical Hobbesian state of nature, where life is meaningless, short and brutish; where politics has become a do or die, and where winners not only appropriate the gains of politics, but further ensure that losers are permanently emasculated and incapacitated.

Zero-Sum Game and Party Switching

Like a decisive game of soccer, a winner must naturally emerge in every political contest as we earlier noted. But the point of departure is that while losers in a football tournament are at least entitled to some consolatory prizes (medals or even trophies), Nigerian politics is a zero-sum game that has no place or provision for losers, and they are hardly reckoned with. Even the few gains the opposition is able to garner (whether as seats in parliament or Governors of states) are further appropriated by the winning party through various acts of intimidation, incorporation, oppression and suppression.

No wonder candidates elected on the platform of minority parties easily cross carpet to the majority party at the slightest opportunity where the pasture is considered greener. Between 1999 and now, some states where their governors defected to other political parties include Sokoto, Abia, Jigawa, Kano, Rivers, Kwara and Benue. The absurdity is the endless cycle of defections, namely, leaving one party for another and returning to the previous at the onset of another electioneering period given the slightest opportunity.

We saw this in Kwara state with the journey of Bukola Saraki from APP-PDP-APC-PDP; Samuel Ortom in Benue PDP-APC-PDP; Rabiu Musa Kwankanso in Kano PDP-APC-PDP; Atiku Abubakar PDP-ACN-PDP-APC-PDP). Or as in the case of then Governors Ibikunle Amosun of Ogun State and Rochas Okorocha of Imo state, who sponsored candidates in other parties against candidates of their original parties where their candidates lost the primaries.

In Imo state was the comedy of one Chiji Collins. In the 2019 elections, he won election on the platform of APGA but defected to the PDP even before he was inaugurated, ostensibly because the PDP was in power at the state level. Six months after, he defected to the APC because the election tribunal and courts had removed the PDP Governor and replaced him with the APC candidate. Yes, life is a game. But the good players are always focused and do not run aimlessly round the field, especially where the issues are ideological-based. Unfortunately, in Nigeria, as earlier espoused, politics is devoid of any known ideology.

In Nigeria, party switching has often led to the emergence of some dubious and spurious alliances of complete strange bed-fellows bound together by a common fate of being denied a political space in their respective political parties or by the government of the day. Taking solace in other associations has thus become a medium of expressing their continued political importance or relevance even where it is clear to them that such moves would not translate into victory at the polls. At intra-party level, the narrowing of the political space by those in power, which is a manifestation of the zero tolerance disposition to opposition, often culminates in the spate of parallel party executives at all levels, suspension and counter suspension of members, or as in the case of the PDP, deregistration of 'disloyal' party members at the heat of its intra-party crisis prior to the 2015 General Elections.

Politics, we are told is a game of number where even one vote counts, but Nigeria will perhaps qualify for the Guinness Book of Records as one arena where individuals not only literally beg for membership of political parties, but could also simultaneously be a member of two or more political parties. And this is because politics in Nigeria is an investment which nobody is willing to lose, where being in the opposition is considered a bad investment, and where those in power hardly tolerate dissension or competition by rival groups, and so ensure by all legitimate and illegitimate means that these elements are silenced.

Election Rigging

Historically elections worldwide are rigged through various means. These include among others:

1. Disenfranchisement, where electoral umpires will deliberately omit names of candidates on the ballot. North Korea is a classic example where the ballot comes with only one name.
2. Stuffing ballot boxes.
3. Faulty voting equipment, as in the case with Nigeria's Smart Card Readers.
4. Voters casting multiple votes.
5. Monetary inducements of voters.

As far back as 1876, the United States of America had an election, which by popular and electoral votes, many thought would have been won by Democratic candidate, Samuel Tilden, but went the way of Republican Rutherford Hayes. The allegations were that while the Democrats employed violence and intimidation to secure majority votes across the states, the Republicans resorted to the destruction of those votes and undue influence on the Electoral Committee set up to resolve the dispute.

The American example paled into insignificance when compared to the 1927 presidential election in Liberia, which is today referred to by the Guinness Book of Records as the "Most Fraudulent Election" in modern world history. In that election, there were less than 15000 registered voters, all Americo-Liberians. But when the election results were released, President Charles King's True Whig Party won with a total of 243,000, while his opponent, Thomas J. Faulkner and his People's Party scored 9000 votes. (wikipedia.org) Again, Africa became a pacesetter for the wrong reason.

In Nigeria, the massive investment into the political enterprise even at great personal cost and discomfort to the actors can better be explained from the central role of the Nigerian state as a means of production. The control of the state has come to represent a major gateway to the appropriation of the resources of the state by the political class. Consequently, the struggle for the seizure, use and retention of state power become fierce and at times brutal, as politicians deploy every resource at their disposal, legal and illegal to ensure victory in these electoral battles.

Richard Joseph (1990) popularized this theory of “prebendalism”, a system of rule which equates public offices with personal fiefdoms, anchored on the Machiavellian philosophy, where the end justifies the means, and where, as Shakespeare also noted, “fair is foul and foul is fair.” This is why rigging of elections, snatching of ballot boxes, declaration of fictitious election results, financial inducement of voters and electoral officers, among others, have become the norms, not aberration to the political process in Nigeria; where politicians have elevated treachery and the ability to manipulate the system to an art of statecraft; where political fraudsters are celebrated, adored and rewarded as godfathers holding by the jugular a pool of largely ignorant, poor, disenchanting, economically and politically marginalized and psychologically repressed set of people. As the dregs of society, the crumbs from the tables of these vicious benefactors become the lifeline they require for existence, and the means to domesticate and incorporate them, as they willingly sell their political heritage and that of incoming generations to the highest bidder.

In Anambra state for instance, Christian Uba, once proclaimed himself “...the greatest godfather in Nigeria,” because, as he claimed, his would be “the first time an individual single-handedly put in position every politician in the state.” President Obasanjo, at a time, once corroborated the claim of this godfather when he told a bewildered nation the alleged confession of Uba in the manipulation of the outcome of the 2003 governorship elections in Anambra state that brought Chris Ngige of the PDP to power. The irony of the situation and by extension the tragedy of the Nigerian nation was that what in an ideal society should have earned the godfather at least a jail sentence led to his majestic rise into the membership of the highly exclusive Board of Trustees of the then ruling PDP.

This phenomenon, according to Gambo (2006) fits into the predatory instincts theory that godfathers manipulate the electoral process to have their anointed godsons in elective public offices in exchange for protection and the spoils of office. The Nigerian experience from Anambra to Kwara, Oyo, Osun, Lagos and other states has demonstrated beyond doubts the negative effects of the godfather syndrome, namely, it is antithetical to participatory democracy, as it does not only hinder genuine aspirations in the polity, but facilitates the personalization of state power and the decimation of its resources by forces loyal to the godfather.

Today, a new concept has been added to Nigeria’s political vocabulary, and that is vote-buying with its long-term implication for the underdevelopment of politics and the politics of underdevelopment. In the past, voters were induced with tons of rice and other consumables alongside cash, but today, with cups of such commodities, their political rights are sold in broad daylight for reasons that cannot be totally divorced from the hunger, deprivations and poverty in the land.

Electoral Violence

As perfidious as these acts described above are, they appear little when compared with the violence on the field of play, especially before, during and after every election I have participated as an umpire in Nigeria’s electoral process since 1999 when I served as Returning Officer for the Kwara North Senatorial election in Bode Sadu, Kwara State, and I can affirm that violence in the electoral process is a product of various factors including poverty, the helplessness or fatalistic disposition of the masses arising from high rate of youth unemployment and, the desperation of the political class to win irrespective of the verdict of the electorate. The tragedy of course is that electoral violence in Nigeria has been on the increase both in intensity and impact as the history of election has clearly shown.

Under the first republic, the controversy that surrounded the 1964 General Election led to devastating consequences across the length and breadth of the country, with greater catastrophic

impact in the western region. The battle of supremacy between the Premier Samuel Ladoke Akintola and the Leader of the Opposition at the federal level, Obafemi Awolowo, snowballed into the Western Regional House of Assembly crisis, leading to the popular “operation wet e” in the region that claimed several lives and property. It was one of Nigeria’s saddest moments that fast tracked the end of that republic and ushered in the first military interregnum in 1966, which produced three regimes of military rulers in thirteen years.

In 1979 were the elections that ushered in the second republic and the emergent Shehu Shagari presidency. But the desperation of the political class to win and retain power in the next rounds of elections in 1983 and the attendant “landslide victory” of the ruling National Party of Nigeria (NPN) in the presidential elections in addition to the party’s controversial victories in the opposition strongholds, notably Oyo, Ondo, Anambra states led to widespread violence in different parts of the country. Of particular note was the re-enactment of the “operation wet e” in Ondo state against the declaration of Akin Omoboriowo of the NPN as the Governor-elect. The “defeat” of the incumbent Michael Ajasin, obviously the choice of the people, as the Judiciary later affirmed, was seen by the people as an affront carried too far, and thus began the mayhem, arson, killings that engulfed the state for several days. Again, that republic collapsed leading to another seizure of power by the military in December 1983 that lasted for another sixteen years.

Between 1999 when the military again handed over power to the civilians and now, political violence has not abated. Rather, it has assumed more worrisome dimensions, with the proliferation of light weapons and the obvious helplessness or culpability of the nation’s security apparatuses during election periods taking the center stage. Today and quite unfortunately, snatching of ballot boxes, destruction of polling materials, disruption of voting procedures in areas the opposition is dominant and the wanton decimation of lives and property are fast becoming the nation’s electoral norms and values.

As earlier pointed out, with the role of the state as a major means of production, where access to state power has become the route to capital accumulation and unfettered access to public resources, the winner-takes-all nature of Nigerian politics has further reinforced the violence in the body politic. Winning elections in Nigeria confers automatic access to the public tills and losers are not only left to count their losses but also humiliated, suppressed and suffocated. In that situation winning by whatever means, including violence has also become the norm to the political class. But in addition to this, we cannot gloss over other contributing factors, especially the nature of inter-group relations and the rise of tribal, ethnic, religious and other primordial sentiments over national considerations, all of which gave rise to an avalanche of legitimated associations competing with the authority of the central government (Nwosu,1981)

Between 1990 and 1999, there were about forty of such fragmented groups with twenty-four from the Niger Delta, and the figure has since increased. The reason for the concentration of these divisive bodies in this part of the country is not far-fetched from the political economy of oil as the major revenue earner for the country. The struggle for the control of the oil resource by the political class has led to the militarization of politics in the southern states of Edo, Delta, Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa and Rivers where the oil resource is found in abundance, and in doing this the politicians depend on the services of armed gangs, which *ab initio* were impoverished and made jobless, as earlier statistics showed, by the inhuman policies of successive governments towards these oil-bearing communities.

Let us recall the activities of these groups, some whose names are so frightening and suggestive of a country at war with itself, and we will appreciate their negative impact on the country’s democratic process: The Odua Peoples Congress (OPC), Egbesu Boys of Africa, Chicoco

Movement, Ijaw Youth Council, Bakassi Boys, Niger Delta Volunteer Force and the Movement for the Actualization of Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB). In the northern part of the country, are Arewa Peoples Congress, Al-Sunnah Wal Jamma (Nigerian Taliban), the bandits in the north-west axis of Katsina and Zamfara, in particular, and other dreaded militia groups located in the middle belt, especially among the Tivs, Jukuns, Taros and Igede in Benue and Taraba.

Poverty of the Selection Process: Will They Ever Hang the Boot

Talking about players on the field will be incomplete without dwelling on their mode of selection. Imagine for a moment Baba Otu Mohammed, Christian Chukwu or Segun Odegbami still adorning the national shirts as players in the current national team. That to me is symptomatic of the temporariness of power and all the glamour that surrounds it as attested to by the Holy Book that admonishes us know that “to everything there is a season and a time to every purpose under the heaven.” (Ecclesiastics 3: 1) But the beauty of the game of soccer is that each of these players knows when to quit and seek solace elsewhere. Those who hang on against all biological or physical barriers and refuse to hang their boots do so at their own peril.

But in Nigeria, hardly do political actors want to quit the arena, even where all the indices point toward doing that. That is why in spite the incessant cry for generational shift, “Not too young to run”, “our mumu don do” and other hypes, politics in Nigeria has been a recurring circulation of the same elites who have ruled the country since independence. Some in the face of biological limitations (age, incapacity), as earlier pointed out, are being replaced by their offspring or so called godsons and daughters. Thus, the same family names have remained the recurring decimal in political appointments and recruitment; some since the emergence of the Nigerian state in 1960.

They are the so called “Any Government in Power” (AGIP), to whom every political dispensation is at their beck and call. We earlier pointed out the ages of some African leaders, which do not seem to align with current global realities of youth dominance of the center stage. By this, the Nigerian political stage has been turned into a big barber shop, motion without movement, but merely gyrating on the same spot, or what Nnoli (1982) referred to as “musical chairs and the chairs of music.” But the tragedy of their adventure or misadventure is that more competent hands and sound minds are denied the opportunities of offering their skills for the advancement of society.

Wearing the National Colours

Another dimension to this sit-tight syndrome is the lack of enthusiasm that goes with job performance of some of the leaders. Worldwide, footballers struggle to wear the national colours of their countries. But in Nigeria it is not so. Sometimes, players who engage in rigorous camping exercise are hardly chosen on a typical match day. Rather, positions are reserved for so called experienced players, the strong and mighty, the “big boys” in the team who as they say, have seen it all and would rather not train with the team, but often with disastrous consequence for the team and the nation.

Such malady also resonates in the political arena, where the quality of political recruitment has shown a correlation with the pattern of team selection. At the national level, Nigeria has been

saddled with leaders who were not only ill-prepared for the job but also lack a programme of action. We have had Presidents who were not only reluctant for the job but also emerged merely to assuage some personal, group and class feelings. Thus, at a point, it was becoming a pattern in our democracy that those who actually struggle for power at this highest level never attained it. Let us look at some examples.

1. In the first republic was the late Tafawa Balewa who became the Prime Minister because the natural leader of the Northern Peoples Congress, Sir Ahmadu Bello, would rather prefer to oversee the northern region as Premier from Kaduna than assume power at the centre in Lagos. In 1966, even though the coup that toppled the Balewa government was led by Major Kaduna Nzeogwu, the ultimate beneficiary of power was General Aguyi Ironsi.
2. We also recall the emergence of Shehu Shagari as President in 1979 against all political permutations and popular preferences in the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) for such candidates as Maitama Sule and Adamu Ciroma. Shagari himself had publicly declared then his ambition for a Senatorial seat before presidential fate smiled on him. In the then rival Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) was Obafemi Awolowo who at his death Odumegwu Ojukwu, former Military Governor of Eastern Region, described as “the best president Nigeria never had,” a description, I believe was borne out of Awolowo’s exploits as Premier of the Western Region and Nigeria’s Minister of Finance under the Gowon administration on one part, and the comprehensive manifesto, especially the welfare programme the late sage drew for both his Action Group (AG) and the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) under the first and second republics respectively.
3. In 1983, the Shagari administration was removed by another coup that temporarily brought General Muhamadu Buhari to power, until he was shoved aside in a palace coup led by General Ibrahim Babangida in 1985.
4. Eight years down the line came the crisis that surrounded the late Moshood Abiola's hard-earned victory in the 1993 presidential elections, and the annulment of the results of that election by General Babangida, even though it is on record that the late politician ran one of the best campaigns in the history of electoral politics in Nigeria. Again, the mantle eluded a man who demonstrated a high degree of physical, mental and psychological preparedness for the job and fell on the gentleman technocrat, Ernest Shonekan, who many would rather prefer to see in Boardroom politics than in the muddled soccer pitch called Nigerian politics.
5. Again, the battle against the illegality that was the Shonekan's Interim National Government was spearheaded by civil society and various pro-democracy groups, but General Sani Abacha became the ultimate beneficiary of that struggle through another coup in November 1993.
6. Similarly, President Obasanjo, fresh from prison was imposed on his party and the nation in 1999. Even though he initially appeared unwilling for the job, it was evident that some desperate forces- military, ethnic, economic- actually routed for his ascendancy against such formidable and willing candidates as Alex Ekwueme and Olu Falae. The rest, as they say, is history. But it is very clear that the first tenure of the regime was merely experimental and lackluster with very insignificant results as the president came into office without any known agenda. While some laudable feats might have been recorded in some sectors during his tenure, especially in areas of foreign policy, high external reserves, external debt profile, pensions reform, telecommunications and an institutional confrontation against corruption, a lot more could have been done. For instance, the strings of successes recorded in these areas did not translate into a reduction in the level of poverty, unemployment and deprivations in the power, education and health sectors, which reached alarming proportions in the eight years of the Obasanjo regime.
7. Within the ruling Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), the same order of leadership selection in 2007 also emerged. Those who mounted the soap box, campaigning “from the Atlantic

to the Sahara,” soliciting for the party support as its presidential flag bearer in the 2007 elections, were jettisoned on the eve of the party selection exercise for a candidate who hitherto neither sought to occupy that office nor openly campaigned for the job. Thus, against all permutations, Umaru Yar Adua emerged as the nation’s President.

8. However, his tenure was shortened by physiological impediments that culminated in his death. This paved the way for another unprepared, some say ill-prepared captain of the ship, Goodluck Jonathan, who became the first incumbent to lose a presidential election in Nigeria’s political history.
9. Even where the current occupant of that seat, President Muhammadu Buhari assumed the leadership position after three failed attempts, the positive impact of the administration seems to have been dwarfed by the myriads of unsettled social, economic and political challenges bedeviling the polity.

The bottom line is that the Nigerian political system often emphasizes mundane and primordial considerations instead of competence and merit, and thereby shortchanges the best materials in the choice of political leaders. But the point must be made that we cannot over-emphasize the need for a credible method and process of political recruitment in Nigeria because political leadership is not a game to be subjected to a trial and error process. It certainly requires thorough planning and execution. Similarly, just like the soccer pitch should not have any place for a spent force, position of leadership and authority is not a rehabilitation center for unwilling aspirants, failed entrepreneurs, school drop-outs or jobless retired military men. Also, political leadership is neither a novelty match, nor is the political arena designed for jesters, which appears to be the lot of many so-called political aspirants who were either aggrieved by the nomination exercise carried in their former parties or were victims of manipulation and denigration of the democratic process by cabals across the states and political parties desperate to foist their choices on the nation. And, these political shenanigans are not in short supply in all the political parties today.

The Poverty of the Political Arena

The soccer arena especially in this golden age of football is sophisticated and splendid. Take a look at the well laid green grass, the grandeur in the stadium, the state-of-the-art facilities and the deployment of information technology in virtually all aspects of the game, especially the electronic device to assist referees on the field. That goes to tell us the level of development and the huge financial, material and human investments that often go into the game of football.

But what message does this convey to us about Nigerian politics? To me, it speaks volume about the state of our political arena, which can be likened to a big animal farm with its well-entrenched asymmetries in virtually all areas of life. In addition, it draws our attention to the highly deplorable, underdeveloped and crude nature of that arena. Unlike the modern football pitch, the notoriety of the Nigeria’s political arena for instability is legendary where the goal posts are constantly being shifted even in the middle of a game, where rules are not only broken with impunity as earlier stated, but are made to suit individuals' personal desires and ego.

In Nigeria, the extent to which an individual is subjected to the dictates of the law is a function of the degree of his/her relevance to the political alliances he/she subscribes to. Being found on the side of a ruling party in Nigeria is a major shield against the prying eyes of the law and its agencies. Indeed, contrary to the well-known dictum of the sacredness of societal regulations, a typical Nigerian law is a respecter of persons and positions, especially where one is reputed to be die hard loyalist and sympathizer of the government of the day. No wonder, the fight

against corruption, which we must all applaud, is gradually wearing a human face, with all the trappings of selective justice.

The nature of every organization is a reflection of the values it upholds. The values are the soul of such organizations. For instance, in FIFA, the goal is to break all color barriers as it strives to unify the world through the game of soccer. In achieving this, it holds sacrosanct the values of fair play and anti-racism in all aspects of the game. This, perhaps to the ordinary eye accounts for the seemingly harsh penalties to offenders both on and off the field of play. Every player is seen as a soccer ambassador who must promote the culture and spirit of love, brotherhood and unity of all races. To be sure, FIFA is not a perfect organization, and no human setting is. It is bedeviled by its own internal wrangling. But in spite of this, as it pursues its goal, the overall interest of the game of soccer is paramount, as the organization has demonstrated a very strong sense of mission and tenacity of purpose, arguably unrivaled by any other body in the world.

At the nation-state level, we talk of values in terms of the ideology of that state. This is the driving force or propeller of such state. But it is in formulating an ideology, as earlier pointed out that the Nigerian state has failed since political independence. We mentioned cases of past leaders who came to office without a blueprint of action. Most of them emerged as political opportunists at different moments of the nation's political history. The 2019 elections have come and gone with over 80 political parties that jostled for power at different levels of government. The 2023 elections are around the corner with same number or more parties likely going to contest for different positions. But none of these parties has demonstrated any clear idea on how to turn around the social, economic and political lives of the people. Today, nobody is talking of how to revitalize the ailing educational, health, transportation, power and industrial sectors of the economy. Nobody is promising the electorate anything new, and the electorate are not asking any question for their votes, not just because of their low level of political awareness, but also because they know their votes do not count in winning elections and in who governs. The few that are asking are posing the wrong questions, especially on which ethnic or religious group should produce the next set of rulers, rather than their track-record and what performance index they should be measured with while in office.

The Spectators Stand and the Conspiracy of Silence

The conspiracy of silence in the polity has engendered and encouraged a growing culture of political spectators and bystanders where they should be active participants. Almond and Verba (1965) in their epic had long recognized the three categories of people in every political system. These are the parochial, the subject and the participant even though they also recognized that every political culture is an admixture of these different categories of people. Similarly, we have the three levels of political participation as propounded by the authors, namely, the apathetic, spectators and the participants. While we may not agree with the authors' westernized perspective, their views nevertheless bear some significance to our understanding of Nigerian politics.

In every game of football, the players are insignificant in number when compared to the number of spectators on the stands, some of whom are actually very active in the game, even though on a different platform. For instance, while the players display their soccer artistry on the pitch, the spectators provide the players with the right psychological and emotional environment needed to triumph. However, there are situations spectators go beyond the stands and their entertainment value to assume responsibilities beyond their role, some bothering on violent extremism, turning the field to a battle ground among rival supporters. Some others on the

losing side even vent their frustrations on the match referees and officials. There are lessons we can draw from this for our politics.

A major one is that like the soccer pitch, the political arena in Nigeria is characterized by very few players and many spectators. Of the large percentage of spectators on the political field, some are mere observers while majority are simply apathetic to the political process, completely ignorant and oblivious of issues and happenings in the political arena. Hence the absurdity and contradiction inherent in political contestations in Nigeria where the battle, in most cases, are not as much between the candidates (the ultimate beneficiaries) as between the supporters who end up as mere pawns (thugs for the males and prostitutes for the females) in the hands of same political elites struggling in different political parties for the control of the apparatuses of the state.

Quite a number of these spectators fall into the category I call the Social Media analysts and commentators. The development in ICT has thrown up a new class of social media political activists, but who in reality are the new educated political spectators. They are full of media activities that signify nothing on the field of play, especially on the day of an election. Just as the arguments and sometimes bloodbaths over football matches do not in any way affect the outcome of such matches, the impeccable analyses of these political spectators on the social media hardly impact the results of any election. Ironically, this population cuts across class, education, gender or age divide; an area the realities of Nigerian politics seem at variance with the determinants of political participation as espoused by Almond and Verba (1965).

For instance, contrary to the belief of Almond and Verba, the educated, the affluent and the urban dwellers in Nigeria are as indifferent to the political process as the illiterate, the poor and the rural dwellers. We may ask ourselves the following questions for a better appreciation of this dilemma:

1. What percentage of the so-called educated, rich, urban dwellers or politically conscious Nigerians are registered voters? Certainly, this must be very few especially where governments had to adopt the stick approach before citizens perform this basic civic obligation.
2. What percentage of these aforementioned groups are actual voters during election?
3. What percentage of these groups are members of political parties?
4. What percentage attend political party rallies, canvass support for candidates in diverse ways, comment on salient political issues as occasions demand or even identify with political associations in many positive ways?

Let us briefly look at statistics released by INEC on the 2019 presidential elections in some states and across geo-political zones in Nigeria.

2019 Presidential Elections

State	Percentage of voters
Lagos	17.25
Abia	18
Rivers	19.97
Sokoto	46
Katsina	48.45
Jigawa	55.67

(iccc@inec.gov.ng; @inecnigeria; www.inecnigeria.org; www.inecnews.com).

In 2019, there were 84.7 million voters with 40 percent increase from 2015. Of the total registered voters, only 34.75 percent voted. Kano state had the highest number of votes cast 1,964,751. The highest rate of voters' turnout was recorded in Jigawa, and it stood at 55.67 percent of the registered voters. Katsina and Sokoto states recorded 48.45 and 46 percent respectively. Ironically, these four states (Kano, Jigawa, Katsina and Sokoto) are classified among those with low school enrolment. Compare the turn-out to those of the following "highly educated states" and the contradictions become clearer. Lagos state recorded the lowest voters' turnout, 17.25, Abia state, 18 percent, and Rivers state 19.97 percent.

A number of issues arise from the low turn-out in these aforementioned states in spite of the huge registration figures:

One, I want to submit that it is high time INEC began to look at the entire process of voters' registration. For example, situations where individuals register at work places but have their movement restricted due to security considerations on the day of election does not encourage high participation.

Also, the issue of multiple registration of voters must be critically examined especially where only 37.75 percent of the 84.7 registered voters across the country voted in that election. This figure was the highest in the history of elections in Nigeria. In 2015, it was 68,000,000; 2011, 73,000,000, 61,000,000 in 2007, in 2003, 60,000,000 and 57,000,000 in 1999 (Salau, 2019; businessday.ng).

Similarly, we must begin to carefully interrogate especially the apathy of the middle class, who in an ideal setting, constitutes the engine of social, economic and political growth, and should be the vanguard for the political mobilization and education of the citizenry. And, this is one major tragedy of the Nigerian political system, a system that deliberately deprives those who should be in the forefront from participating in politics. Today, the middle class, is waging a serious battle of survival, following its virtual decimation by obnoxious economic policies of successive administration. They keep off ostensibly for lack of faith in a system where their votes may not count in determining the choice of political leadership. Consequently, to the typical Nigerian, politics becomes a luxury they can least afford in the face of serious debilitating social and economic conditions of life begging for attention. Hence their apathetic mentality, that where you cannot join them, at least you can watch from a distance. But no serious society ever develops with such apathetic disposition of its educated men and women and its youthful population toward social, economic and political issues that directly impact the lives of the people.

The Rules of the Game

Nigeria went through three major systems of government before the inauguration of the Fourth Republic in 1999, namely:

A. Parliamentary form of government (bequeathed by British colonial regime at independence, which lasted for six years (1960-1966). Under this system, the legislative power was vested in the bicameral legislature both at federal and regional levels. While the Senate at the federal

level and House of Chiefs in the Regions were appointed, members of the Houses of Representatives at both levels were elected. The Prime Minister exercised executive powers while the President of the Federation, (the Head of State) performed ceremonial functions.

B. Presidential form of government. Here, legislative and executive powers were separated. Adopted in the Second Republic between 1979 and 1983, the system was designed to accommodate the inadequacies of the parliamentary system, especially the conflict arising from the dual nature of powers of the President and the Prime Minister.

C. Absolute Military regime, first from 1966 to 1979 and later from 1983 to 1999.

D. Although attempts were made to democratize between 1985 and 1998, these efforts were aborted by the different military regimes. Of particular note was the infusion of civilians into executive positions as deputy governors and helmsmen of strategic parastatals under the Babangida regime. This policy was part of IBB's deceptive political agenda to give a sense of progressive democratization, which was a smokescreen that obscured the vicious misdeeds and economic pillage. It merely became what Edwin Madunagu (1993) called "an integument for legitimacy" as the Babangida regime scored very high in compromising the very susceptible political class and the gullible general populace, using institutions such as Mass Agency for Social Mobilisation and Economic Recovery (MAMSER), Directorate for Food Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRI), Centre for Democratic Studies (CDS), Peoples Bank, etcetera, and academics such as Professors Jerry Gana and Omo Omoruyi who gave enticing and persuasive renditions.

The 1999 Constitution

On May 29, 1999, when the present civilian administration was finally inaugurated, another presidential constitution was bequeathed by the General Abubakar Abdusalam-led military regime to regulate the system of government in Nigeria. It should be noted that except the 1960 Independence and 1963 Republican Constitutions, all the others, namely, the 1979, 1989, draft 1995 and 1999 constitutions, were products of different military transition agenda. The current democratic project represents the longest experiment in the history of Nigeria. Since the country's return to democracy in 1999, the system has remained uninterrupted under Presidents Olusegun Obasanjo, Umaru Musa Yar' Adua, Goodluck Jonathan, and now Muhammadu Buhari. While some achievements have been made, there are observable gaps in the Nigerian democratic project, especially on the scales of the rule of law and relationship with the other arms of government.

Under the general provisions of the 1999 constitution, the supremacy of the constitution in terms of its binding force on all authorities and persons, basis of governance and subjection of other laws under it, are clearly expressed. Section 1 to this effect stipulates that:

This constitution is supreme and its provisions shall have binding force on all authorities and persons throughout the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

The Federal Republic of Nigeria shall not be governed, nor shall any person or group of persons take control of the Government of Nigeria or any part thereof, except in accordance with the provisions of this Constitution.

If any other law is inconsistent with the provisions of this Constitution, this Constitution shall prevail, and that other law shall to that extent of the inconsistency be void (FGN, 1999).

This provision is meant to serve not only as basis of governance in the country; it attempts to limit governmental power and ensures constitutionalism. Although the Constitution provided for separation of powers between the legislature (represented by the elected National Assembly-Senate and House of Representatives at the federal level, the House of Assembly in each state, and the local councils), the executive (represented by the elected President, Governor and Chairman at the federal, state and local government level respectively) and the judiciary, there is an inseparable relationship between the legislature and the executive in virtually all areas of their responsibilities, including law making, investigation, oversight functions and policy implementation.

But disrespect for the norms and regulations governing the political process have engendered a new order of constitutional rascality unprecedented in Nigeria's political history. Today, political leaders choose which court judgment to obey or disobey. The rule of law is increasingly being subsumed under the whims and caprices of our rulers as the current political dispensation, more than any in the nation's past continues to witness a gross personalization of state power and utter disregard for the hallowed institution of the judiciary. A constitution, no matter how called, is the soul of any sovereign state. Since the major purpose and functions of the state is the establishment of law and order, protection of lives and property, provision of welfare and participation in the state system, the constitution is needed to define the structure and powers of various instrumentalities of the state required to perform these functions. But in Nigeria, like most third world countries, as Reuben Abati put it, "the stomach rules the head, emotions suppress reason, idiots become kings, imbeciles pose as wise men... every political leader believes his own version of reality".

Some interesting scenarios and analytical templates that typify the breach of some basic tenets of democracy could be found in the manner court orders are treated, and we will give three recent examples to show the contemptuous disregard for the judiciary.

The Dasuki Saga:

As part of the Buhari's administration's anti-graft war, several individuals who served in the previous administration accused of corruption were arrested and charged to court. One of such persons was Sambo Dasuki – President Jonathan's National Security Adviser (NSA). The charges against Dasuki included the alleged diversion of \$2.1 billion meant to aid the prosecution of Nigeria's anti-terror war and illegal possession of fire arms (Okakwu, 2017). In the face of escalating terror attacks in the north-eastern part of the country under Goodluck Jonathan and the accompanying humanitarian disaster, the task before the government was to put in place viable security and counter-terrorism measures. Given the fact that the terrorists recorded several military gains over the Nigerian military setup (military barracks were invaded and military hardware carted away, military checkpoints were under repeated attacks, and towns and villages came under the brutal control of insurgents), the government then needed to spend to acquire modern military equipment and strengthen the Nigerian security architecture. While

the attacks by the insurgents were condemnable in all ramifications, the diversion of funds meant to arrest the situation and prevent further bloodletting was heart-breaking. However, resorting to self-help by detaining Dasuki under a nebulous reason of ‘national interest’, and undermining the rule of law in the process – which has been the approach by the Buhari government – poses a serious puzzle to the Nigerian democratic enterprise.

Dasuki was arrested by the Department of State Services (DSS) in July 2015 – two months after the inauguration of the government. Since his first arraignment before the Abuja division of the Federal High Court (FHC) in 2015, his counsels’ requests for bail were granted half a dozen times by various courts but the DSS consistently disregarded these court orders until the President ‘ordered’ his release in December 2019.

The State Vs El Zakzaky

The second interesting scenario on government response to court orders is the case involving Sheikh Ibraheem El-Zakzaky who is the leader of the Islamic Movement in Nigeria (IMN), also known as the Shiite sect. Sheikh El-Zakzaky was arrested on December 14 2015 after a clash between members of his IMN and officers of the Nigerian Army in the convoy of the Chief of Army Staff, Lieutenant General Tukur Yusuf Burutai, in Zaria, Kaduna State. The sect leader and his wife who were brutally injured and their house destroyed by the Nigerian Army were transferred to the custody of the DSS on December 15 2015. During the clash, the Nigerian security forces killed hundreds of civilians – mostly members of the IMN – and arrested several others. About 347 members of the sect were allegedly killed (Okaku, 2017; Adesomoju, 2016).

Following the arguments of Femi Falana, the counsel to the Shiite leader, the Abuja division of the FHC ruled that his detention without trial was a violation of his human rights under section 35(1) of the Nigerian constitution as amended and the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights, and consequently ordered his release on December 2 2016. Apart from providing 45 days ultimatum for his release, the Judge also ordered that a sum of 50 million naira be paid to the detainees as damages. The Nigerian government ignored the order and only filed an appeal 10 days after the expiration of the ultimatum. More than 100 members of the sect have also been in detention since December 2015 (Adesomoju, 2016; Okaku, 2017).

The case took another dimension when in July 2019, the federal government washed its hands off the case. In a statement signed by the President’s spokesman, Garba Shehu, the government declared that “As far as this country’s Ministry of Justice is concerned, the case involving E-Zakzaky is no longer in its domain...and the government at the centre can be said to be clear of any alleged violations of court orders...” With the Kaduna state government assuming jurisdiction over the case, El Zakzaky had remained in the custody of the state since then.

The State vs Omoyele Sowore

The third example is the arrest, arraignment, detention and eventual release of Omoyele Sowore by the Directorate of State Security (DSS) on August 3 2019 following a plan by Sowore to stage what he called “RevolutionNow” protest. He was released after spending 124 days in

detention despite various court orders granting him bail. To some, the action of the DSS was antithetical to the letters and spirit of the constitution that guarantees citizens' freedom of expression and association. More so that similar protest marches had taken place against previous regimes unhindered.

“The Tribunalisation of Elections”

Similarly, within the context of electoral jurisprudence, today, the country is confronted by what popular lawyer, Femi Falana (2019) referred to as “the tribunalisation of elections in Nigeria”, where elections are no longer won and lost on the field of play but in the tribunals and courts, where parties and candidates resort for justice. The general impression is that on the field of play, as Shakespeare put it, fair is foul and foul is fair, the usual Machiavellian tactic of denying people their rights to freely choose their leaders. So, mandates are wilfully stolen and enormous financial muscles are deployed to defend the brazen assault in courts and tribunals. Those who do not have the means are left to lick their wounds or resign to fate. Hence the apt description of Nigeria's election as “a process where thugs decide, police support, INEC declares and the Court affirm (Etsu, 2019).

While the some sections of the judiciary have indeed risen to the occasion, the onslaught of the Buhari administration that opened the rots, corruption and decadence in that hallowed arm of government, (even if not perfectly executed), points to their obvious limitations in dispensing free and fair electoral judgments, and the extent they might have contributed to the perversion of the country's electoral process. The Supreme Court judgments which reversed the victories of APC and PDP candidates in the 2019 Bayelsa and Imo governorship elections respectively have remained the most controversial in recent times.

The Constitution as a Check

As David Brin rightly noted, “it is said that ‘power corrupts’, but actually it is truer that power attracts the corruptible. The sane are usually attracted by other things than power. When they do act, they think of it as service, which has limits. The tyrant, though, seeks mastery, for which he is insatiable.” For the purpose of achieving the ends of the state, mechanisms are established to prevent the arbitrary use of these powers, and to ensure that rights and liberties of the citizens are guaranteed. These mechanisms vary from country to country and are usually subject to change from time to time. In a liberal democracy (or supposed) like ours, the constitution remains significant in matters relating to the conditions of life of the people, because the emphasis of the document is on the rule of law, a separation of powers and protection of liberties of speech, assembly, religion and property. This is why David Bentham (1994: 157-172) recognized the constitutional arrangement as one of the four cardinal factors that facilitate democratic consolidation in any country.

Constitutionalism excludes cases of absolute rulers, who combine unlimited power in all the three domains of government -the executive, the legislature and the judiciary, since it specifies the limits placed upon these three basic forms of government power. Constitutional limits can come in a variety of forms, but the major ones include: the scope of authority (e.g., in a federal

system, provincial or state governments may have authority over healthcare and education while the federal jurisdiction extends to national defence and transportation, among others.); the mechanisms used in exercising the relevant power (e.g., procedural requirements governing the form and manner of legislation); and civil rights (in the form of a Charter or Bill of Rights) (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2004). Most often, these are in form of individual or group rights against government, rights to things such as free expression, association, equality and due process of law.

In enthroneing constitutionalism, the place of an independent judiciary cannot be over emphasized. This simply means that no one or organ can interfere in the work of any of the courts existing in a country, and it is necessary as a check against constitutional violations, which in Nigeria are very rampant. Today, politicians and other powerful forces in the society blatantly abuse the powers of their offices to the utter dismay of even the courts. The judiciary, often called the last hope of the common man, is daily undermined and harassed on both sides by legislative arrogance and executive lawlessness through the active connivance of some law enforcement agencies, especially the Police.

While the doctrine of separation of powers promotes the independence of the three arms of government – legislature, executive and judiciary – it also allows for checks and balances to prevent the abuse of constitutional powers by these organs of government. Any nation that is desirous of deepening and entrenching its democratic culture must adhere strictly to the doctrine of separation of powers and the principle of checks and balances. In Nigeria, there have been instances when the other arms of government have been muzzled and disregarded by the executive. Let us look at some specific cases.

The Judiciary and Impeachment of Elected Officials

Another area the image of the judiciary seems to have been utterly battered, especially in recent times, is in the exercise of the legislative power of impeachment of public officers, especially the president, governors and chairmen of local governments. It must be pointed out that impeachment is one of the strongest weapons under the 1999 constitution given to the legislature to check the excesses of the executive. And like the 1979, those who drafted the 1999 constitution intended that the provision be applied as a last resort against criminal behaviours that are at variance with the high pedestal those offices are placed.

Basically, the grounds for impeachment in most of countries that provided for it in their constitution are offences that violate the constitutional provision(s). But the ambiguity lays in the fact that there is no precise meaning of impeachable offences as these vary from one country to another. For instance, in the United States, impeachable offenses are described in Article II, Section 4 of the Constitution, which defines executive powers. It states that “the President, Vice President and all civil officers of the United States shall be removed from office on impeachment for, and on conviction of, treason, bribery, or other high crimes and misdemeanors.” Here, impeached officials are not only removed from office, they may be subjected to further criminal prosecution. In Nigeria, Section 143(2b) of the 1999 constitution expressly states what constitute impeachable offence as 'gross misconduct', which is defined in subsection (11) as “a grave violation or breach of the provision of this Constitution or a

misconduct of such nature as amounts in the opinion of the National Assembly to gross misconduct". Similarly, impeachment proceedings not only vary across political systems, they are complex and time consuming. I believe that this has been deliberately designed to ensure that the rigorous process satisfies the twin elements of justice and fairness, on the part of both the prosecutor and the accused.

The United States House of Representatives impeached Presidents Andrew Johnson, Bill Clinton and Donald Trump in 1868, 1998 and 2020 respectively. But the beauty of democracy was vividly displayed, especially in the Clinton's and Trump's cases when the American Senate turned down the decision of the Representatives, thus effectively marking the end of the impeachment saga. Before then, President Richard Nixon had resigned in 1974 as impeachment proceedings were under way to remove him following the Watergate scandal. In November 2000, Joseph Estrada of the Philippines was impeached by the House of Representatives on grounds of corruption. Also, in April 2004, Rolandas Paksas was impeached by the Lithuania's parliament. Paksas was accused of unlawfully granting individuals the Lithuanian citizenship in return for financial support, leaking classified information, and meddling in a privatization deal. And in March 2004, President Proh Moo Hyun of South Korea was impeached by two-thirds majority vote in the National Assembly for allegedly violating the country's electoral laws (Encarta, 2006).

Impeachment became more pronounced as a component of Nigeria's political vocabulary in the Second Republic when the Governor of Kaduna state, Balarabe Musa, was removed by the state's House of Assembly. The Deputy Governor of Kano state was to suffer a similar fate under that dispensation. However, it was clear in both cases as corroborated in the Report of the Political Bureau set up by the Babangida military regime in 1986, that the removal of both officers were motivated more by political considerations than the watchdog role of the different legislatures. At that time, two major constitutional defects that facilitated the impeachment process were highlighted. These were the ouster clause which forbade the Courts from entertaining any action brought before it in respect of the impeachment proceedings, and second, the nebulous nature of offences that amounted to acts of gross misconduct. Unfortunately, in spite of the recommendations of the Political Bureau Report on the need to remedy these defects, the architects of the 1999 constitution completely ignored them. The result of this flaw is the impeachment gale that has swept the entire political landscape under the present dispensation because the legislatures are at the liberty to determine what in their estimation amount to gross misconduct. Today, impeachment has become one cheap instrument in the hands of some overzealous legislatures at all levels to blackmail and intimidate uncooperative executives, who unfortunately have also failed to live above board by soiling their hands in filthy lucre.

At the federal level, President Olusegun Obasanjo was threatened with impeachment in August 2002 by the Ghali Umar N'aaba led House of Representatives. The intention was later jettisoned due to interventions of party machineries and notable Nigerians. At the state level, besides the Deputy Governors of Osun and Lagos States, Iyiola Omisore and Bucknor Akerele respectively, who were impeached in the first regime of the current dispensation, six governors were removed by their different state legislatures, all in controversial circumstances. In fact, since the removal

of the Governor of Bayelsa state, Diepreye Alaimaeyesigha late 2005, the threat of impeachment has assumed the dimension of a scourge. Examples include the controversial manner in which the Governor of Oyo state, Rasheed Ladoja was impeached by 18 of the 32-member state House of Assembly in January, 2006. In the latter part of the same year, the Anambra state Governor, Peter Obi was also impeached in similar circumstances by a faction of the state House of Assembly. Even though in Ekiti state, the Governor, Ayodele Fayose was removed in October, 2006 by overwhelming majority of the State Assembly, the procedure adopted was not without its attendant flaws. The most absurd of course was the political drama in Plateau state House where six out of its twenty-four legislators executed the removal of the governor, Joshua Dariye following his indictment by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) for corruption. The Plateau scenario was more brazen than the episodes in other states, not only in terms of the insignificant numerical strength of those legislators that carried it out, but the overt support the group derived from the law enforcement agencies before, during and after the impeachment exercise. As it was then, the template has remained the same under the Buhari administration. For instance, we have witnessed the controversial removal of the Deputy to Governor Okorochoa of Imo State, Eze Madumere over disagreements between the two gladiators. Similarly, following his defection from the ruling party, the Governor of Benue State, Samuel Ortom was equally threatened with impeachment by a minority of the state's legislators before the act was jettisoned by the State House of Assembly.

To be sure, corruption is a cankerworm and efforts to stamp it out must be commended. But it is my view that such efforts must conform to legitimate rules and regulations, especially as enshrined in the constitution. It is by so doing that the rule of law will not only be sustained, but the entire democratic project would be perfected. The relevant courts had indeed pronounced on the illegality of some of the cases, and that will not detain us here. Suffice it to note that at least, for once, the judiciary was able to wriggle out of the ouster clause that has hitherto constrained its interference in matters of impeachment. By reversing the removal of some of these governors (in Oyo, Anambra and Ekiti), and Deputy Governor (in Imo), the courts have merely justified the age-old belief in the institution as the bastion of democracy and the pillar of freedom and justice. But aside from the legal platform, we cannot gloss over the political significance of this issue, especially the undue interference of external forces, repeatedly the Presidency in the various impeachment proceedings. Whether by coincidence or design, impeachment has suddenly become a political weapon to deal with supposedly antagonistic interests. Under Obasanjo's Peoples Democratic Party, the measure became an instrument to coerce and incorporate recalcitrant party members opposed to party leaders. For instance, it is instructive to note that all impeached governors elected under the PDP platform (except probably in Ekiti state) were seen as allies of Vice President Abubakar Atiku who waged an open battle for political supremacy with the President Obasanjo's wing of the PDP. These intra-party squabbles snowballed into the removal of these governors through forces loyal to their political opponents in their respective state houses of assembly. In Anambra state, a non-PDP state, it was purely the climax of a politically orchestrated drama between an uncooperative PDP dominated house of assembly and an uncompromising All Peoples Grand Alliance (APGA) led minority executive. In prosecuting these battles, impeachment, through extra-legal constitutional means, backed by unusual overt and massive deployment of the nation's security

apparatuses, became a ready tool in the hands of the various houses of assembly operating under the guise of prosecuting an anti-corruption war. It is clear from these cases that the penchant for impeachment is an offshoot of the overhang of an unfading mentality of military dictatorship wherein executive power made the legislative and judicial authorities very subservient.

As an arbiter between political players, the courts too have fallen short of societal expectations at different times. How can we ignore the penchant for conflicting judgments by courts of equal jurisdiction on electoral matters before them? Or the application of different yardsticks, some bothering on technicalities while ignoring the substance in the determination of cases. The judgments of the Election Tribunals in Edo (Oshiomole vs Osunbor), Ekiti (Oni vs Fayemi), and Osun (Aregbesola vs Oyinlola; Adeleke vs Oyetola) are clear examples where the judicial pronouncements were based on different rules of engagement.

In all these, we must however appreciate the structural constraints and dilemma under which the judiciary in Nigeria operates, and which tend to stifle the autonomy of the arm of government. For instance, in spite of constitutional provisions, the funding of the judiciary still remains at the mercy of the executive arm. Before the assumption of the Buhari's government, the budget for the judiciary was on a downward spiral from 95 billion to 73 billion between 2010 and 2015, and to a further dip in 2016 to 70 billion naira. Within this period, several states' judicial workers were on strike or other forms of industrial action for most parts of the months. Within that same period, the Judicial Staff Union of Nigeria sought the intervention of the Courts to compel the Goodluck Jonathan administrative to respect the provisions of the constitution on financial autonomy for the judiciary. Though the financial position of the judiciary has improved, that has not translated into greater efficiency and political neutrality of some of the judges as the issue of judicial corruption seem to suggest.

Assault on Homes of Judicial Officers

In 2016, the Department of State Services (DSS) raided the homes of senior judicial officers seemingly as part of the administration's anti-corruption war. While the fight against corruption is necessary to rid Nigeria's economy of its corrosive effect, the Gestapo approach adopted by the government is capable of further undermining the independence of the judicial arm of government that has been described as the weakest of the three organs of government. On the night of Friday October 7 and early Saturday of October 8, 2016, the personnel of the DSS invaded the homes of different judges located in Abuja, Port Harcourt, Gombe, Kano, Enugu and Sokoto. Those targeted included Justices Adeniyi Ademola and Nnamdi Dingba of the Federal High Court (FHC) Abuja, Justices Sylvester Ngwuta and John Okoro of the Supreme Court, Justice Kabiru Auta of the Kano High Court, Professor Innocent Azubike Umezulike, the Chief Judge of Enugu State, Justices Muazu Pindiga and Samia, Gombe and Sokoto States' Judges respectively. During the operations, some documents were allegedly found linking Ngwuta and Okoro to estates worth over 1.5 billion naira, amounts of huge foreign and Nigerian currencies were allegedly found in Mr. Ademola's residence in addition to some documents of landed properties belonging to him (Okakwu, 2016). While narrating his ordeal in a letter he

wrote to the Chief Justice of the Federation, Justice Adeniyi Ademola revealed that the personnel of the DSS arrived his residence at the middle of the night with mask on their faces and that he was forced at gunpoint to sign a document purportedly containing an inventory of the items found after ransacking his house for six hours. He was whisked away afterwards to the office of the DSS without any warrant of arrest (Agbede, 2016).

The National Judicial Council (NJC) – a creation of the 1999 Constitution of Nigeria as amended to serve as the regulatory body of the judicial arm of government – expressed its grave concerns on the DSS invasion. The body described the action of the gun-wielding agents of the DSS as a threat to the independence of the judicial organ of government, a threat to Nigeria's young democracy, and an attempt to intimidate and cow the judiciary. The NJC maintained that the DSS as an agency in the presidency was primarily concerned with the internal security of Nigeria and therefore acted outside of its functions. Besides, the NJC noted that the petitions or cases against these judicial officers had either been treated or still under consideration by the body as at the time their residences were raided (Adoyi, 2016). The Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) also expressed anger against the 'Gestapo-style' operation by agents of the DSS. The NBA described the operation as sacrilegious and advised the DSS to always respect the rule of law in its operations (BBC News, 9 October, 2016). The President of the upper chamber of the legislature, Senator Bukola Saraki, equally condemned the action of the DSS. According to him, the operation was a needless violation of the rule of law and due process. He noted that some of the sting operations were carried out without warrants and some did not yield any incriminating evidence against the judicial officers. He explained further that while the National Security Agencies Act of 1986 empowered the DSS to take necessary action on economic crimes of national security dimension, the power to coordinate and enforce economic and financial crimes laws belonged to the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and not the DSS (Taiwo-Obalonye, 2017).

Legislative Powers of Oversight

Apart from the judiciary, the legislature has also had its raw share of executive impunity. A major constitutional power of the legislature is to exercise oversight over the executive and its agencies in the discharge of their functions. This oversight function is fundamentally an integral part of the checks and balances between the legislature and executive. Under the current dispensation, key appointees of the federal government have failed to honour national assembly's invitations for questioning on matters of national importance, with the presidency not in the mood to call such erring officers to order. A case in point was the refusal of the former Inspector General of Police (IGP) – Mr. Ibrahim Idris – to honour the invitations of the Senate to answer questions bothering on internal security. The IGP was invited on three different occasions and he declined to appear before the Senate on each occasion; a behaviour that led the members of Senate to pass a vote of no confidence on the IGP and declare him unfit to hold any public office. Although opinions were divided on the attitude of the IGP, the majority agreed that the IGP erred by shunning Senate summons. The argument is that it is within the constitutional powers of the legislature to carry out investigative hearings on matters of national importance (Aborisade, Adesomoju & Aluko, 2018). Interestingly, following the suit filed by

the IGP challenging the powers of Senate to summon him, the FHC in Abuja ruled on October 2, 2018 that the suit amounted to an abuse of court processes because the IGP was inexcusable. The presiding judge, Justice John Tsoho, argued that the IGP's suit was aimed at preventing the Senate from carrying out its constitutional and legitimate responsibilities and consequently struck it out (Olasunmi, 2018). Other government appointees who had disregarded Senate summons at different times included former Secretary to the Government of the Federation – Babachir Lawal, Customs Boss – Hameed Ali, and Minister of Power, Works and Housing – Babatunde Fashola. Irked by executive disregard for the legislature, Senate protested sometime in 2017 by refusing to screen 27 Resident Electoral Commissioners (RECS) and two Ministers nominated by the President (Sotubo, 2017).

Power of Confirmation of Appointment: The Magu Controversy

Another sour point in the executive-legislative relationship was President Buhari's retention of Mr. Ibrahim Magu as the Acting Chairman of the EFCC despite appearing before the Senate as required by the Constitution and failing the upper chamber's screening on two different occasions. In July 2016, Professor Yemi Osinbajo – Nigeria's Vice President who was then serving as the Acting President due to president Buhari's medical sojourn in the United Kingdom – requested the Senate to confirm Mr. Ibrahim Magu's nomination as the Chairman of the EFCC through a letter signed by him. However, Mr. Magu's confirmation hearing did not hold until December 15 2016. Relying on a confidential security report from the DSS, the Senate declined confirming Mr. Magu (Adebayo, 2016). The confidential report sent to the Senate revealed that Mr. Magu had failed the integrity test. Although Mr Magu was rejected, the Senate approved the screening of the four members of the EFCC board it received alongside Magu (Ndujihe, Umoru, Kumolu, Oke & Erunke, 2016). This setback notwithstanding, President Buhari re-presented Magu's name to the Senate for confirmation in 2017. During the second appearance before the Senate on March 15 2017, the DSS – after the necessary background security checks – reaffirmed its earlier position that the Mr. Magu lacked the moral probity to assume the position of the substantive chairman of the EFCC. The DSS questioned the credibility of Mr. Magu and explained that his candidacy would eventually constitute a liability to government's anti-corruption war. Following the damning report from the DSS, the re-appointment of Mr. Magu was rejected by the Senate (Adebayo, 2017). In defiance to the recommendation of the Senate, the President retained Mr. Ibrahim Magu as the Acting Chairman of the EFCC until 2020 when he was eventually fired. This situation worsened the relations between both arms of government.

The Invasion of the National Assembly Complex

Perhaps, the most daring assault on the legislature by the executive was the invasion of the national assembly complex by the DSS in August 2018. The siege on the National Assembly by the agents of the DSS has been described by many as a coup on democracy. Key figures in government ignored the fact that the attempt by the executive to interfere in legislative matters

and prevent the national assembly members from sitting could worsen the already delicate rivalry between the two arms of government. Following the gale of defection from the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) to the opposition People's Democratic Party (PDP) by key members of the National Assembly including the Senate President – Bukola Saraki, the continued and persistent demand by the Chairman of the APC that the Senate President must be removed overheated the polity and set the two arms of government on the path of conflict. In the early morning of August 7 2018, the operatives of the DSS – masked and armed to the teeth – invaded the premises of the national assembly and prevented federal lawmakers from gaining access. The invasion that was aired live around the world enraged Nigerians and members of the international community. The invasion was described as an attempt to provide a security cover for the APC senators who had been given the marching order to orchestrate a leadership change in the upper chamber of the legislature (Tribune Newspaper, August 9, 2018). Although the Director of the DSS consequently lost his job, the local and international reverberations that followed the incident exposed the autocratic tendencies in some agencies of government. Some even doubted the genuineness of the move to sack Mr Lawal Daura as his sack was interpreted as a damage control measure to redeem the battered image of the executive following local and international outcry. His sack did not exonerate the presidency of complicity.

The negative impact of these altercations on the polity could be seen in the delays by the National Assembly to pass appropriation bills, the controversy over the amendments to the Electoral Act, and the refusal of the President to give his assent to the amended bill and a similar bill amending the Petroleum Industry Bill targeted at improving the efficiency of the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation.

Nevertheless, the relationship with the legislature was not completely conflicting. For instance, the interface between the executive and legislator that resulted in signing into law, a bill granting financial autonomy to states judiciary and legislature by the President Buhari alluded to some sort of cooperative relations between the executive and the legislature. Hitherto, the governors had unfettered access to the finances of both the legislature and the judiciary, and had used that to compromise their independence by withholding legitimate budgetary allocations to these organs. Even though the situation in most states has not completely changed, granting financial autonomy to these two bodies as envisaged in the amendments to the constitution will go a long way to maintaining the respect and dignity of these institutions, a vital ingredient for the checks and balances inherent in the separation of their powers.

Organised Labour and the Poverty of Minimum Wage in Nigeria.

Vice-Chancellor, in discussing democratization, permit me to dwell briefly on a vital area in my academic research, which as earlier pointed out, attracted my attention in the Doctoral thesis, namely, the historical role of organized labour or what we popularly refer to as trade unions in Nigeria's democratic journey. The plight of the workforce also drew our attention

during my MBA programme where I wrote my dissertation in the field of Human Resources Management.

As our studies have shown, there seems no other area the poverty of politics and the politics of poverty in Nigeria have been better exemplified than in the plight of organized labour and the struggle against the dehumanizing minimum wage in the country (Ajayi, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2003, 2005). This is less surprising given the ideological bifurcation between capital and labor globally. Particularly to owners of capital, every gain of labour, whether imaginary or real, is seen as a loss of profit. It is this mindset, among other factors, that account for the dehumanization of the workforce all over the world as reflected in the low wage regime of most countries, especially in Africa. No wonder, Karl Marx in his 1876 book, "The Capital", asserted that, the value of labour-power was the major foundation of trade unions. The point was more poignantly expressed in the motto of the Nigerian Labour Congress, "Labour Creates Wealth."

A minimum wage sets the benchmark for the share of labor in the benefits of production. Across the world, the minimum wage has become a 'yardstick for measuring the material wealth for labour in polity. This is the reason every policy announcement on the minimum wage usually engenders some ripples across all the sectors of a nation's political economy.

On one side, are those who believe that government owes it an obligation to pay workers 'living wages' that would liberate them from the misery index position they have been confined to for a long time. To this group, a decent wage comparable to what obtains in the private sector represents a major means of injecting the nation's workforce with the right caliber of manpower, competition and efficiency. On the other divide, are those who see the minimum wage issue as a wrong prescription for the woes of the working class, as it relegates the vital issues of productivity and appropriate price index, which are considered fundamental to the improved conditions of the working class.

Minimum Wage in Historical Perspective

The Colonial Era

The minimum wage crisis is perhaps as old as the Nigerian state. The political and economic structure of colonialism, aptly recorded by Rodney (1972), Nnoli (1981), Ake (1981), Onimode (1983) and Osoba (1980), among several others, were predicated on the dehumanization of the working class especially through the payment of exploitatively wages. Workers' response to this form of exploitation could be seen in the first major attempt in the early 1900s at organizing themselves into trade unions. The Civil Service Union and the Nigeria Union of Teachers, the first set of trade unions, were able to rally their members against unjust and discriminatory colonial wages and other deprivations. Series of agitation at that period led to the 1934 Hunt's Commission and the 1935 Gorsuch Initiative that structured wages and salaries.

Workers' grievances were compounded by the negative impact of the Second World War, especially the attendant increases the war brought on prices of goods and services. The inflationary impact of the war on an already famished workforce led to series of agitation that

climaxed in the 1945 General Strike over the nonpayment of 'Cost of Living Allowance' (COLA).

The emergence of Michael Imoudu of the Nigeria Railways Union on the Nigerian labor scene gave further impetus to labor activism in contradistinction to the lackluster Bankole's leadership of the Civil Service Union. Imoudu's radicalism and tenacity led to the first general strike and a consequent fifty per cent rise in pay in 1945.

Agitations for further increase in salaries continued thereafter, leading to the constitution of A.F. Moller Wages Commission in 1947. The struggle assumed a greater political dimension in 1949 when the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroon's (NCNC) joined the fray to demand from the colonial government a minimum wage of five shillings per day. In the 1950s, similar agitations took place to press home the demands of Nigerian workers. Prominent among these was the 1952 Nduka Eze-led mercantile workers strike, which led to another thirty per cent increase in workers' salaries. Also, there was the Walter Harragin Commission of 1955 set up to examine the demands for increase in wages. This was followed up by another Commission headed by Sir Louis Mbanefo in 1959 (Ananaba 1969, Ajayi, 2000a, 2000b).

At Independence: Balewa-Gowon

The wage issue became a major point in the nationalist struggle for political independence. But while it is true that independence brought about political freedom for workers, the same could not be said of their economic survival. This is evidenced in the series of agitation for improved working conditions by organized labor since 1960. For instance, Labour's resentment against the Balewa administration led to the setting up of the Morgan Commission in 1964. Labor's demand at this time centered on not only a significant wage increase but also payment of arrears, abolition of the daily paid system, removing the lopsidedness in the ratio of earnings of a messenger and permanent secretary put at 1:40, and the applicability of any wage increase to both the federal and regional workers as well as the private sector. These demands were granted after a thirteen-day strike by the four unions that made up the Joint Action Committee. These were the United Labour Congress, Nigeria Trade Union Congress, Nigeria Workers Union, and Labour Unity Front (Ananaba 1969).

The Nigerian civil war dealt a devastating blow on the Nigerian workers, both in terms of decimation of their rank and file, and capacity to organize as one common front. However, the end of the war in 1970 provided another opportunity for mobilization on a more united platform. Despite the dramatic boom of the Nigerian economy in the 1970s, with growth rate jumping from 3.5 percent in 1960/67 to 9.6 percent in 1970/71 and in 1971/72, the living standard of the citizens did not considerably improve. At the same period, the total earnings from export had risen from the 1963 level of 259.8 million naira to 953.2 million naira in 1970/71. Of these figures, oil accounted for 7.4 million and 584.2 million naira respectively. But following the civil war, inflation led to loss in value of wages and salaries. Workers in the Eastern part of the country were worse hit as some were physically incapacitated and lost valuable property to the war. The industrial relations atmosphere during this period was reflected in the numerous

disputes recorded between 1970 and 1979. Statistics show that during this period, there were 2997 trade disputes resulting in 2124 work stoppages across the country. A lot of these crises were not unconnected with the demand for wage increase (Ajayi 1999 & Bello 1999).

Thus, on June 20, 1970, the Simeon Adebayo Commission on wages was constituted by the administration of General Gowon. This effort yielded an interim award of 48 Naira each to all those earning less than 1000 Naira. This was to take a retroactive effect from 1st April, 1970. A follow-up to this took place in August 1971 when salaries of junior and senior workers were increased by 20 per cent and 8 per cent respectively. Under the award too, salaries of school leavers enjoyed an increase of 18 percent. Another major salary review was undertaken in 1974 following the inauguration of the Udoji Commission two years earlier. The result of these efforts was a 30 percent rise in salaries of civil servants (Dudley 1982, Ajayi 1999c, Ajayi, 2003).

Murtala-Obasanjo Regime

The policy of limited intervention and strategy of incorporation of the unions during the Murtala-Obasanjo regime (1975-1979) was able to checkmate the Hassan Sunmonu-led labour movement such that not only was a 'mass purge' of the civil service accomplished, a regime of wage freeze, including a ban on fringe benefits and vehicle loans payable to workers was instituted. (Ajayi, 1998)

Shagari Administration

The Congress later found its feet with the restoration of civil-democratic rule in 1979. The new-found agility of labour during the second republic which culminated in another general strike led to a major review of salaries and allowances, the restoration of vehicle loans, and the declaration of May Day as public holiday in 1981. A new minimum wage of N125 was also passed into law by the National Assembly. (Ajayi, 1999)

Another Military Rule

These 'gains' were, however, lost to the new wave of military incursions into the nation's political arena in 1983. Militarism and its debilitating economic policies led to another round of pauperization of the working class, especially through various draconian legislations. This unpleasant atmosphere explains the helplessness of labour under the Buhari-Idiagbon dispensation and even the more benevolent Babangida dispensation, which granted a minimum wage of N250, and a later 45 percent increase in wages. The gestures of the Babangida government in particular, must, however, be understood against the background of the regime's Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) and the attendant worsening living conditions and inflationary impact of that policy. Labour was literally decimated under the Abacha government as the Nigeria Labour Congress was proscribed thereby foreclosing the possibility of dialogue between the two institutions. Even though the Vision 2010 set up by the same administration had noted in its report that a worker with three children requires at least N13500 per month to

live a normal life, the Abacha government was completely averse to grumblings in labour circles (Egede 1999).

Respite, however, came in 1998 when General Abdulsalami Abubakar took over the reins of government following the death of General Abacha. The new regime's approach to the issue of wage was based on a policy of deregulation which recognizes the need for the decentralization of collective bargaining machinery along the different tiers of government. It was based on this premise that the Federal Government in September 1998 announced a minimum wage of N5200 for federal worker, and directed other tiers of government to negotiate with their employees based on their capacity to pay. Consequently, the Federal Government went ahead to pay its workers without consultations with states and Local Government councils.

The crisis generated by this new policy had hardly erupted when the Federal Government announced in its 1999 budget broadcast a downward review of the minimum wage to 3000 Naira. This policy change was made four months after some federal workers had already earned the new pay, and when state workers were still negotiating a N5200 minimum wage. The confusion which the new directive created across the country led to the setting up of the Mike Akhigbe panel to dialogue with labor. The committee recommended a basic salary of not less than N1299 for public employees at all levels, while each state or local government would negotiate fringe benefits with its own workers (Lakemfa, 1999).

The restriction on states and local government was rejected by the Nigeria Labour Congress, which maintained a position of equality of all workers irrespective of the tier of government that employed them. In fact, the Congress had equally canvassed an equality in pay to federal workers and their counterparts of similar qualification, experience and position in the service of oil producing states. The basis of this position was the almost exclusive reliance of the federal government on proceeds from oil, a resource that belongs to the state and local governments¹⁷. A compromise between government and labor was later struck. This gave a marginal difference of five hundred Naira in favor of federal employees. By this, the initial offer of N5200 was reduced to N3660 for federal workers, and employees in such oil producing states as Delta, Bayelsa, Rivers and the cosmopolitan Lagos State. Workers in other states are to be paid N3080.

A fall-out of this accord was the unwillingness of most state governments to honor the terms of agreement. For instance, Military Administrators of states in the northern parts of the country met and decided they would not pay the new rate. Instead, they resolved to pay the minimum pay of N1300 and old fringe benefits of N400 for transportation, meal subsidy, rent and utility, bringing the total figure to N1700 per month. Some states such as Kaduna went ahead to reduce the workforce in a manner unprecedented in the country's labor history. Labour responded through the strike weapon in not less than twenty-eight states of the federation. The strike was suspended in solidarity with the transition programme that ushered in the Obasanjo administration in May 1999.

The Obasanjo Civilian Administration

From the picture above, it was obvious that the new civilian government at its inception in 1999 inherited a tense, intolerable industrial relations system, and a demoralized workforce across the country. The positive expectations of the working class in the democratization process as a bastion of hope following decades of misery could therefore be easily understood. The three political parties that contested the federal elections realized this much as each promised during their campaigns, labor-friendly and people-oriented programs on assumption of office.

Perhaps, in fulfillment of this promise, President Obasanjo used the occasion of the 2000 May Day celebration to announce a new minimum wage of N5500 per month payable to all categories of workers in Nigeria with effect from the day it was proclaimed. Under this arrangement, the least federal worker would earn N7500 representing an increase of 105 percent from N3500. In justifying the increase, the President alluded to his 'great concern at the plight of workers' who according to him 'have not only suffered a great deal during the last 20 years of economic stagnation and decline but have added significantly to the number of Nigerians living in abject poverty' .

Also, in the new wage policy, was the provision for an automatic upward review of the wage by 25 percent in the year 2001, and by another 15 percent in 2002, both depending on what the president called 'the state of the economy'. The president's pronouncements were equally given the necessary legislative backing by both arms of the National Assembly.

No doubt, the federal governments offer came as a major morale booster to a class already pauperized by long years of military occupation. But the euphoria did not last long as the series of aftermath events clearly showed. (Ajayi, 2004)

Goodluck Jonathan Regime

The Goodluck Jonathan administration had used the occasion of the Workers Day celebrations in May 2010 to announce a new minimum wage of 18000 naira, which was to become effective in August of that year. The failure of government to review the 7500 naira had led to another round of agitations in labor circles leading to the issuance of a notice of a 5-day warning strike. Negotiations with the Nigerian Labor Congress led by Abdulwaheed Omar, culminated in the setting up of the Joint Public Service Negotiating Council. President Jonathan did not only assure the workers of a new wage, a promise he eventually fulfilled, he also indicated that not only would The National Committee on Parameters for Wages in the public sector develop a template for a gradual adjustment of workers' salaries, the country would also attain a point where workers would not need to negotiate for salary increase, both ideas that turned out largely to be utopian, as the restlessness of organized labour under the Muhammadu Buhari administration has clearly shown.

Buhari's Government

A number of factors, in addition to the provision under the subsisting agreement between government and labor have compelled a renegotiation of the existing 18000 Naira minimum wage under the Buhari's government. They include the slide of the country's economy towards a recession, hyper-inflationary trends that has greatly devalued the workers earnings, the unbridled corruption of the political class as reflected in the wide gap in their standard of living, taste and acquisition compared with the working class, coupled with their disproportionate share of the national wealth through outrageous salaries and allowances. Consequently, organized labor had forwarded to the government, by way of a declaration of industrial dispute, a request for the payment of a new minimum wage of 66000 naira in the light of the aforementioned reasons, especially the rising cost of living and the expectations of an average worker to have a decent living.

Government response was the setting up of a 29-man tripartite committee, composed of government representatives, the organized labor and the organized private sector to negotiate the new minimum wage. Feelers that the committee's assignment was heading for the rocks emerged when the Minister of Labor, Chris Ngige, did not only publicly denounce the claims by labor that the committee had agreed on a 30000 Naira minimum wage, but also announced the federal government position on 24000 naira. But labor had responded that it never proposed the 30000 Naira benchmark during the tripartite negotiations, and that the figure was agreed upon as a compromise on its part. Another twist was added to the stalemate when the umbrella of state governors in the country, the Nigerian Governors Forum through its Chairman, Abdul'azzez Yari, issued a statement expressing dissatisfaction at the negotiations on the minimum wage, denounced the 30000 naira bandied by labor, and went further to recommend an increase of a miserly two naira to bring the minimum wage to N20000 (twenty thousand naira). Expectedly, this proposal was not only rejected by labor, it went further to call on its members to take decisive political action by voting out in the 2019 general elections any state governor that opposed the position of labor on the wage issue.

To further press their demand, the three labor organizations in the country, notably, the Nigerian Labour Congress, the Trade Union Congress and the United Labor Congress jointly resolved to proceed on a general strike on November 12 2018, as nothing to them suggested that "this government is willing to demonstrate honor and integrity in relating with Nigerian workers and masses." Preceding the strike, was what the labor termed a day of "National Outrage and Mourning" observed all over the country on 30th October 2018, where rallies and processions around major cities of the country held to sensitize the public on the abject conditions of the Nigerian workers and pensioners, the insensitivity of government to labor-related issues and other obnoxious policies of government against workers, and to mobilize members of the public on the impending strike.. This was to be followed by a meeting of the Joint Central Working Committee, comprising all the labor centers in the country, with a view to receiving reports from their branches and making final preparations for its confrontation with government.

Government reaction to the threat of organized labor was the invocation of the provision in the 2004 Trade Dispute Act of “no work no pay”, by which workers would not be entitled to their salaries for the period they were on strike, a position the President of the Nigerian Labor Congress, Ayuba Wabba debunked by retreating to the weapon of strike as the right of workers under subsisting labor laws; a right that differentiates workers from slaves. Specifically, the labor leader’s reference to Section 41 of the Trade Dispute Act, which “provided condition precedent for a worker that is working in areas that are dangerous to proceed on strike by issuing a 15-day notice” was a further affirmation of his belief that government’s posturing was a mere attempt at suppressing and cajoling workers against the exercise of their fundamental human rights to protest unbearable organization’s working policies.

Notably however, the Governors Forum at its meeting, with the Minister of Labour, Budget and Planning, Udo Udoma; and the Chairman, Salaries, Income and Wages Commission, R.O. Egbule in attendance, held on the day of the workers’ solidarity rallies, announced a re-consideration of its earlier stance and offered to pay the sum of 22500 naira as the minimum wage to state workers. This decision, according to them, were anchored on the capacity of the states to pay and sustain such payment, the need to free resources for other developmental needs such that no state would commit more than fifty percent of its monthly earnings to payment of salaries of public servants who by the statement of the governors, accounted for less than five percent of their population. With this pronouncement by the state governors, it thus appeared the stage was set for the planned November 12 nation-wide industrial action, as labor did not only reject the proposed 22500 naira, but also cast aspersion on the Governors Forum as an illegal entity, unknown to the extant labor laws of the country, especially in matters relating to negotiations. Labor had also re-affirmed its position on the 30000 naira it has consistently argued was agreed at the tripartite meeting, and also demanded that the agreement be forwarded to the President for onward transmission to the National Assembly for promulgation into law.

In the midst of the impasse, the federal government proceeded to summon another meeting of the tripartite committee on Sunday, November 4 2018, which the organized labor not only boycotted, but also went ahead to announce same day the commencement of the strike on Tuesday November 6th. Labor’s threat seemed to have yielded the desired effect when after its meeting, the committee announced the federal government decision to accede to labor’s position on the 30000 Naira minimum wage; a move that led the leadership of labor to suspend the strike that should have commenced the following day.

Issues in Minimum Wage

For our purpose here, three major issues arising from wage issue shall be briefly discussed. These consist of the position of state governments and attendant constitutional matters, the place of the organized private sector; and the political economy of the new minimum wage.

The Position of State Governments

Historically, state governments have always voiced their opposition to every proposed wage increase. Their common grounds have always been their inability to pay commensurate wages as the federal government, based on the factors of affordability, sustainability and equitable resource allocation. There is also inequity in the distribution of federally generated revenue. This confers on the federal government a disproportionate chunk of these resources, such that in the past the federal government would fix a minimum wage without the input of state governments. The revenue profile of the states, the governors have consistently argued, could not match the new wage regime, especially in the face of daunting developmental challenges across the states of the federation. To be sure, most state governments are owing their workers backlog of unpaid salaries; some, upward of fifteen months. In some other cases, workers are paid percentages of their monthly salaries, ranging between 10 and 50, depending on the benevolence of the state governor in any particular month. Some other states have hidden under the canopy of wage increase to down size their workforce, and in the process causing severe job losses, in addition to compounding the already debilitating condition of the workers.

However, we must note that constitutionally, the power to legislate over minimum wage is vested in the federal government, as contained in the Executive list and specifically the Second Schedule of the Nigerian constitution, where the federal government is expressly empowered to legislate on labor including ‘trade unions, industrial relations, conditions, safety and welfare of labor, industrial disputes, prescribing a national minimum wage for the federation or any part thereof and industrial arbitrations.’ And, here lies the dilemma of a federation as Nigeria, with a strong, powerful center superintending over weak and incompetent states as its component units. But the beauty of the federal system is that while the federal government is constitutionally empowered to set a benchmark, each level of government could actually determine what it could afford to pay its employees based on prevailing social and economic realities. In this case, a state may even decide to pay more than the stated minimum, but certainly not less. While this provision seems to have to put to rest the right of the federal government to announce a minimum wage, it must be noted that in exercising this right, no sensible government desirous of a harmonious inter-government relations would ignore the place of consultation, bargaining and compromise among the tiers of government, and in this case, federal-states-local government on one part, and legislative-executive relations on the other.

The Role of the Organized Private Sector

A discussion of the minimum wage issue would perhaps be incomplete without mentioning the place of the organized private sector in the entire struggle. At every tripartite forum engaged to negotiate a new wage structure, the natural antagonistic relationship between labor and capital has always manifested itself. In almost all cases, the Nigerian Employers Consultative Association (NECA), as the umbrella of private entrepreneurs, had openly expressed displeasure at salary increase, even though some private establishments pay wages higher than those obtainable in the public sector. In fact, under the Obasanjo regime, NECA had directed its members not to comply with the federal government circular on the new pay

structure until an enabling law was passed by the National Assembly. Even when it eventually pledged its loyalty to the new law, NECA unilaterally adopted a maximum gross minimum wage of N5500 for the private sector workers, to the consternation and condemnation of the unions in the private sector.

NECA's position has always been informed by what it considered the economic realities, notably the high cost of doing business in Nigeria, occasioned by the dearth of basic infrastructure -electricity, water, transportation among others- coupled with the low productivity level of Nigerian workers. Apart from being antithetical to the profit motive of employers, the private sector also sees wage increase as a wrong prescription for the ills of Nigerian workers, and has always advocated for appropriate macroeconomic measures that would increase productivity and stabilize prices of goods and services with a view to improving the purchasing power. Such measures are aimed at the quality and not the volume of earnings.

The Political Economy

The structure of Nigeria's political economy which bears direct relevance to the question of the minimum wage struggle could be found in the asymmetric class character of the society, the uneven distribution of governmental patronage, pervasive corruption, profligacy and flagrant display of ostentation and affluence in the midst of unemployment, poverty, illiteracy, ignorance, non- accountability of leadership at all levels and several government policies which have negative impact on the standard of living of the people. The workers, as part and parcel of the society, are not immune to these general maladies and their reactions have been unique in several respects.

Organized labour has often drawn a correlation between persistent demand for wage increase and this misery index position workers have found themselves over the years. These incessant demands for improved pay are often reinforced by the general perception of governments at all levels as agencies of waste and corruption with unbridled appetite for uneconomic and unbeneficial expenditure. All it takes to yield to every demand for wage increase, Labor has often argued, is the political will on the part of leaders to free funds from unproductive areas with no impact on economic activities. Some of these areas of waste, according to the Vanguard (2000), a leading Nigerian Newspaper, include expenditure on protocols and multiplicity of agencies of government with overlapping responsibilities, excessive payments to public functionaries, especially political office holders, subsidization of purely commercial ventures, and the provision of excessive paraphernalia of office (fleet of exotic cars, expensive accommodation and scores of allowances). Others are the over- invoicing of government expenditures and the corruption that characterizes the process of contract awards and project execution (Onimode 1983).

The Nigeria Labour Congress painted a gloomy picture of the process of self- accumulation in the National Assembly between 1999 and 2003 vis-à-vis its demand for survival wage for workers. These consisted of a monthly pay of N480,000, N3.5 million furniture allowance, N450,000 to hire constituency office, N15000 to clear telephone bills monthly, N15000 to clear refuse in residence monthly, and N5000 entertainment allowance monthly. The Idris Kuta Panel set up to probe the activities of the Chuba Okadigbo-led Senate also released a more terrifying account of the financial extravagance that took place in the National Assembly. The report

showed how 22,950,000:00 and 16,950,000:00 Naira was spent on the welfare of the Senate President and Deputy Senate President respectively. These amounts, according to the Nigeria Labour Congress, could have employed over 7000 workers at the then prevailing minimum wage of N5500. Of course, the squander mania also pervaded the executive arm of government. It becomes more devastating when this largesse are openly flaunted as symbols of the new found status, power, privilege and positions in the society. Former Senate President Okadigbo's open declaration at the height of the probe of the upper legislative arm that he had not been elected to spread poverty, no doubt, typified the height of insensitivity and irresponsibility of elected leaders in the country.

Similarly, under the Buhari administration, and in the midst of the controversy over the actual income of the nation's political class, Senator Shehu Sani, representing Kaduna Central in the National Assembly, also told a bewildered nation that the monthly pay of Nigerian Senators amounted to the sum of N13.5m (thirteen million, five hundred thousand naira), and another N700,000 (seven hundred thousand naira) unaccounted for. The gross insensitivity of the legislators to the misery in the country was further contained in the reaction of Sabi Abdullahi, the spokesman of the Senate to the public outcry against Shehu Sani's revelations, when Abdullahi told a bewildered nation that "Sani after all did not disclose anything new" as the amounts quoted were provided for in the budget of the National Assembly, which as he also claimed, was an "open document" (The Cable.ng). It is this negative impression about government and its agencies, especially their disdain for the rest of the society that usually inform the workers struggle to get what they consider their rightful share of national resources. And so long as this inequality persists, the spate of agitation would as well be a recurring feature of the nation's industrial relations.

Quite related to this financial recklessness of government functionaries is the poor handling of some government economic policies especially those with direct impact on the lives of the people. A notable case is the persistent upward adjustment in the prices of petroleum products occasioned by the so-called attempts at deregulating the petroleum sector. Such policies are contrived in such a manner that the goodwill occasioned by every wage increase is lost to hyper inflationary trends across various sectors of the economy, given the transmission effect of the petroleum products on the other sectors of the economy, notably transportation, housing and food, among others. In fact, the inflationary impact of this persistent increase in the cost of petroleum and other products formed the kernel of labour's demand on the Buhari's government to honor the agreement between government and labor to review upward the 2015 agreement on 18000 naira, and labor's subsequent demand for a minimum wage of 66000 naira.

While it may be correct to state that every democratic dispensation has always afforded the Nigerian workers the right to exercise their freedom of association and to organize to fight for their legitimate entitlements, we must admit that for organized labour in Nigeria, it is not yet *Uhuru*. If anything, the minimum wage issue has further drawn attention to certain imperfections inherent in the body polity which need to be urgently addressed. Among these are the suzerainty of the federal government over the states and local government in a federal system as Nigeria: the lingering crisis over revenue allocation to the different tiers of government, especially the need to financially empower the states and local governments to meet the demands of the populace; the need for harmonious relationship between the legislative and executive organs of government; and the desirability of government to impact positively on the lives of the citizenry through realistic and meaningful policies and programs that would bridge the gap between the affluent and the down-trodden, especially in the areas of education, health, transportation, rural development, power generation and other enabling environments

that would ensure the growth and sustainability of the private sector. Where these are in place, the unbearable pressure on workers' salaries would have been drastically reduced. By this, government will be seen as not only accountable but responsible. It will also provide a leverage that will enable the government to correct the negative perception of the public service as opportunities for self-enrichment. Similarly, the fight against corruption must be intensified and culprits prosecuted, not only to serve as deterrent, but to re-enact the spirit of sacrifice, commitment and service of the nation's workforce. Above all, the issue of an appropriate wage cannot be divorced from the general need to reduce the high level of poverty, unemployment, ignorance and backwardness in the wider society. Achieving these goals is fundamental to meaningful and prosperous life. But as long as the pervasive system of deprivations, injustice and marginalization persists, an end to agitation for improved wage may not be witnessed in the nearest future. Political struggle may bring these issues to be codified and made justiciable under citizen's fundamental human rights.

Lastly, the struggle for a new minimum wage under the Buhari administration is a further proof of the rediscovery of the vibrancy and potency of the labor movement in Nigeria since the advent of the current democratic dispensation in 1999, contrary to their emasculation under successive military juntas. The current scenario in the country validates Fajana's position that for collective bargaining to thrive in any society, there are conditions precedent, and these include a favorable political climate, freedom of association, the ability of one party action to affect the other, recognition of trade unionism, stability of workers' organization, and the ability of the parties to negotiate and reach agreements. The expectations are that opening up the political space would further engender the spirit of tolerance, bargaining and consensus needed for harmonious working relations between the government, labor and the organized private sector. Yes organized labour has been very permissive over the years. More germane here is the issue of the ideological summersault of ex-labour leaders who foray into partisan politics and, soon after, their stupendous wealth. Labour leaders have been too indolent in their negotiations, collusive by shortening the length of industrial action.

There is need for Labour to determine the commodity basket that comprise the minimum of housing, food, clothing, transportation, medical bills, minimum number of dependants and every basic necessity that is required for the lowest grade of worker to live and re-present himself at the workplace for continuous wealth creation. These should be aggregated in the commodity basket and valued in terms of money, and should be the minimum acceptable wage.

The two main drivers of immoderation are mismanagement of the economy which worsens the exchange rate and pump-price of petroleum products which is determined by exchange rate and international price of crude oil. Therefore, I submit that it is foolhardy for labour to expect that peaceful negotiation will deliver the aspiration of minimum wage. Only tenacious political struggle can deliver it.

The Place of the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU)

One labour union whose activities over the years have had far-reaching impact on Nigerian politics is the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU). My position on the union is largely a product of my experience both as a teacher and administrator at different times in federal, state and private universities. With such a vantage position, I am able to compare and contrast the efficiency and productivity in the three legs of the university system.

In addition to its role as a defender of the welfare of its members, ASUU has come to represent the voice of the society on matters relating to the need for equitable redistribution of societal

resources. It has not hidden its socialist ideological platform in fighting the imprints of the Bretton Woods institutions, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, and the neo-liberal political and economic structure that holds the Nigeria's university educational system. Towards achieving this ASUU has consistently fought along its four major pillars.

The struggles, no doubt, have contributed towards improving the lots of the university system, and halted its drift towards the anarchy that currently characterize the primary and secondary school systems. Unfortunately, like Shakespeare noted in Macbeth, the love that follows ASUU is sometimes its trouble. How? While it is undisputable that the union has sufficient reasons or grounds for its struggle, it seems to me that the battle fronts are too many for any tangible result. Hence the "pyric victory" that often accompanies every strike, an industrial action that has now become the union's major albatross because of its frequency and negative effect on the same system the strikes are meant to salvage.

If we want to know how precarious the salary condition of workers in Nigeria is, let us take a look at the typical conversation that takes place between academic staff members of FUL as they awaited the payment of their Earned Academic Allowance (EAA).

MA

House seems to be quite these days ..wondering what's happening

TO

Expectations of EAA is enough to make us so

IIB

Those last days of the month when needs/demands are more than supplies, you operate on a low key

UJ

Demand n supply chain indeed Mr B. just passing bye n greeting sir...

MA

Hopefully EAA should be paid this week

A

Bursar travelled you were told

MA

Oh yes..I remember..he will be back by October

Lets wait till October then the money would have yielded small interest

MA

FUL Bursar..Please where is our EAA

O

We have donated it to the orphanage

MA

Whao..This is great...I hope you people have donated the interest ...the money has accrued too

When in February 2021, the allowances were paid, see below part of the conversation between the staff:

T

Zenith has responded! Confirmed by the son of ...

PE

Congratulations

EO

GTBank! GTBank!! How many times did I call you? OK

PE

Hahahahahaha... Be calming down

Dr. P

Please Call UBA if GTBank isn't responding

OLK

And First Bank

MeA

Zenith... I never see oooo

ABD

Bursar should be advised henceforth all payments must sstart with bank names that begin (with A), then downward! (ASUU, FULOKOJA, 26 February 2021

Similar conversations also do occur towards the end of every month as they await their pay. Let us take a look at these:

Malik

GT Bank responded to non IPPIS, another two months, Na waooo

ISB

It is well ooo

OLK

At least, there is hope now

DAD

I just received alert from GTBANK

Chair

Good morning comrades. We greatly appreciate everyone's patience and understanding despite the delay. I wish to announce that the salary for Nov and Dec is coming in now. (ASUU FULOKOJA , 5 March 2021)

Now, beyond the comic relief the above conversation offers, if we find such feeling of despondency or hopelessness in the academia that the society looks up to, and where relatively, salaries are paid regularly, we can begin to imagine the rottenness, deprivations and despair among the less privileged artisans and the proverbial hewers of woods and drawers of water in the larger society, whose salaries are seen as privileges from a benevolent task master. But more importantly, the state of the intelligentsia as demonstrated in the above conversations is symptomatic of the collapse of the once vibrant middle-class following years of neglect and annihilation by the powers-that-be. Today, things have really fallen apart, as the “falcon cannot hear the falconers, and “the center can no longer hold”.

Are we then still in doubt about the correlation between the poverty of the working-class peasants and artisans and the poverty of their political participation, whether in terms of their input to the political process or contributions to societal decision making? Definitely no. The poverty of the political arena is certainly not only a reflection of the poverty of minds of the players, but more importantly, a product of the poverty of their material conditions. Herein lies the centrality of the struggle for a decent living wage for the Nigerian workers.

I therefore submit, Vice-Chancellor that ASUU must re-visit its erroneous impression that the academia is destined for penury not for those who desire to be rich because not all the members signed a pact with poverty when they took the job, and so desire to be handsomely remunerated. A profession can be noble and handsomely rewarding. Both are not mutually exclusive as teachers are being portrayed today in Nigeria as the dregs of the society. The ASUU struggles should therefore be majorly tailored towards realizing that goal because every labour union is selfish to the extent that it is committed exclusively to improving the lots of its members.

The implication of this is that ASUU must re-strategize, develop new methodologies and tactics, and limit the ‘war’ for now to purely welfare issues of its members, notably their salaries and allowances in order to guarantee them decent and affordable living conditions.

Lastly, the national leadership has a major role to play in ensuring that the centrifugal forces within the union are curtailed. Dissensions and criticisms are elements of democracy, and an assemblage of academics must encourage that freedom of expression. It is by so doing that the great resources that abound in the union can be effectively harnessed.

If politics is life, it then means that union leaders are naturally political animals. But is the union ready to play the politics at the national level that will engender the desired welfare dividends for its members? In looking towards this, leaders in some branches of the unions must rise above the pettiness of campus politics, see all academics as bona fide members with equal stake in the union, and draw the line between their personal political preferences and the union’s interest. It is by so doing that the perception by some of its members, including those in management positions, of some union leaders as tools in the hands of political adversaries would be laid to rest. More than ever before, the time for ASUU members to demonstrate a unity of purpose and direction is now, and no sacrifice on the part of the union leaders and members should be considered too costly in achieving that.

Recommendations

Vice-chancellor, as we attempt to draw the curtain, we submit that our discussion thus far shows clearly that politics in Africa is poor in conception and manifestation. Yes, politics is about the authoritative allocation of values and resources. But, in Africa and Nigeria in particular, we dare say that our politics is tilted towards the distribution and redistribution of poverty, misery and deprivations. No wonder therefore, the struggle for power at the center is usually fierce,

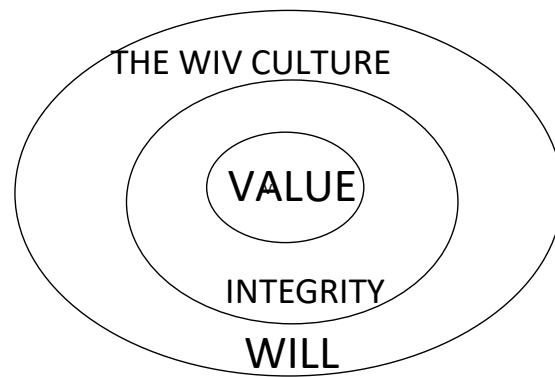
brutish, rough and costly, whether in financial, material and human terms. That also explains how and why every interest or individual feast on Abuja, Nigeria's capital as a surviving grace. Blessed are those who are called to Abuja to 'come and eat', as a one-time Nigerian Minister of Internal Affairs, Late Sunday Afolabi put it, and my sympathy to those either shut out of the eating room and struggling in the ensuing rat race to be part of the maddening crowd outside the castle struggling for survival. Or are we still in doubt why on the political terrain is characterized by the unbridled craze for political appointments, which many see as opportunities to appropriate one's share of the national patrimony, the Nigerian "turn by turn mentality". Or are we still bewildered at the effrontery with which thieves celebrate their pillage of our national purse, and are in turn celebrated and dignified by political opportunists, hangers-on and kinsmen, who benefit from the misrule and misappropriation of the so-called leaders. It in this light I therefore wish to make the following suggestions:

1. The game of soccer as we have tried to demonstrate in this presentation has moved from the traditional to more sophisticated styles, with coaches and players employing the state-of-the-art equipment to learn and perfect the trade. In the same manner, the place of political information and education cannot be over emphasized in the life of any nation. Illiteracy is a disease worldwide. But the ailment is more pathetic in those who pretend to know. Thus, efforts at educating the citizenry on their rights, duties and obligations in the political process must be intensified because an ignorant populace is a threat to the consolidation of democracy. In this regard, the role of civil society is paramount. The civil society- religious organizations and their leaders, student bodies, mass media, labour unions and other non-governmental agencies must step up their activities toward ensuring the opening up of the political space. They must also accelerate the demand for a redistribution of powers, position and privileges in the society. As mass organizations, they constitute the vanguard for generating the much-needed political awareness among the people, especially in guiding them towards making the right political decision from time to time. Zambia, at a time demonstrated the efficacy of people's power when the country's civil society groups converged and mobilized to halt a military take-over of a democratically elected government in that country. A similar feat was also recorded in Haiti, Gambia, among other countries. Therefore, as the soul of the nation, civil society in Nigeria must not only be critical but refuse to be part of the rottenness and contradictions in the larger society. Civil society must demand from the political class issue-based approach to politics and also canvass an end to the current diversionary emphasis on primordial factor of ethnicity to capture power. Political campaigns toward elections must focus on issues of social, economic and political relevance to replace the ongoing dramatization of ideological bankruptcy across the political landscape by all the political parties.
2. The judiciary must locate and rediscover its rightful place in the nation's political structure. More than ever before, the institution has done enough harm to its revered status under the current dispensation. Therefore, it must embark on a process of self -cleansing, not only by constantly being neutral but seen to be so in the dispensation of justice. The few courageous judges must sustain the independence of the institution. They must not allow the greed and inordinate ambition of a few to destroy the sanctity of the body, for in it lays the virtues of the rule of law and constitutionalism necessary for democratic sustenance. The recent travails of the judiciary in the hands of the Presidency and the Economic and Financial Crime Commission leading to the humiliation of its high-ranking personnel represent a sad moment in the life of the nation that must not be allowed to repeat itself.
3. Political corruption is as deadly if not more harmful than economic crimes. Consequently, society must place greater emphasis on the former as it has done with the latter. The leadership question cannot be ignored if the quest for a morally just and equitable society is

to be attainable. And very fundamental to this drive is the need for an orderly, credible, fair and egalitarian process of leadership succession in the country. The current law on the spending limits for political aspirants, which is in line with the spirit of Section 93 of the 2006 Electoral Act, is a right decision that must be vigorously pursued if the democratic process is not to be further perverted by political mandarins and money bags. INEC has put a ceiling of N1 million for individual donation to a candidate and N100,000 from anonymous donors. Also, a maximum spending limit of N500 million has been set for presidential candidates. For governorship candidates it is N100 million; N20 million for senators; N10 million, N5 million and N500,000 for candidates into House of Representatives, State House of Assembly/ Local Government chairmanship, and councillorship positions respectively. While some like Odion (2007) may indeed doubt the reality of these benchmarks, and their fears are real and genuine, I believe they represent desperate measures to seemingly demonic affliction of the political arena that the activities of the moneybags have come to represent. INEC has issued enough yellow cards to players on the field of Nigeria's politics. Now it is time to wield the big stick.

4. To fully ensure this therefore, the powers of agencies directly or indirectly connected with elections in the country, especially, INEC, the Police and EFCC must be further strengthened to enable them discharge their duties without fear or favor. Vote buying under any guise must be discouraged, penalties must be spelt out and offenders punished accordingly. INEC initiative in this regard is highly commendable and must be sustained. The current negative perception of these bodies as appendages of the ruling government does not enhance their credibility as umpires in the political process. For instance, in 2007, the EFCC published a list of politicians indicted for corruption. A great move no doubt, but the release was badly implemented. Else how does one reconcile the obvious contradictions in the list of indicted personalities vis-a vis the public declaration of the EFCC boss at different fora on corrupt officials? For example, at the University of Ibadan parley (earlier referred to) Ribadu, the then EFCC Chairman, did not only condemn the godfather phenomenon, but specifically lampooned the pillage of the Oyo state economy under the then Akala dispensation in collaboration with his godfather, Lamidi Adedibu. Yet, conspicuously missing on that list of indicted officials was Akala, who had switched to the then ruling party and was made its flag bearer in the 2007 gubernatorial race in the state. Similarly, in September 2006, Ribadu while appearing before the Nigerian Senate reeled out names of twenty state governors mostly of the ruling PDP found to be corrupt by his agency. He also gave a blow by blow account, the dimension and magnitude of their escapades with public funds. But as it was with Akala, a lot of those names were visibly missing in his onslaught on the political class. As it was then, so it is now. Defection to the ruling party in every dispensation has become an immunity against prosecution for corruption. (See the case of Jim Nwobodo, Senator Adamu Mohammed, Goje, Godswill Akpabio, Timpry Silva etcetera). This is an area the current EFCC boss needs to provide Nigerians with some explanations if it must not be seen as an appendage of the government of the day. While comparing the penalties for corruption across the world, PLO Lumumba, in his usual satiric manner had this to say: "In China, corrupt individuals are executed. In Japan, they commit suicide, in Europe, they are jailed, while in Africa, they contest for elective positions". I strongly believe that the EFCC must rise above this malady by beaming its search light across the entire country. Its activities must not be colored by geographical or political considerations which opponents of the agency easily point attention to. For it will be a tragedy of monumental proportion if at the end of day, the noble efforts of the EFCC at cleansing the Augean stable become instruments in the hands of the ruling party to prosecute its real or imaginary political battles.

5. On the field of play are losses, (electoral, physical, material and emotional) players suffer. Thus, there is a need for a constitutional review of the present system of political reward in Nigeria. The current zero sum, winner-takes-all scenario must give way to a system of proportional representation that gives room for representation of all political parties in parliament based on their level of performance at any given election. The present system, as we earlier noted, creates room for the current greed and desperation that characterize the struggle for political offices in the country. Such measures must also take into cognizance the need to halt the undue monetization of the political process, tame the monster of vote buying and corruption of electoral umpires as recent court sentences of officials of INEC in Rivers state aptly demonstrate. INEC must also revisit the relevant sections of its guidelines on inconclusive elections, especially on what determines the margin of lead, and circumstances under which elections or results from polling units could be cancelled and press for relevant legislative amendments. The present arrangements that allow political thugs to overrun opponents in areas they fear defeat with a view to halt the voting process or the announcement of results is inimical to natural justice and must attract some punitive measures under the law.
6. The time has come for a political re-engineering that would engender devolution of powers from the center to the other levels of government, notably the states and local governments in the country. If the center is less attractive, the competition for its control is likely to become less intense, less bitter and less acrimonious. What this means is that the states and local governments must be constitutionally empowered to perform a lot of the responsibilities the presidency is currently saddled with. The present arrangement that makes a president the center of attraction and magnet of loyalty cannot but succeed in creating a monster with its attendant megalomaniac tendencies out of whoever occupies the office. If this will be Nigeria's contribution to the concept of the presidential system, so be it. After all, we once had "Option A4" voting system hitherto unknown to our post-independence political arrangement. One would therefore understand the disdain that greeted INEC's offer of technical assistance to Chad's Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI) in 2019 to enable it conduct a free and fair election. Charity, as they say, must begin with Professor Mahmoud Yakubu's INEC.
7. Nigeria is currently at a crossroads where a revolution in the thinking and attitude of the people is inevitable. Fundamental to this moral rebirth is what I have called the inculcation of the WIV culture. This entails a tripartite combination of Will, Integrity and Value. The country at this critical moment in its life needs fearless men and women of passion, drive, nationalism and patriotism, just like the vintage soccer player who is ready to sacrifice his all on the field for the fatherland. Secondly, integrity as the soul of any enterprise must be a yardstick for determining the worth of persons on the political field. And for the society to advance, men and women imbued with the fear of God must not be in short supply. No wonder the Holy Book affirms that "when the righteous reign, the people rejoice and when the wicked reign, the people mourn (Proverb 29:2)." Accountability and responsibility must be the watchwords of such persons Nigeria is currently looking for. Lastly, such men must be ideologically driven. There must be a compass that directs their actions. They must be men of vision, who can dream realizable dreams. Else the nation's polity becomes a rudderless ship; a ship without a captain.



We must not fail to recognize that the WIV culture cannot be truly inculcated outside a commitment towards a generational change in our body polity. A new order of political socialization cannot succeed under the present gerontocracy that thrives on a patron-client relationship and an unquestionable allegiance to a semi-god whose pronouncements and feelings are laws. The exploits of the Ezekwezilis, El Rufais, Okonjo-Iwealas, Soludos, Ribadus, Kingsley Moghalus and Peter Obis in politics and the, Dangotes, Adenugas, Otedolas, Elumelus, Ibrus and Utomis, in the business sector are pointers to the indisputable place of a new generation of young talented technocrats in the building of a New Nigeria. With their exemplary courage and integrity, these men and women have demonstrated that given the proper institutional backing, they can dare even in areas where the elders had failed. I believe that Nigeria have more of their types in different sectors of life.

8. In the same vein, the political terrain is one that requires men and women that are physically, mentally and intellectually prepared for the job. Consequently, like the modern game of soccer, the training for political leadership must be rigorous, vigorous and consistent, one that prepares potential leaders for the task of managing the domestic economy, foreign relations, internal security among others, and not the present spontaneous and "fire-brigade" reactions to serious demands of the moment. Leadership is a serious enterprise that must attract the best for the society irrespective of tribal, ethnic, religious or other primordial considerations. This is why coaches traverse different parts of the world searching for the best materials for their team irrespective of colour barrier. Hence, a Samuel Eto'o could be making waves in Spain, and another Michael Essien dominating soccer in England in spite of the tantrums of so-called white supremacists. Incidentally, too, it seems to me that the Nigerian national football teams (male and female) constitute one major arena where the issues of tribe, ethnic group, federal character or religion are not on the front burner. I therefore believe that even as the nation battles to satisfy the different geopolitical entities under a power sharing arrangement, it is possible to pursue that without jeopardizing the principles of merit, ability and competence, in such a way that the best materials suitable for the job are produced from each zone of the country.
9. This brings us to the question of political succession and the role of godfathers in politics. Players must learn to quit the stage not only when ovation is loudest, but also when their time is up. Political actors, just like John the Baptist must accept the role of forerunners and vacate the scene for the political advancement of their successors. Political leaders must not succumb to the seeds of discords their supporters like Disciples of John often sow between former and present political gladiators. Such hangers-on are adept at comparing regime performance, and in the process, plant in their "leaders" the fear of being surpassed by their successors. Such fear largely accounts today for the politics of elite circulation, the peddling of political influence, the resort to family succession (resulting in the new wave of hereditary republicanism) and the unwillingness of leaders to vacate office in spite of their age.

10. Our universities must be in the vanguard of the revolution for a new political order. Charity, as they say, begins from home. So, the universities must not be turned into battle grounds by ethnic, tribal and religious warlords, academics turned politicians who are not better than the political class we criticize in our classrooms and publications. The University system certainly has no place for so-called political godfathers fanning the embers of hate and stereotype, and beating as usual their unattractive drums of war. We must pursue this by checking the penchant for empire building, sometimes bothering on intellectual arrogance by a few self-appointed overlords in our university campuses. The worth of a staff and student of FUL must not be measured by their tribal marks or religious persuasions, but by their functional contributions to the survival of the system. It must not always be the issue of Ebira, Igala, Okun or Bassa as some would always interpret every ranging issue on campus. Similarly, the University system must be self-regulatory in such a manner that its core mandate of teaching, research and community development are not compromised. The system must be capable and strengthened to reward excellence and the same time sanction mediocrity and all those vices that pervert the noble qualities of an ivory tower, namely, sex for mark, admission racketing, cultism, poor teaching and research qualities, overbearing conduct of lecturers and bullying of students, poor classroom management and plagiarism. These are maladies a young university as FUL cannot afford to leave with.

Vice-Chancellor, the recent clashes in FUL orchestrated by some ‘indigenes’ over appointments in the ivory tower should be an eye opener to the excruciating poverty of our politics, and the magnitude of deprivation in the land. FUL is virtually one of the few, if not the only surviving federal establishment in Kogi State. The Ajaokuta Steel Company, another major federal presence in the state is comatose or at best crawling, more than thirty years after its establishment because those superintending over its affairs since the 1980s are more interested in the carcass than the products of the steel industry. We can therefore understand the fury and resentment that greeted the publications in the social media of what the “protesters” perceived as the ‘lopsided appointments’ by the University authority and the resentment across a state where every household has its army of unemployed languishing at home and waiting to explode at the slightest provocation.

11. Like in every game, the University community must see itself as a team where unity is the watchword. A soccer team is a group of eleven different but same players bound together by a common purpose to win. Imagine every player on the field attempting to score at the same type. That will be a sure way to anarchy. As the legendary Michael Jordan put it, “Talent wins games but teamwork and intelligence win championship.” So, we must appreciate our individual differences in the system, acknowledge and respect the place and position of leadership, and accord it all support as wingers on the field to enable it deliver on its set vision. Similarly, just as defenders on the field of play, we must ensure that the system does not come to ruins through our selfless pursuits as teachers and administrators. The constant bickering among unions and groups is certainly unhealthy for the system. Therefore, we must imbibe the spirit of stakeholders, not shareholders.

Vice-Chancellor, we see FUL as a microcosm of the larger Nigerian society, which means it is also susceptible to the vagaries- tribal, ethnic, religious, personal and other primordial considerations of the larger society. But these tendencies must be well managed in the interest of the young budding citadel if the institution must make progress. This is a task that requires the sacrifices of everyone as major stakeholders in this enterprise. We see our coming to this institution as part of the fulfilment of that aspiration where the Okun, Ebira or Igala agenda will give way to the true FUL agenda. Our task is to be part of the success story of the University as

we discharge our responsibilities in teaching, research and community engagements. Towards this, the establishment of three major structures are dear to our heart, and they are

- a. The Lokoja Governance Institute
- b. The Lokoja Business School, and
- c. The Lokoja Electoral Institute.

These are platforms through the permission of the Vice-Chancellor, we shall devote our energy and time because we believe they will positively project the image and mandate of our dear FUL as a great citadel of learning, and also institutionalize our role and commitment to research and development in political studies, especially in the areas of policy making, inter-governmental relations, legislative studies, elections and democratization, peace studies, fiscal and monetary policies, among others.

12. The university must, in accordance with current global best practices, embrace and encourage trans-disciplinary pursuit of academic disciplines. We must do away with our unproductive drift towards ego trip and empire building that do not go beyond churning out volumes of “publications”, which nobody is reading. Trans-disciplinary studies, as widely demonstrated, address societal problems, not from the usual narrow and jaundiced, but broad, holistic and informed perspectives. Also, it is more productive and cost effective whether in terms of financial, material, personnel or space. In FUL, one would want to see greater collaborative efforts between Political Science and History, Sociology, Economics or Mass Communication. The same should also apply to the Sciences. We take a cursory look below at the course structures for the History and Political Science programmes domiciled in different faculties in FUL.

Selected Courses in History and Political Science, Federal University Lokoja 2019/2020 session

History		Political Science	
100 Level		100 Level	
HIS109	Introduction to Economic History	HIS109	Introduction to Economic History
POS101	Introduction to Political Science	POS101	Introduction to Political Science
HIS 105	Introduction to International Relations	POS205	Introduction to International Relations
HIS112	Blacks in Diaspora	HIS112	Blacks in Diaspora
POS108	Elements of Democracy	POS108	Elements of Democracy
200 Level		200 Level	
HIS211	Economic History of West Africa	ECO111	Economic History of West Africa
HIS202	Economic History of Nigeria	ECO112	Economic History of Nigeria
POS204	Introduction to African Politics	POS204	Introduction to African Politics
POS203	Political Ideas	POS203	Political Ideas

HIS207	African and European Imperialism	HIS207	African and European Imperialism
300 Level		300 Level	
HIS303	Nigeria from 1900-1960	POS201	Nigerian Government and Politics
HIS307	Armament and Disarmament	POS319	Theories of War and Peace
HIS320	Politics of Development and Underdevelopment	POS310	Politics of Development and Underdevelopment
HIS308	International Economic Relations	POS312	International Economic Relations
HIS315	Capitalism, Communism and Mixed Economy	POS315	Theories and Practice of Marxism
400 Level		400 Level	
HIS401	Nigeria Since Independence to the Present	POS201	Nigerian Government and Politics
HIS403	International Organizations	POS412	International Law and Organization
HIS405	History of the Middle East	POS417	Politics of the Middle East
HIS411	Modern African Political Thought	POS406	African Political Thought
HIS413	Military in African Politics	POS406	Civil-Military Relations
HIS421	Gender Studies	POS309	Gender Studies and Development
HIS410	History of Science and Development	POS316	Science, Technology and Politics
HIS416	Globalization and the New World Order	POS419	Politics of Globalization and Reforms
HIS418	Nigerian Foreign Policies Since 1960	POS407	Nigerian Foreign Policy

Source: Compiled from Academic Handbooks of both Departments of History and Political Science, Federal University Lokoja.

The commonality of courses, apart from the mandatory General Studies and Entrepreneurship-focused courses draws ample justification for our position on the affinity between Political Science and History and the need to further explore the terrain. Mr. Vice-Chancellor, this also raises a puzzle I have been grappling with of late, and that is how a programme on Peace and Conflict Studies could be run in FUL at diploma, undergraduate and post-graduate (including Ph.D.) levels without an input from the Department of Political Science. I therefore with all humility call on the Vice-Chancellor, the two Departments, Academic Planning Unit and the

School of Postgraduate Studies to immediately address that lacuna. Such inter-disciplinary collaboration will not only enrich the academic and professional contents of the programme, but also the quality of their products and the image of the university at large.

Lastly, on the university, as we have argued in this lecture, every relationship is political to the extent that goals are involved and actors differ in their modes of achieving those goals. Therefore, I enjoin the university community to see the various campus contestations as mere games we play to advance the cause of the noble institution. But in so doing, we must place the interest of the university beyond every other consideration. If we do that, separating the office from the occupant will be less difficult, and our assessment, criticism and advice would be more focused. As it has been repeatedly expressed, “in the moment of crisis the wise builds bridges and the foolish builds dam.” So now is the time for new bridges of genuine love, friendship and collaboration.

Conclusion

As you go out *rotimising* African and indeed Nigerian politics, government and society, Vice-Chancellor, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, I leave you with these five nuggets:

1. Life itself is a game with its time and season. Play your part very well.
2. In the words of the legendary Nelson Mandela, leaders at different levels must “lead from the back and let others believe they are in the front.” That is the heart of democracy as a government of the people, for the people and by the people.
3. As a nation, in place of the much-abused and worn-out cliché called federal character, what we need in Nigeria at this particular hour is more of sound moral character on the part of both leaders and followers.
4. Good and desirable as political and fiscal restructuring are in Nigeria, more attention should also be focused on attitudinal restructuring of the citizenry;
5. As a game that it is, we need to learn and play politics with love, not hatred or bitterness. That way the essence of our humanity and nationhood would be fully realized.
6. All of us must remain incurable optimists in our great country as we shun despondency and other fatalistic dispositions.

In holding unto this sixth point, I close as I take my bearing from the same Holy Book that gave us the inspiration for this lecture.

God told His people that it was time to move because they have circled this mountain for too long. He commanded Pharaoh through Moses, His messenger, to let His people off the hook of oppression, suppression, marginalization and dehumanization. But we knew how Pharaoh in his megalomaniac state resisted God, the same way the political and economic vampires have held by the jugular the destiny of this country for decades. Pharaoh stubbornly resisted God until his imaginary kingdom was visited by unmitigated disasters. The good news is that just like Moses persisted in the face of discouragement when quitting before Pharaoh would have been a justifiable option, the unwavering hope and tenacity of the Nigerian people in the Nigerian project is a recipe for a greater tomorrow where peace, justice, truth, equality, freedom and prosperity reign. This, in summary Vice-Chancellor, distinguished ladies and gentlemen is the positive end of a tortuous democratic journey I envision for our great country Nigeria and Africa in general.

Acknowledgements

Several people too numerous to name have affected positively my life trajectory. I begin with some of my childhood friends who have been very supportive. I remember the Late James Kola Toluhi (JKT), and Abraham Osanuwa, affable fellows. May God continually rest their souls and uphold the families they left behind. How can I begin to describe Sir Johnson Jimoh (JJ), his amiable, lovely wife, Josephine and children, who all represent a strong pillar to my family? I am grateful for the moral guidance, advice, material and financial support JJ has always rendered every time I call upon him. May God continually prosper him. Also, I acknowledge the role of Gbenga Alepa, an Economist and Strategy Expert who painstakingly and graciously went through the manuscript and offered his editorial inputs. Thanks too to Emmanuel Bobinihi, Joel Kutu, Gabriel Owope, Zachary Ejibunu, Francis Olorunfemi, Emmanuel Abejirin, Ralph Elegboja, Ayo Anjorin and other members of De Family Club 1975 that space would not permit me to name. Growing up with you all has been great fun such that the friendship of the 1960s and 70s has today become trans-generational. I appreciate the trio of Barrister Tunde Bello, Ade Fagbemi and Dr. Akin Oloniruha for their big brother role.

In my academic sojourn, I have come across wonderful students and supervisees, some of whom are now experts in their various fields. They include Professors Daniel Gberevbie and Sheriff Folarin, Associate Professors Segun Joshua and Samuel Oloruntoba, Drs Segun Oshewolo and Mike Aleyomi. Others include Noah Williams and Emmanuel Ajisafe, just to mention but a few. I thank you all.

In my calling as a University teacher, I have received the love, warmth and tutelage of several elders and mentors. They include Senator Tunde Ogbeha, Professors Olugbemi Jege, Zacheous Apata, my PhD thesis supervisor, Matthew Idowu Ajibero, Julius Ihonvbere, Toyin Falola, Oluwafemi O. Balogun, and Andrew Ohwona. To those who have gone to the great beyond: Professors Adeoye Akinsanya, Arthur Ebun-Davies (who employed me as Assistant Lecturer), Ade Ogunsanya, Aize Obayan and Sunday Otokiti, may God rest their souls.

Also worthy of special mention are Professors Jackson Olujide, Daniel Atime Omoweh, Atare Otite, Tunde Babawale, Sunny Ododo, Hassan Saliu, Bunmi Omotesho, Femi Omotosho, Bayo Oloyede and Shola Omotola.

My appreciation also goes to the Covenant and Landmark Universities' families, notably, the Chancellor, Dr. David Oyedepo, for the various opportunities in self and leadership development he offered me through both institutions. To Professor C.K. Ayo, former VC, Covenant University, and currently VC Trinity University, Lagos, thank you for being a good friend. Also are Professors James Katende, Charles Ogbulogo, Theophilus Fadayomi, Jonathan Aremu, Philip Alege, Christian Osueke and his wife, Ngozi.

I give kudos to my team members here in FUL for the love and affection I have enjoyed since coming on board the ship of this great University. Thanks to my academic colleagues in all the committees I have either chaired or served for your support and the opportunity afforded me to learn from you- Professors Osagbemi, former DVC, M.S. Audu, current DVC, Lucky Ovwasa, Dean of Faculty of Social Sciences, Idris Audu Jayeoba, Remi Akujobi, Emmanuel Bala, Sunday Adewumi, Benjamin Dauda, Gbenga Ibileye, Ayodele Bamidele, Jacqueline Badaki, Abel Joseph, Esra Gbaje Shiloba, and indeed all members of the University Senate. Thanks to the Chair, Dr. Ebenezer Ejalonibu Lawal, staff and students, Department of Political Science. I appreciate Mrs. Charity Ijese, Taiye Mofolorunsho, Abidemi David and all other academic protégés for the invaluable support I receive at all times. Also, my gratitude goes to the

University Chaplain, Pastor Kayode Ajibade, the Chaplain of Reginald Charlie Rev. Fr. Paul Tubi, and the Chief Imam of the University, Imam Khalid Danjuma for your prayers and admonitions.

I want to specially thank the pioneer Vice-Chancellor of FUL, Professor Mohammed Rafindadi. Not only did he recruit me, he also accorded me the full dignity of a Professorial Chair. May God reward him in greater dimensions. To the immediate past Vice-Chancellor, Professor Angela Freeman-Miri, you flew the banner of this great institution to the best of your ability. Working with these two Vice-Chancellors in different statutory organs, committees and capacities was a great adventure in leadership and service.

I thank the Chairmen of both the University Second and Third Governing Councils, Emeritus Professor Nimi Briggs OON and Senator Chris Adigiche respectively, and other members of both Councils for the show of love. Electing me to the two Governing Councils by my colleagues in Senate is a privilege I do not take for granted. I am grateful.

My appreciation to the current Vice-Chancellor, Professor Durotimi Olayemi Akinwumi for providing the enabling environment for today's lecture. Together we began this aspect of the game of life in 1986, and it has been divinely orchestrated that you would preside over my inaugural 35 years after. What in my journey of life, I call the icing on a beautiful cake. Vice-Chancellor, may your tenure be more peaceful and successful than your predecessors especially in terms of re-positioning the university for the actualization of its core mandates in teaching, research, enterprise and community impact. While assuring you of my total commitment and support, I have no doubt that given your sound pedigree in inter-group relations, you will succeed.

I am grateful to my late parents, Ajayi Ewenla and Comfort Titi Olorunuun, who both passed away twenty-eight years ago, for their generous investments in me. I believe that they can look down in the company of the innumerable heavenly angels, where I know they abode and thank God that their labor on their lovely son has not been in vain. I remain eternally grateful to you Dad and mum. Thanks to my siblings and relations – Dele, Helen, Lekan, Sunday, Femi Ewenla, Dupe and Ade Fashagba- for standing by me at all times.

I appreciate my wife, Helen Ayonike and our three lovely great children, Oyinda (PhD), Femi (PhD) and Bukky (Medical School) for being ever supportive and caring. Thanks to you children for believing in me as your dad. Definitely, it has been a great experience, lesson and testimony for us all. I can confidently look back and declare that this great family represents my pillar, pride and joy. May God keep you all.

The entire glory belongs to the Omnipotent, Omnipresent and Omniscient God alone for this inaugural lecture. He the Great Provider, not only gave me a career, but has kept and sustained me on the job from the beginning. Without Him, this lecture would not have been. Thank you Most High God for every stage of this glorious journey, the past, present and the future; the mountains and the valleys; the good times and the bad times, the beautiful and the ugly. I shall forever be grateful.

Talking about this Great God, the Owner of time and season, I end this *rotimisation* on African Game with these eternal words, culled from a University of Ilorin group platform:

When next a game is on, take a look at the players, the referees, the linesmen and the spectators. Out of these categories of people, the only people who don't wear a wrist watch are the players on the field. They get into the pitch and play their hearts out knowing that even though they don't know the exact

time, the exact minute the game will end and the whistle will be blown, they are conscious of the fact that the game will definitely end when the one holding the time blows his whistle. I liken this to our race here on earth. We are on the pitch of play called life. And even though we all wear wrist watches; they are just a man-made device to guide our daily activities and give us a sense of timing. The one who holds time is somewhere waiting and watching us play our game on the pitch of life. He has whistle. When the time is up, by HIS own timing, he will blow the whistle and the game will be over and then winners and losers will emerge and rewards will be given to deserving players. It is only after the referee's whistle has sounded that I notice people weep or jubilate. They cry and gnash their teeth because it is over! The game is over and the time is up! They weep because they missed opportunities, missed scoring chances, but by that time, the time is up! The game is over. And those who celebrate do so because they won the match. They were adjudged winners and deserving of the much-contested trophy. Let me encourage you today, dear friends, that your wristwatch is not the time. Oh no its not! The time is with the one who created time and only HE determines when the time starts and stops for each one of us. With this in mind, let's strive for mastery and reach for the goal as we play on the pitch of life... the play is still on. It is not our wristwatch that's reading, it is God's time ticking away... ... play your game well. Play it with utmost concentration. Shut out spectators who are either cheering or jeering. Keep your eyes on the goal post. Play hard. (Unilorin Christianity Whatsaap Platform posted 21/8/17)

Thank you all for listening.

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