

# LEADERSHIP: THE BIG CHALLENGE

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at the University of Ibadan*

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by

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*The Vice-Chancellor, Deputy Vice-Chancellors (Administration and Academic), The Registrar, The Librarian, Provost, College of Medicine, Dean, Faculty of the Social Sciences, Deans of the other Faculties, Dean of the Postgraduate School, Dean, Student Affairs, Distinguished Colleagues, Friends, Ladies and Gentlemen.*

Twenty-three years ago, Billy J. Dudley presented the first inaugural lecture on behalf of the Department of Political Science titled 'Skepticism and Political Virtues'. This was followed by Peter Ekeh (1983) 'Colonialism and Social Structure'; J. Bayo Adekanye (1993) 'Military Occupation and Social Stratification'; J.A.A. Ayoade (1997) 'Nigeria and the Squandering of Hope'; and Alex Gboyega (2003) 'Democracy and Development: The Imperative of Local Governance.'

With the exception of the first which was fundamentally a theoretical discourse and partly an agenda on what Political Science entails particularly at Ibadan, an agenda which subsists; and the second on impact of colonialism in Africa, all the others critically addressed fundamental issues and aspects of Nigeria's politics and administration with concern that all was not well with Nigeria and Nigerians.

Perhaps, it is important for me to state at this point that political scientists are not apostles of doom or mere critics who never see any good thing in government or in the polity. On the contrary, we regard it as our social responsibility to subject politics and governance to scrutiny in favour of a well ordered society and to enable the justification for the movement away from the uncertainties of Thomas Hobbes' 'state of nature' to the modern state system. At Ibadan, we had from inception recognized Peter Ekeh's standpoint that "we owe a duty to humanity and to Nigeria", hence the commitment "to seeking to understand human problems."

It is also instructive to recall Dudley's (1975: 2) clarification on what Political Science is all about. To him, the components of Political Science consist of five elements, namely:

- (i) 'Consciousness formation', that is, 'evoking of an awareness amongst a collectivity of the issues and problems confronting that collectivity'
- (ii) 'Social mobilization', which is the organization of a collectivity for joint collaborative action',
- (iii) 'Contestation', the contesting of the determination of national priorities through the process of argumentation and debate';
- (iv) 'Institutionalized struggle', or 'the conversion of fights into games and debates'; and
- (v) 'Transcendence', the bringing about of change both at the level of the person and the systemic and sub-systemic levels'.

In essence, Political Science is the systematic, or if you like, the 'scientific' study of these various components of politics. I am pleased to report that this has been our preoccupation in the Department over the years and this Inaugural serves to further our accomplishment in this regard.

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, I am delighted, therefore, to have been asked to deliver the 2008/2009 session inaugural on behalf of the Faculty of the Social Sciences which is the 6<sup>th</sup> from the Department of Political Science since its transformation from a sub-department of Government in October 1960 to a fully-fledged Department in October 1963. Indeed, this is a platform for me to report, reflect, reinvigorate but not to freshly invent or reinvent the wheel. It is also an occasion to test one's academic contributions.

I had to resist the temptation to change the title of this lecture which was officially communicated to the Dean of my Faculty about two weeks before Nigeria's 48<sup>th</sup> Independence Anniversary. The reason was that, more than before, the leadership question featured most prominently in virtually all reported analyses, comments and interviews in the media, especially the print media. One thing that is evident is the recognition of leadership deficit as an important factor in understanding Nigeria's predicament. Hitherto, a host of factors, ranging from slavery, colonialism, the existence of the three dominant ethnic groups, inappropriate constitutions, and the

nature of Nigeria's federalism, the military, and the absence of democracy, among others, have been used as explanations. As will be discussed shortly, it is clear that the problem is not much about the above especially the absence of democracy or lack of resources, but that of political and economic mismanagement by the country's leadership.

From the submissions, it was clear that we are gradually moving close to resolving Nigeria's political and developmental problems which are not essentially the National Question, which, of course, is important but might be problematic without the resolution of the leadership question. All the tinkering with the constitution and institutional reforms has not had any salutary effects on governance even under a supposedly democratic government between 1999 and 2007.

I decided against changing the topic partly because the position in this lecture was not borne out of intuition or an understanding of current affairs, but on the basis of investigation on the central issues of governance and administration in Nigeria. I must state here that it is time for us as political scientists to elevate leadership issues in Political Science discourse in Nigeria. I want to admit that the title of this Inaugural Lecture is partly to fill a gap and to report new aspects of my research/thinking without compromising the essence of Inaugural. It unveils what has been learnt over the years.

It is, therefore, with gratitude to God Almighty that I stand before you at this hour to speak on an issue of global and national concern; the so-called leadership question, in respect of which I have titled this Lecture, which dominantly pertains to Nigeria, *Leadership: The Big Challenge*. While I had deliberately narrowed down my discussion to the Nigerian predicament, it must be clearly stated that the problem of leadership deficit is a global problem in contemporary world. But, as will be demonstrated, it is a 'big' challenge.

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, I wish to state that my preoccupation since I was appointed an Assistant Lecturer in our Department two and a half decades ago has been in the area of political and social engineering. I have been researching as a constructivist in either analysing issues relating to what we now refer to as

governance or good governance, especially the observance of human rights and the rule of law, and in prescribing what could be regarded as prerequisites or minimum ingredients which include requisite institutions and supportive ethos for an efficient and effective public administration in a well-ordered society at all levels of human organizations – local, national, regional and global. All these have been about aiding the accomplishment of the end of the state and respect for humanity. This began when what we now know as good governance was just an evolving concept. But I have to add that my own workbench is built on the more concrete and less theoretical end of our field of study. But the explanation of processes, let alone the offering of predictions, does nevertheless mean linking empirical evidence with theoretical framework.

Starting with an interest in Public Administration with special emphasis in local government administration, I have had the rare opportunity to blend this with other sub-disciplines in Political Science and Law. I branched into eclectic research in public administration, human rights and democracy.

A number of factors have impacted the direction of my research. Barely one year in the employ of this University, I had the opportunity to access funds from the Staff Development Grant to study the Master's of Law in International Human Rights Law at the University of Essex, UK in 1983 which stimulated my research interest in human rights. This was then the only Centre in Europe and America that had that specialization at a time when human rights' ratings, especially in Africa, was at the lowest point. This was also at a time when criminal violations of the three tyrants of Africa - Idi Amin of Uganda, Jean Bedel Bokassa of the former Central African Empire and Francisco Nguema of Equatorial Guinea – were alive with a lot of concern not only within the African continent but also internationally. It was their flagrant affronts to human rights and the likes of the *Butcher of Baghdad*, the late Saddam Hussein that put the issues of human rights in the global agenda (Okunade 1987). With this, the foundation for the current trend where human rights is no longer an exclusive responsibility of states, was laid. Now, the course is ubiquitous for good, while many unresolved issues of human rights, the rule of law and

democracy then appeared to have been fairly settled in respect of standard settings and, to some extent, observance and compliance.

Aspects of these were my initial areas of research where one argues for a unitary as against a dualist conception of human rights on the one hand, and for the limitations of cultural relativity in human rights standard on the other. Relating to this are the limitations to the permissible limitations to human rights. There is now a reasonable degree of agreement on expectations by the citizens, globally while governments are trying to comply globally. In Africa now, the human rights field has moved ahead with improved institutional frameworks for the realization of the Banjul Charter with the creation of an African Court of Human Rights, while democracy as a *sine qua non* to the enjoyment of human rights and the rule of law is fast becoming the only game in town.

As immediate past Director (September 2004 and June 2007) of the Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies (CEPACS), I had a responsibility to catch up with refugee and humanitarian and disaster management issues. With this, I was able to enlarge my coast by addressing critical governance issues in managing crises that are humanitarian in nature.

Of course, it is pertinent to point out that some intervening and sometimes interrelated developments have come to change the terrain, the tenor and the texture and the reality of contemporary world in ways that complicated the political landscape within and among countries, with implication for leadership at all levels of governance.

### **Contemporary Global Leadership**

Increasingly, more responsibilities are being put on leadership in different countries. Some of these are the collapse of Apartheid regime in 1990; the sudden demise of communism which signalled the end of the Cold War courtesy *Perestroika* and *Glasnost* – ‘the new thinking’ under Mikhail Gorbachev and the emergence of new democracies in Eastern Europe, the enlargement of the European Union; and 9/11 (the day the world changed) which was induced by the nature of global relationship and intolerance. The aftermath of the last was United States’ and

its allies' unilateral declaration of war against terror as against the collective response envisaged under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter. The unending war has led to the protracted and apparently unending war in Afghanistan and Iraq, with lots of pressure on political leadership globally.

Also, the strength of leadership in the United Nations also waned as a result of the United States' defiance of Art. 2(4) of the UN charter on unilateral use of force. It is now very clear from all accounts, including the findings consisted in the Report of the 9/11 Commission set up by the US that Resolution 1441 was a mere pretence, as it did not authorize war in Iraq. So, the US agenda in Iraq, I submit, was based on other considerations rather than the event of 9/11. It was to finish an unfinished war and to effect the so-called regime change that was not accomplished under the senior Bush's administration during an earlier intervention by the US to drag out Iraq forces out of Kuwait in January 1991. The conversion of the sin of Saddam and his Iraq had to be changed from possessing Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) to human rights violations pointed to the desperation to win the moral and legal argument at all cost. Kofi Annan, the immediate past Secretary-General of the UN repeatedly declared the war illegal.

The judgment of the principal leaders – George Bush and Tony Blair – on Iraq has been a subject of controversy and protests globally. Of course, Tony Blair had to be 'forced out' while George Bush's public opinion ratings which plummeted to about 30 *per cent* in recent times had to do with Iraq, among other considerations. It is against this background that one can understand Obama's fortune in the US presidential electioneering campaigns and the high probability of winning the presidency in the US presidential election two days ago. At the time of preparing this lecture, all objective indicators; the opinion polls, voters trust on handling of issues, endorsements and performance at the presidential debates; barring human indeterminacy, scandal, assassination and race becoming a crucial issue for whatever reason, point to Barrack Obama as the first Black President in the US.

Arising from the above is that leadership plays a fundamental role in shaping world affairs. It can, therefore, be



understood why the expected dividends from the end of the Cold War as advanced in Boutros Boutros Ghali's *Agenda for Peace* was unattainable. The 9/11 and its aftermath brought about a reversal and ushered in a more delicate balance and a more insecure world. Saddam Hussein would not have killed or maimed over a million innocent civilians and combatants in his lifetime if other efficacious ways other than the use of force were employed.

One important development that is constantly affecting national and global leadership is the phenomenon of globalization which some have erroneously tagged as a neo-colonial ploy and anti-developing countries especially Sub-Saharan Africa that 'still looks like the Old Third World.' It prescribes minimum national standards covering its three foci—political, economic and information technology—to which countries and leadership must conform for relevance. Its prescription of responsibility, accountability, transparency and responsiveness are standards which political leaders have to meet.

Its internal dynamics have in recent times unleashed dramatic changes on the global economy—the melting down of economies—that threaten our survival. It has sent national and global leaders back to the drawing board while truncating the unbridled subscription to economic liberalization and *laissez faire*.

Having made some comments on some of the factors that shaped contemporary global leadership, I wish to address the remaining part of this Lecture in four parts, starting with an elucidation of what I think I have been doing to justify this lecture and its topic; this is followed by some reflections on political leadership. The next section is on why the leadership question is the problem and a big challenge with particular reference to Nigeria, and the last substantive part is on the appropriateness and challenges of the newly professed approach—servant leadership—to resolving the leadership question in Nigeria. Of course, the last is the conclusion.

## My Contribution

I consider my investigation into Nigeria's public administration substantial, especially in the area of Local Government Studies. My main contribution was in advocating a change from Agency to Partnership Model of Local Government in Nigeria (Okunade 1988, 1987, 1991). While admitting the contributions of the Military Governments to the development of local government in Nigeria, I have indicated the limitations of these and indicated that the military has a centralizing character to public administration in Nigeria.

I have since my initial research on local government had to revisit the subject and can report that nothing has changed except for the continued irrelevance of local government as an agent of change, especially in the rural areas with the neglected rural majority and urban poor. To be sure, I seem to regard myself as an activist in subscribing to a system of local government imbued with the capacity to make authoritative and binding decisions in its area of juridical competence with all the paraphernalia that are essential to proper functioning of government, especially in a federation. In my analyses and submissions, I differ from the position of the fathers of local government in Nigeria who could not figure out a system of local government based on devolution.

Surprisingly, in all the afflictions on local governments in Nigeria, it was the military that destroyed civil public administration including local government and not the civilian administrations which, at least in principle, did the most for the emergence of a virile system of 'local government' *qua* local government at the local level. Although, one cannot reasonably speak of autonomy at the local government level given the nature of the military, I wish to report that it was under the military, particularly under the Babangida administration, that Local governments moved closest, though in principle, to being a tier of government in its own right. It limited some of the encumbrances and constraints that came even after the introduction of the uniform system of local government in 1976 and the partial entrenchment of the spirit and letter of same in s.7, 149 and the *Fourth Schedule* of the 1979 Constitution.

Local Governments in Nigeria, especially in the recent past – the eight years before May 29, 2007 – have drifted drastically in conception, relevance and in the extent to which they are truly grassroots governments. The various controversial local government elections including the recently concluded one in Lagos State have not helped in firming up local democracy and governance. To this extent, local government like, other levels of government suffers leadership deficit.

The supposedly democratic governments that emerged since the 1976 reforms have not been able to reverse these misfortunes in terms of the conception of local governments in Nigeria. Thus, we continue to sustain a centralized system of local government, while the issue of local government remains a federal rather than a state matter. The states, for political reasons, have not been less obstructive in their control of local governments. Part of the reasons has been the disdain for the local governments as a tier of government.

Till date, we have in Nigeria a system of local administration that we erroneously tagged local government and a system that has at best recorded a mediocre level of performance. It is an unfortunate development to have local governments that cannot even carry out their basic functions, including environmental sanitation or collect taxes to shore up their resource base. This is an unfortunate development if one compares the trend with what operates in unitary states, where local governments are subordinated to the central government, or to what it was before the termination of the local government system prior to military incursion into Nigeria politics. Available records showed that, despite their limitations, local governments were caterers to local needs. They established and managed the primary, secondary modern school and teacher training colleges until these were gradually taken over as part of the centralizing agenda of the military. Their products were not markedly inferior to those by the regional governments and the voluntary organizations. It is, however, important for me to warn against chastising local government or viewing it with disdain as its performance was only consistent with what obtained at higher levels of governance in Nigeria.

It is clear from the above that in Nigeria, a system of local government that can engender local democracy is yet to evolve. This, however, is not peculiar to local government; similarly, Federal and State government suffer from this inadequacy. The other problem of local government in Nigeria apart from leadership and the seeming absence of local democracy seems to have been captured recently in the *Country Review Report* (2008) on Nigeria by the APRM when it noted in its par. 104 (p. 49) that,

... it is significant to note that while Nigeria projects itself as a "Federal Republic" its laws and the actual exercise of state power tend to retain highly unitary character. Political power is so centralised as to make the two other tiers of government – the state and the local governments – almost entirely dependent on the central government for survival. The federating states and local governments have very little real economic and political autonomy, and there are laws which serve to further divest these political units of their key rights and responsibilities.

The challenge of ensuring a framework for a virile system of local government and consequently local democracy remains. In fact, local government is under threat. As things stand, the system of local government and the reality of operation of local government shrink the democratic space:

Apart from the issues relating to decentralization, legal, constitutional guarantees and, of course, the need for free and fair elections with effective citizen participation, the role of leadership in relation to political governance is very important. The failure in local governance and local democracy is that of failure of leadership not only at the local government level but at the State and Federal levels.

As a corollary to the above, I will recommend the return to the "more *autonomy building* reforms" under the Babangida administration, which included the abolition of State Ministries of Local Government and the Service Commission and the

commitment to direct funding to local councils to reduce state government's encroachment on local government. What is being proposed is the kind of relationships that exist between Federal and State Governments at the State Local Government level. For example, if the Local Government Service Commission has to be created, it has to be independent, unlike now, of the state government and has to be under the control of the Local Government which it services. It is in this way that local governments can have control over their personnel, which *ceteris paribus* is a *sine qua non* to performance. Also, the Ministry for Local Government should only be advisory and should have nothing to do with budget approvals or prescribing spending limits above which the approval by the state government is required. To do otherwise is to undermine the legislative arms of local governments and erode their powers to make things happen at the local level. These will go a long way in repositioning local government and in the promotion of local autonomy. And, of course, there has to be free and fair elections and an enlightened citizenry. It is within the context of the suggested imperatives that local government can be a breeding ground for local democracy and for democracy in general.

One important issue that has always been a source of tension since 1979 and one which requires urgent attention, at least at the political level, relates to the creation of local governments. This has been an ending battle from as far back as the Second Republic. This has been a source of tension between the Federal Government and Lagos State Government even before the Yar'Adua presidency. The issue came up again recently with the resolve of the Lagos State to conduct local government elections on the basis of additional 37 Councils created by its House of Assembly and the 20 existing ones that were said to be the ones constitutionally recognized by virtue of the listing of the names of local governments in s. 3 of Part 1 (*First Schedule*) of the 1999 Constitution. Though the issue seems to have been resolved by the Supreme Court while ruling against the illegal seizure of Lagos Council funds under the Obasanjo administration, it would appear that the political disagreement which should not have persisted given the ruling by the apex court subsists. Ultimately, this might be an issue for

constitutional amendment in favour of a three-tier federal setting, where the responsibility will be that of the State government. Of course, the argument against this, and for the involvement of the Federal government, might be its consequence where local government becomes a factor.

I want to emphasize that it would require an effective local government for some of the targets in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), NEEDS, SEEDS, LEEDS, CEEDS, Vision 20-20-20, 7 - point agenda and NEPAD to be met and not Constituency Allowances to the members of the legislatures. There can, of course, be a constituency-based approach to budgeting that will be implemented through the normal mechanism.

The above proposals go with some responsibilities. Political leaders must *be prepared to work together* in the interest of the people, act in accordance with acceptable norms of behaviour, and must understand the limits of their authority. Local government's political and career executives, must also not abuse their powers, and must be responsible, upright and committed. The experience in Nigeria's local governments in recent times indicated the contrary. For some reasons, the quality and character of most Chairmen and Councillors are questionable to make local government work in ways that promote local democracy and development. The common opinion is that local governments political and career executives, possibly with few exceptions, merely share allocations meant for developmental purposes. According to the Chairman of the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC), Mrs. Farida Waziri, local government in Nigeria between June 1999 and June 2007 had nothing to show for the N3.313 trillion allocated to them (See, *The Guardian*, 27 August, 2008)

In the field of human rights, my works span an analysis of the Human Rights position of Nigeria at the domestic and international levels and provide linkages between the two, while prescribing appropriate actions and institutional framework for lesser abridgements by the state. I have made the important and critical point that the observance of human rights is a yardstick for the measurement of political maturity of the state in contemporary setting, which in turn determines their stability.

While arguing that the tenuous linkages between social justice and human rights in Nigeria's public administration is responsible for citizens' alienation from Government, I have advocated for the adoption of a unitary conception of Human Rights in Nigeria for the full enjoyment of human rights and to prevent government's abdicating its responsibility (Okunade 1991a). In addition I have clearly identified the official methodology for the avoidance of Human Rights through selectivity in the standard setting and its interpretation in Nigeria (Okunade 1987, 1988, 1989, 1996, 1998). The artificial divide between the economic, social and cultural rights on the one hand and the civil and political rights can easily relegate human rights issues to the background. My subsisting submission is that the common Chapter II of the 1979 and 1999 Constitutions which are elliptical statements and, therefore, can be said to be non-justifiable will undermine the fiduciary responsibility of the state. This is very important because the commitment to the welfare of the citizens ought not to be a matter of constitutional guarantee without the adequate resource base. This thinking is contrary to the position of the international community at the Vienna Conference of 1993 against hierarchy of rights and the commitment to a unitary conception where the rights enunciated in the Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights are as fundamental as those in the Covenant of Civil and Political Rights. In fact, they are said to be mutually reinforcing and one might not be achievable without the other.

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, one of the truly exciting parts of my research work which is not unrelated to the above is exploring inter-connections between Human Rights and Development (Okunade 1989, 1991b) with particular reference to the violation of Trade Union rights in Nigeria (Okunade 1989).

My analytical framework for examining the Banjul Charter (Okunade 1987), the African Commission on Human Rights (Okunade 1997), and the expansion of the political space through *perestroika* and *glasnost* (Okunade 1990) has advanced the understanding of the international dimension of domestic policies. My main and the most important contribution in this domain is the explication of the debate on the sovereignty of a national constitution. With Nigeria as the tenth signatory to the

Banjul Charter, the trend has been to complement her human rights prescription with the Banjul Charter which has the capability of superseding a national convention. This has become one of the useful means for the defence of human rights in Nigeria over the years, and this is important given the inadequacies of human rights standards in Nigeria and the fact that the Banjul Charter recognizes as basic rights such rights like the right to education. This is based on the principle of 'self determination' in peoples' rights which are unusual in regional human rights instruments.

In all the above, the basic thrust has been to make a virile system of local government and enjoyment of human rights the mainframe of the rule of law and the larger issue of development. The basic problem that Nigeria had before May 29, 1999 that earned her the status of a pariah state could be attributed to absence of democracy. This problem was supposedly to be over with the promulgation of Decree No. 24 cited as *The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (Promulgation) Decree 1999*, by the General Abdulsalami Abubakar Military Government which came into force on May 29, 1999.

The submissions in the next two sections of this Lecture indicate how futile it could be, placing any hope on a civilian constitution and democracy without a leader that has a strong will and the commitment to the spirit and letters of the constitution and the essence of democracy. Thus, we focus on leadership in Nigeria especially in the eight years before May 29, 2007 after a theoretical exploration of the essential ingredients of leadership with special reference to political leadership.

### **On Leadership**

Leadership is a concept with wide application. It applies to all categories of human collectivities – groups, organizations or societies, etc., both formal and informal. Indeed, it is one of the intrinsic elements for efficient and effective management and administration and it is very important in setting and attaining organizational goals. To Bill Newman (1997) when arguing for continuous development of leadership skills in order to



accomplish success in all nations said 'Civilization must experience progress and progress depends on leadership.' Leadership is therefore important in development and problem solving. Leadership, than anything else is the proposed solution to all accomplishments.

The literature on leadership is concentrated on managerial leadership or leadership generally. Therefore, any attempt at defining political leadership has to be within the general discussion on leadership as political leadership shares all characteristics of leadership except in their concern. Therefore managerial notions cannot be imported wholesale into politics which is about 'the resolution of conflict of value and of interests, of multiple perspectives and perceived relatives.'

Like most concepts, it is difficult if not impossible to construct what could be regarded as the "ultimate definition of leadership". It has been suggested in leadership studies that the appropriate question is not "What is the definition of leadership?" but "What is *good* leadership?" The implication of this is that leadership does not necessarily have to be good. There can therefore be good and bad leadership, depending on the character of leaders, among other factors. This partly explains why the conception of leadership is a dilemma in every society and organizations. While leadership is needed for guidance and goal accomplishment, it can also misguide and bring about retardation in the development of the collectivity in question.

The adjective 'good' has two senses which are logical conjunctions and attributes of good leadership. These are that leadership must be 'morally and technically good' and 'effective'. It is, however, arguable whether a leadership that possesses one of these, especially effectiveness that might have attribute of being 'technically good' but lack morality in its actions or choice of means, qualifies as good leadership. It is the ideal that a good leader should possess the two attributes that led to Johanne Cella's (2004) assertion that "ethics lies at the heart of leadership studies".

Contrary to the thinking that there was no precise, accurate, and concise definition of leadership, Ciulla (*ibid*) identified some commonality namely, that all see 'leadership as some kind

of process, act, or influence that in some way gets people to do something.' He noted the difference in their connotation, particularly in terms of their implications for leader-follower relationship. This relates to how leaders get people to do things (impress, organize, influence, and inspire) and how what is to be done is decided (forced obedience or involuntary consent, determined by leaders and as a reflection of mutual purposes) have normative implications.

The issue of how leadership gets things done depends on the nature of the environment where it is operating. Suffice it to state here that in a democratic society with 'freedom, personal autonomy, and equality', the most morally unattractive definitions are those that appear to be coercive, manipulative, and dictatorial'. (Ciulla *op. cit.*, p.10)

The morally attractive ones have two attractions (Rost 167), namely: rather than induce, the leadership influence which implies that leaders recognize the autonomy of followers. In this case, the leadership process has to be ethical. People have to freely agree "that the intended changes fairly reflect their mutual purposes." So, consensus is an important part of what makes leadership, and it does so because free choice is morally pleasing. The second attraction is the recognition of the 'beliefs, values, and needs of the followers'. Here followers and leaders are seen as partners in shaping the goals and purposes of the organization in question.

It is the morally attractive definition which applies in a democracy that is of interest and relevant to us. At the core of democracy is the principle of popular sovereignty or consent which holds that government can be legitimated by the will of those whom it governs. Also, another essential element is that it is based on the equality of all the people within a national boundary, and that all the laws of the land apply to all without exception. So, democracy has political and economic dimensions. It is not an end in itself, but also a means to an end.

It also requires the constitution to provide methods, by which the people can, without recourse to violence, control the government which emerges in accordance with and even specify the means for its own amendment. The constitution prescribes the institutional, legal, infrastructural and environmental

framework for the emergence and operation of leadership. The constitution itself must be based on the principle of the rule of law. Inevitably, it is the government that is responsible for upholding the rule of law within the state. This, together with the making of laws, is one of the most important of its responsibilities to the people.

But the government, that is, political leadership is subject to the constitution. The officials of the State including the head, however called, swore on oath to honour and protect the constitution as the supreme law of the land. Lack of respect for the constitution automatically undermines the basis for the rule of law. Absolutism and arbitrariness are undemocratic. These responsibilities on the State or government its agent are responsibilities of political leadership.

Ideally, political leaders are supposed to be public servants who want to serve the people they lead. Like leadership, a good political leader requires a vision which is the hardest part of leadership, courage and 'a willingness to make bold moves and must be careful in choice of options and be prepared.

Throughout history there have only been three ways of resolving issues that are political in nature, namely: money, force or politics. But on the long run the most efficacious is politics, neither money nor force alone work. Strictly speaking, politics operates at three separate levels – of values and ends that have to be rationally argued; of ways of engaging people in addressing issues; and of ways of binding people together to accept outcomes. These are issues in which political leadership is fundamental.

In general, the quality of leadership can be determined by the extent to which it possesses the following attributes – vision, foresight, knowledge - particularly of the organization it is leading and others to which such a body relates, its problems, goals and strategies, among others; sensitivity, decisiveness, discipline, responsiveness and most important, its capacity to respond to challenges. These also determine leadership performance at least in potential terms. Also, the extent to which leadership can deploy these attributes is very crucial. Any attempt at exploiting the attributes for selfish or myopic interests necessitates a disqualification. Therefore, leadership

must always identify and represent the aspirations of the people or the collectivity it is leading (Okunade 1989). It is these attributes that determine leadership acceptability, ability to gain compliance of followership and legitimacy. However, these characteristics in some cases can be recognized as virtues or qualifications for leadership.

Given that we will be discussing the servant-leadership model in the later part of this lecture, it is important to attempt a brief discussion on the normative theories of leadership. The theories of leadership offer different ways of thinking about good leadership or what it is to be a good leader, which are essentially two namely, Transformational or Transforming Leadership and Servant or Caring Leadership. Given the concern in this Lecture and in its next part, the discussion of the theories will tilt towards servant leadership.

The theory of transforming or transformational leadership rests on a set of assumptions about the relationship between leaders and followers. Burns (1978: 42-43) and Ciulla (1978) argue that leaders have to operate at higher need and value levels than the followers and that a leader's role is "to exploit tension and conflict within peoples value systems and play the role of raising people's consciousness." Transforming leaders are reputed for their strong values and moral ideals which they do not water down by consensus but elevate people by using conflict to engage followers and help them reassert their own values and needs. Transactional leadership is concerned about end-values such as liberty, justice, and equality and transforming leaders raise their followers up through stages of morality and need. Like servant leaders they turn their followers into leaders and the leaders become a moral agent.

Relating to transformational leadership is charismatic leaders which to Jay Conger (1989: 17), to some extent, facilitate transformational processes within organizations, because the charismatic leaders have "powerful emotional and moral impact" on followers. Charismatic leaders are, however, not predictably the best, they can be the worst.

The second—servant or caring leadership—is a model of leadership that has not been highly popularized like transformational leadership. It is a simple but radical shift in

emphasis. Like transformational leaders, servant leaders elevate the people, but there is much more as it involves the leaders serving followers instead of followers serving leaders.

Robert K. Greenleaf (1977) in his *Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness*, brought to fore the concept and its distinguishing or defining characteristics as a variant of leadership, and has been popularized by others like Larry C. Spears (1995) and James A. Autry (2001), and others. In his seminal essay titled 'The Servant as Leader' (*ibid.*) he emphasizes that servant leadership is an emerging approach to leadership in the service of others. It is an important part of the emerging leadership and management paradigm for the 21<sup>st</sup> century that has influenced many people and organizations both in the public and private sectors.

According to Larry Spears (1998) the model is a move away from the

“traditional autocratic and hierarchical modes of leadership and toward a model based on teamwork and community, one that seeks to involve others in decision making; one that is strongly based in ethical and caring behaviour; and one that is attempting to enhance the personal growth of workers while at the same time improving the caring and quality of our many institutions.”

It is regarded as an approach to leadership which is the key for “building a better and more caring society” (Autry 2001: 336), and “a unique and humanistic philosophy of leadership” (Spears 1995: 283), a management model which is obviously antithetical to the popular management and leadership thoughts which are based on old concepts of power. It is a fairly established concept, but not so popular in usage. A further discussion on this will be undertaken in the next part of this Lecture, which is on challenges to evolving and developing servant leadership in Nigeria.

## **Leadership in Nigeria**

The history of Nigeria's economic, political, and social fortune and misfortune especially in respect of political leadership are too well known and reasonably documented to warrant a rehash here. But it is important to note that before now, Nigeria was engaging in endless visions, political engineering including constitutional, structural, and moral reforms, apart from the endless crusades against perceived social malaise. Despite these, the problems have not abated.

Until comparatively recently, colonialism and the politics of independence including its resultant effects—colonial inheritance and inappropriate political structures and system—were advanced as explanations for the country's predicament. In fact, the vogue was to talk of artificiality of the Nigerian nation, and the 'mistake of 1914'. So, in Nigeria as in most African countries, independence has meant little to the citizens as their hope and aspirations were dashed. All along, the character of the leadership was recognized as an obstacle to the accomplishment of the goal of the state, but more often than not some extraneous factors are always being held responsible while the leadership seem to be oblivious of their negative impact on the country.

While one cannot underestimate the impact of colonialism and its transferred or migrated structures, the challenge of independence was for the emerging leadership to revert the trend. But, increasingly after independence our understanding of governance and politics in Nigeria has not been the pursuit of public policy or service. Rather, it is the pursuit of private ends. Nigeria suffers as Gavin Williams observed from "a narrow conception of politics" which "reduces it to the contest for political office and the competition for its spoils." Equally valid is Billy Dudley's position that politics in Nigeria "is not about alternative policies but about the control over men and resources". So also is the Introduction to the 1979 Nigerian Draft Constitution which declares that, "the pre-occupation with power and its material benefits" was a major interest and that "political ideals as to how society can be organized and ruled to the best advantage of all, hardly enter into the calculation" of the Nigerian ruling class.

The collapse of the First Republic occasioned by the first military coup (regardless of the misgivings about the coup) was nothing but dissatisfaction with leadership. The inter-play of forces and the bickering evident in the secondary as against primary antagonisms among the leadership shortly before independence gave some justifications for the coup. To Chief Obafemi Awolowo, the collapse of the First Republic could be attributed to three factors namely, the calibre of the political class, their inability to play according to the rule of the game and lack of tolerance. Of course, the military could be said to be impatient. While the military could exercise a restraining influence on the unreasonableness of the political class in a situation that can accentuate insecurity, successive military regimes have not been different. In fact, one can say that the 30-month civil war was fought to resolve the battle for supremacy between the then Lt. Col Chukwuemeka Odumegwu-Ojukwu and General Yakubu Gowon, and that it was not essentially a war to keep Nigeria one as it was not unavoidable.

Undoubtedly, and as been well documented and by the admission of its leadership (*The Punch*, July 7, 2008), the military expectedly failed to provide good governance and leadership. But it would appear that based on the expectations from the supposedly democratic governments of Alhaji Shehu Shagari and Chief (General) Olusegun Obasanjo between 1979 and 1983; and 1999 and 2007 respectively, one can talk of a mediocre level of performance. One can safely conclude that Nigeria has always been under a 'coalition of bad leadership', whether military or civilian. It is a discussion of the latter that is considered relevant in this part of this Lecture.

Indeed, Nigerians and the international community were full of high expectations from a 'democratic' government coming after a contrived Transitional Government after the death of General Sani Abacha in 1998. Under the Abacha regime the situation in the country was largely abnormal and the greatest charge that earned Nigeria the status of a pariah state was the absence or lack of progress in the return of the country to democratic rule and, of course, the flagrant violation of human rights and the rule of law. Democracy was seen as a way forward and the expectation was that there would be an end to

executive lawlessness, affronts to the rule of law and the realization of public good. Therefore, lack of democracy was seen as the problem.

At the beginning of the second term of the Obasanjo administration, just like in his inauguration speech the president invited Nigerians to dream of a Nigeria that was free from rampant corruption and pervasive indiscipline, and challenged Nigerians to retrieve their social values and reinstate their self-pride. The restoration of a vigorous public service lay at the heart of the president's challenge.

In the Foreword to *The National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS)* (2004) document which was the administration's response to the development challenges of Nigeria, the president revealed that "in 1999, most people grossly underestimated the extent of social, political, and economic decay of the country." He claimed that as at 2004, the Federal Government had "succeeded in stabilizing the polity, consolidated the democratic governance structure, and made modest progress in the social and economic sphere." He raised the hope of Nigerians further by a further commitment that:

Over the next few years (2003-2007) NEEDS will consolidate the achievements of the previous four years and lay a solid foundation for sustainable poverty reduction, employment generation, wealth creation, and value reorientation.

He also noted, and rightly too, that Nigeria had what it takes (human and material resources) to become the strongest economy in Africa and one of the leading economies in the world.

Contrary to the above, many things went wrong during the eight years in question as there were unpardonable and avoidable developments that further exacerbated the country's socio-political and economic development. In retrospect, the eight years cast a bleak evaluation. Virtually everything went wrong and needs to be fixed. Some of the conclusions on the assessment of the first term of the supposedly democratic dispensation by Alex Gboyega (2003) is useful and valid here.



According to him, the elected political leaders “acted not as servants of the people ... but as lords” with the “imperial dispositions” of the executive branch and the legislature creating what he referred to as “unnecessary, distracting and [a] bizarre theatre that did not portray strong commitment to serious business.” Added to this was that “service delivery remains insensitive and accountability is hardly enforced or attainable” while corruption was still thriving while the period was marked by a “monumental record of contravention of due ‘process’ in procurements, financial management”. The period was also marked by intergovernmental disputes with the federal government not being on a firm ground in virtually all of them. On the whole he concluded that “our elected leaders seem quite oblivious of or are impervious to the yearning for fundamental changes’ in the way Nigeria was governed and failed to save Nigerians from ‘the groans of misery”.

The balance sheet in the eight years cannot but be negative given the above and continued the recklessness and insensitivity of governance, increased insecurity, unjustifiable and continued decaying infrastructures especially road and power, considering the financial commitments to them, the continued low capacity utilization to the dismay of investors, abuse of due process and the rule of law, lack of transparency and accountability in governance and the ineffective and selectivity in the anti-graft war, among others.

The achievements often attributed to the administration are in most cases ridiculous and laughable. These—wresting the country from the military, guaranteeing the unity and stability of the country, mobile phones (which three years earlier were common possessions of artisans and market women in some West African countries), privatization and commercialization (which included all levels of educational system), debt repayment, the banking reform, Public Service Reforms, privatization including the establishment of private universities, and establishment of anti-graft commission and ‘anti-graft’ war—were insufficient in terms of the expected dividends of democracy, given the colossal resources and public expenditure during the period.

If these accomplishments come under scrutiny, definitely some of the claims will diminish or collapse as they are either not efficiently or effectively accomplished or were self-serving and not in the country's interest. For example, apart from the fact that the mobile phone technology was long overdue, its being a critical asset of globalization makes for its inevitability. The mode of regulation of the sector and the exorbitant levies on the providers coupled with an unfavourable service environment, for example security and lack of infrastructure like power, have made mobile phone tariff one of the highest in the world with little or no protection to subscribers in the face of poor services, poor interconnectivity and providers super-normal profits. To date, no one has come to explain to Nigerians the logic or the technological imperative of '1\*', in loading MTN's recharge vouchers when \*555\* suffices. I think we deserve an explanation on this if only to douse public understanding that the '1\*', which through Nigerian's ingenuity has long been sidelined, was to service corruption.

One more example of the administration's achievement is said to be the establishment of private universities which have now outstripped public universities which have been run down mostly by some of the present proprietors of the private universities. The justification for the new universities which are undoubtedly desirable is defective. The fact that they were established to checkmate the public universities and to ensure rapid and predictable academic year is not in the interest of the system, more so when the problems of the public universities were not being effectively addressed in any significant manner. The establishment of private universities without addressing the problems in the older public universities which provide the intellectual backing by their capacity to produce academic staff to service the nation's universities only postpones the dooms day. The new Universities now poach on existing staff or engage the services of many who require pupilage. The future implication of this is the dwindling of staff in the public universities as a result lucrative offers of remuneration and promotion prospects elsewhere, and as a result of voluntary and involuntary retirements.

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, it is clear that the University of Ibadan has had a rough time in this regard and this is not likely to change. With all sense of responsibility, I wish to draw attention to the fact that the trend has to be addressed. If nothing is done many courses including Political Science may find it very difficult to secure full accreditation at next exercise in a few year's time. I need to state here that the future of this country and its leadership lay in the quality of its universities, but for us in Nigeria, it lies not in the private but in the public or in both. Some of the Universities that are being celebrated have no business in the provision of tertiary education and are not interested in giving a rounded education capable of liberating the beneficiaries. Staff and Student unionism which are essential for institutional and personal development including leadership training are stifled. This is nothing but an abridgement of the fundamental right to association and other related employee's rights to collective bargaining in the case of the members of staff.

There are also sharp practices in ways that compromise standards. As a matter of fact, some of them are already waning and under threat less than ten years of existence. Ultimately, some of the graduates have to legitimize their degrees by coming to the 'run-down' public universities. The future staff needs of the universities especially the new ones is an issue that requires attention. Of course, the fact that many of the country's leadership including technocrats now own or are associated with some of them should be a source of concern. Privatization and commercialization (and in the case of Nigeria, in the midst of poverty) as it is becoming evident globally, have their limitations. We may not come to realize this until it is too late. What we need now given the level of poverty is not more choice which will definitely lead to greater inequality but increased public – sector driven provisions. We have to develop first for choice to be meaningful.

My reservations about debt repayment as a good thing have to be withdrawn in view of the revelations on economic governance under the Obasanjo administration. My preference had been for such monies to be used for infrastructural and human development, especially education, health, power and

communication, including information technology. These are good investments that will regenerate the resource input that can now be used to pay the debts at a latter date. But given the level of mismanagement and lack of returns on investment coupled with the large-scale diversion of public funds, it was a good thing that the debts were paid regardless of the yet-to-be confirmed unofficial costs of the transaction.

In respect of privatization of the nation's assets, available evidence reveals that the transactions were not fair and transparent and therefore, cannot be in the national interest. Contrary to the position during the privatization debate in 1986 that privatization would open up Nigeria to a new form of imperialism as Nigerians would not have the capacity to buy, it is therefore amazing that reasons other than finance stand as obstacles to privatization in Nigeria. There was also another dimension to it: a few Nigerians were involved in stripping the country of its assets. It was as if Nigeria was put up for sale to a few individual bidders. Some of the reversals including the sale of the refineries, sale of houses and land in the Federal Capital Territory, among others, are an indictment on the privatization exercise during the period. As a matter of fact, what transpired during the period is a confirmation that there is no genuine private sector in Nigeria. Most of the assets in the private sector including funds for recapitalization and for purchasing public assets are largely from the nation's resources.

The performance of the administration is even worse in the political aspects of democracy or the non-tangible components of the so-called dividends of democracy. There are many other failings which included lack of observance of the principle of checks and balances, especially between the legislature and the executive; constant frictions between the executive and the legislative arms of government; 'unlawful arrests and detentions, unjust and unwarranted impeachments that were upturned by the Supreme Court'; deliberate rendering of the courts ineffectual by flagrant disobedience of court judgments as in the case of withholding of Lagos State Local Government Fund by the Federal Government, interference in the judiciary by frequent self-serving interpretations of judgments; violation of due process standards which the administration set by itself;

apparent lack of transparency and accountability; and the support and promotion of 'informal entities' for selfish political advantage and the settling of political score. There were other violations in respect of the rule of law by individuals, corporate organizations and government agencies in the country. Also, contrary to the belief that under a presidential system of government there is no official opposition, the governance and politics of the period was run on the basis of government versus opposition. Because money played a big role in the politics of the time, the National Assembly was not able to continue in its role as a collective check on the executive. In fact, it would appear that only the presidency existed during the period with the ex- President as the major player.

The three levels of government – Federal, State and Local – were said to have accessed or spent N16 trillion as total net allocation during the eight-year tenure of President Olusegun Obasanjo. Out of this amount the Federal, State and Local Government shares were N7.39 trillion, N5.74 trillion and N3.3 trillion respectively (*Nigerian Tribune*, 9 September, 2008). Contrary to the evidence of available resources that were actually deployed and the thinking that the resources of the country can meaningfully obliterate the problems associated with the provision of social welfare and infrastructural decay, the eight years before May 29, 2007 was marked by reckless squandering and privatization of the nation's resources with increased poverty and grave infrastructural decay as the consequence. In the midst of this, the living condition gap was increasing with the diminishing middle class completely wiped out. The wage structure ridiculously tilted in favour of the political class, with the lowest paid elected official having better remuneration comparable to the highest non political-public servant. This is apart from abuse of perquisites of office and access to unearned incomes by way of corruption.

From the 'utterly horrendous' revelations at the probes and public hearings by the current National Assembly and other agencies like the EFCC and the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC), one can say that the greatest performance apart from abuses in the areas of rule of law, was corruption. Virtually every sector, institution and financial commitment and

involvement – contracts, privatization - undertaken under the administration and accruals are being investigated. Prominent are oil and gas, sale of Abuja houses, communication, power projects, aviation, the ex-Governors and the Local Government. The amount involved has been put at a conservative estimate of N3.5 trillion (*The Guardian*, 3 June, 2008). EFCC and ICPC claimed to have recovered as at March 2008 about N600 billion of ‘stolen money from individuals since their operation’ (*The Guardian*, 11 March, 2008).

The financial management of the administration was characterized by wastages, untraceable projects, sidelining of due process, conflicting figures, expensive duplication of procurements, ‘unsecured contracts to companies’ some without record of registration with the Corporate Affairs Commission and other violations of best budgeting practices with the Ministries, Departments and Agencies holding back unspent appropriations. In addition to the above, most of the administration reforms including the public service reforms which included rule of law, transparency, accountability were violated with impunity. It is little wonder then that Nigeria ranked very low in the Transparency International Corruption Perception Index at 37 of 45 African countries in 2006 and 32 most corrupt nation in 2007.

One comment that is apt here is on the immunity clause as a shield from prosecution especially of Governors for corruption, and it is important here. Contrary to attributing corruption to immunity, I wish to state that the immunity clause has to be read alongside other provisions including the impeachment clause (s.188), Code of Conduct for Public Officers (*Fifth Schedule*) ‘Oaths of Allegiance’ (*Seventh Schedule*). The inability to try Governors for alleged corruption is political and is fuelled by corruption. The use of the impeachment clause which would have stripped serving Governors of their immunity, has always been very difficult and shameful. It would require a legislature functioning under a proper checks and balances system to overcome this. So, I submit that immunity is a protection subject to good behaviour. It must be noted that the immunity clause was not an invention by Nigeria and is not peculiar to it. This is part of the failings of the political class, that is, the inability of

the legislative, executive and party leadership to play according to the rule. Without the clause, going by what transpired between 1999 and 2007, especially the leadership style, there was no basis to suggest prosecution.

Granted that a non-democratic regime cannot convincingly superintend elections, the conduct and administration of the April 14 and 21 2007 elections in Nigeria raised serious issues on the capacity and capability of a democratic government to undertake free and fair elections.

With the handling of the elections, the opportunity for democratic consolidation was thwarted by the administration. The administration seriously attempted to use its party, the Peoples Democratic Party's majority in the National Assembly to force a constitutional amendment to seek a third tenure presidency. This coupled with the feud between the President and Vice President Atiku Abubakar heated up the polity in ways that essentially dangerously polarized the country. The conduct and administration of the party's primaries which largely violated internal party democracy and the declaration by the former President that elections which otherwise depend on popular sovereignty was a 'do or die affair', was a sign-post to a disastrous election. Also, the seemingly appropriation of some federating institutions like the Police, EFCC, Judiciary and INEC, among others, by the presidency weakened the possibility of free and fair elections.

Apparently, the greatest threat to democracy was the former president who obviously was not disinterested in the emergence of whoever became his successor (when the idea of the third term was jettisoned) and there was no way the elections, especially the presidential, could have been otherwise. (Okunade 2007). Many aspects of Electoral Act 2006 Act as evident in the rulings by the Election Petition Tribunals were violated, especially the provisions relating to internal party discipline. Yet, Electoral Act 2006 was supposed to be an improvement on *Electoral Act 2002*. This included the regulation of campaign finance, the requirements for internal party democracy, especially in respect of candidate selection, that is, party primaries. From the beginning the elections were shrouded in intrigues and manipulations while incumbents, especially at the

executive level at both the federal and state levels, failed to exercise restraints in the commitment of public resources to fight the elections.

The elections were another dimension of the scuttling of the June 12 election that was the best election ever conducted in Nigeria, which was annulled by the military and their civilian accomplices including traditional leadership at the time. But unlike the June 12 election, there were election results that were largely contested. With over a thousand election petitions, including the presidential, and a considerable number of reversals by the tribunals and the courts, the elections as is commonly believed and acknowledged even by President Yar'Adua, were flawed. The elections were the worst in Nigeria's history and were indescribably flawed in ways that initially threatened democratic consolidation in the country (Okunade 2008). Professor Maurice Iwu (2008) in one of the spirited efforts at defending the Independent National Electoral Commission acknowledged a marked difference between the early nationalists and the political class in the last elections. To him, in their era,

there were depths and service-oriented approach to politics. Vision, principle, ideology and meticulously developed manifestos formed the basic foundation on which the pursuit of power was hinged.

The political class at that time to him had political parties that "developed their rules and guidelines based on their philosophies, and no member of any of the parties were above the law or beyond reproach within his group." To him, this was no more. Instead he alluded that "one of the most grievous features of contemporary politics and the conduct of politicians in the Nigerian environment has been the absence of order" and the "quest for power that does not make room for restraint and respect for constituted authority, individual and group excesses, in which the mechanism for state control is weak or compromised". He alleged that "on the 2007 elections, the ruling party, PDP, foisted a most unusual and unprecedented



crisis on the nation." Seriously speaking, this was a failure of the political leadership. The occurrences that created a high degree of abnormality were not unavoidable. On the whole, it would appear as if the legacies of the eight were hardly different from the years before May 29, 1999. Chief Awolowo's conclusion on the First Republic applies.

So, without knowing it, Nigeria was back at a more precarious situation and was at the lowest ebb in governance in its history by May 29, 2007. Instead of pursuing an agenda based on the legacies of the Obasanjo administration, it soon became very clear that it would be irresponsible for the Yar'Adua administration to prefer continuity. In fact, the conclusion of the former president on the situation he met in 1999 was truer in the state he left Nigeria in May, 2007. Although the Olubadan of Ibadan, Oba Samuel Odulana concluded that "democracy never improved between 1999 and 2007" from personal experience (*This Day*, 13 September, 2008), his conclusion undoubtedly represents the mainstream assessment of what transpired in the eight years before May 29, 2007 in Nigeria. Neither the political nor the economic benefits of democracy could be said to have been accomplished.

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, sir, I have gone to this length in describing what transpired during the last eight years before the current administration to demonstrate the human failings that characterized the leadership. The above represent the mainstream assessment of Nigeria in the eight years before May 29, 2007 and cannot reasonably be explained by any other factor than the human factor. They are not attributable to the inadequacies in regulative and constitutive rule. For each of the actions that was negative, there were positive and beneficial courses of action or inaction. It was a failed administration induced by man, and in this case the political leadership. The flagrant and systemic corruption, disrespect for court orders, commitment to 'do-or-die' elections including the inability to conduct free and fair elections are caused by the leadership for reasons that require further research.

The only difference is that Nigeria remains largely stable, but this cannot be an achievement attributable to the country's democracy as other undemocratic countries are also stable.

Generally speaking, Nigeria and Nigerians have been labouring under leadership strain and deficit, that can, according to Desmond Davies' (*West Africa*, March 1994) be 'thriving on mediocrity', while those who are striving for excellence are failing to make it to the top. So, it is more often than not those who have embraced mediocrity that have been making progress. This has to stop; but it is difficult as long as money plays a significant part in Nigeria and poverty continues to flourish. This is one reason why the war against corruption must be won with the loot recovered.

Although, the analysis is limited to the Federal or national level, one can conveniently say that with very minor exceptions, the development at other levels of governance mirrored what transpired at the national level. As we shall see shortly, the situation has serious implications for the succeeding President Yar'Adua's administration.

I have to state in concluding this part that the whole attention has been on leadership. One is not oblivious of the fact that there is a unified interdependent relationship between the leadership and followership. But there is a higher order responsibility of leadership which as we have discussed earlier include, the responsibility of the leadership especially transforming leadership to 'morally improve its followership'.

### **Challenges and Appropriateness of Servant-Leadership in Nigeria**

Although, not much is being heard in terms of substance or content of President Yar'Adua's servant-leadership method in specific terms, there is no doubt that he has foisted an entirely new leadership style on the country. I am not unaware of Chief Servant Dr Mu'azu Babangida Aliyu, *Taliban of Minna*. But the idea of a chief servant seems to be alien to servant leadership as ultimately, a chief servant is a 'boss' as against a servant. In any case, it is the President Yar'Adua's servant leadership model and its appropriateness that we discuss in the remaining part of this lecture. The challenges of developing the model of leadership in Nigeria are also discussed. This is preceded by a discussion on its essential element of servant leadership which elaborates on the second aspect of the normative models of

leadership earlier discussed. This is important to enable our analysis.

To Greenfield (*op. cit*), “a servant-leader is one who is a servant first” and servant-leadership

begins with the *natural feeling that one wants to serve first*. Then *conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead*. The difference manifests itself in the care taken by the servant – first to make sure that other people’s highest priority needs are being served. The best test is; Do those served grow as persons; do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servant? [*Emphasis mine*]

Autry (p. 3-21) advances what can be regarded as the intrinsic elements of the leader as servant, by redefining leadership from the perspectives that serving others is its essential component. It is, therefore, “not about controlling people”; instead, “it’s about caring for people and being a useful resource for others.” It is not also “about being boss;” but it entails “being present for people and building a community at work”. Furthermore, it is “not about holding on to territory; but about letting go of ego, bringing your spirit to work, being your best and most authentic self.” It is also “more concerned with creating a place in which people can do good work, ... find meaning in their work, and can bring their spirits to work” and largely, it is ‘a matter of paying attention’ and requires love. It is, therefore, not about power which is always the preoccupation of leadership. It is, therefore, a calling.

Elsewhere, Rasmussen (in Spears: 287) identifies the following—service to others, using a holistic approach to work, promoting a sense of community, sharing power in decision-making, and impacting the least privileged in society of benefit, or at least causing no further deprivation; and the development of “a relationship in which those being served grow as persons by becoming healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, and more likely to become servant leaders themselves” - as the philosophy

or underlying values of servant leadership. These are in contrast to other descriptions of leadership which are behaviourally-based.

On the basis of Greenleaf's original writings, Spears (*op.cit*; p 4.) identifies a set of ten characteristics of the servant - leaders which are of critical importance, and are central to the development of servant-leaders. These are Listening, Empathy, Healing, Awareness, and Persuasion. Others are Conceptualization, Foresight, Stewardship, Community to the growth of people, and Building community.

A servant-leader is therefore sharply different from one who is leader first. For a leader first, it will be a later choice to serve—after leadership is established. One other difference is in the care taken by the servant-first to make sure that other people's highest priority needs are being served. These distinctions between the 'leader-first and the servant-first' which he regards as 'two extreme types', is the greatest problem to the transition to servant-leadership or creating a team of servant-leaders and, indeed, a culture of servant-leadership in existing organizations, institutions and communities.

The leadership style is the opposite of transformational leadership in the sense that it not only makes the followers to be leaders, the leader puts himself at the service of the followers. This is also markedly different from the conception of politics and leadership, especially in Nigeria where politics and leadership are self-serving.

The greatest problem of servant-leadership as a leadership model is how to reverse the existing conceptions and trends at all levels of political leadership and the public service without which such a claim by one person may be unfounded and futile. Servant - leaderships require of a team of servant-leaders. One of the essential responsibilities of effective leadership is to build and sustain high cohesive and performing team or teams, as the case may be. So, it is not enough for a President or a Governor to proclaim that status for the approach to leadership to take root.

Therefore, there are challenges to the emergence and the development of servant leadership in Nigeria. The first relates to the validity of the claim to servant-leadership and the second is associated with the building of a team of servant-leadership and

the third has to do with creating a culture of servant-leadership. Building a team of servant leaders and creating a culture of servant-leadership are necessary for leadership effectiveness and sustainability.

I will now attempt to briefly discuss the obstacles to the emergence of servant-leadership as a method of leadership in contemporary Nigeria. First, there is the problem of validity of the claim to servant-leadership by President Yar'Adua, given the manner in which he became interested in the Presidency. As someone who was not interested and had to be drawn or conscripted into the race by the kingmakers he would not have met the qualifications for servant leadership *ab initio*. These are that servant-leadership 'begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve', and 'the conscious choice ... to aspire to lead'.

However, if one concedes the status as the president voluntarily embraced servant-leadership and could be seen as a resolve by the President to do things differently due to his realization of the need for change in style of leadership, there are still some challenges relating to other challenges already identified. The task of producing a team of servant-leaders and the development of 'a culture of servant leadership' are mutually reinforcing, and central to them is the whole issue of the mechanics or strategies for sustainable servant-leadership in a country like Nigeria. These are complex and cumbersome tasks which can be only be realized if there is in place a servant-leader. Although, there are other important factors but the existence of a servant-leader is fundamental.

Ideally, the task of building the best team(s) starts with an analysis of the organization's needs based on functions necessary to make the vision work and not with offering jobs based on irrelevant considerations. The next thing is 'the recruitment of the best people to form the top team with each positioned appropriately', that is, where they can best deploy their skills and play to their strengths.

In Nigeria, at the Federal level as elsewhere, the way the present crop of public officials – political and career – officers emerged cannot be said to have produced the kind of team that is envisaged. Some of the key players were inherited, donated or imposed on the President. The requirement to have a team that is objectively determined is yet to be met. The President is said to

have acknowledged the weaknesses in the present team of ministers and the need to have technocrats as ministers. The current reshuffling may also not be different given the forces involved, political and otherwise. However, the assemblage of a team is not an end in itself; they still have to be transformed to servant-leaders. Transforming them may be as difficult as transforming existing officials.

There is a more serious problem as to the possibility of having such a team given the nature of politics and the influence of political parties in Nigeria. There is also the problem of how to extend the approach to the 36 States, 774 local governments including six area councils in the Federal Capital Territory and the various arms of government. This might not be necessary as Nigeria is a federation. The style may be fashionable and contagious with time if it has salutary effects where it is being practised.

Apart from the above, the task of building a team of servant-leaders like in all existing organizations is more problematic, giving the prevailing leadership model(s). In these organizations, change and change management are herculean, because the task of building a team of servant-leaders requires transformation as against reformation of existing practices and techniques for task accomplishments. It requires more than marginal tinkering with existing arrangements. As Autry (p.49) notes and rightly too, "Servant-leadership does not come naturally or easily to people whose experience has been limited to organizations in which the command-control, hierarchical management style is the norm". This puts a lot of responsibility on the new leadership in helping others to develop.

It is hoped that with the advantages of servant-leadership—the fact that people will benefit while their lives are going to be easier, freer, and more fulfilled than they were under the old, repressive way of doing things,—the expectation is that the transformation will be well received. This is not necessarily so. A lot depends on the leadership; the way and manner a leader proceeds to introduce the new culture of servant-leadership. It goes beyond the sitting servant-leader proclaiming servant-leadership, or his intention to create an environment with all the values and advantages of servant-leadership.

Human reaction to change, regardless of its outcome even when not sudden, is not always without reluctance and, in some cases, is the evidence of resistance borne out of fear and anxiety. In some cases, it might result from the protection of entrenched interests. More important is the old thinking that accepts certain hierarchies which will wane under the servant-leader.

It has been said that, the Nigerian political class holds

on government to entrench itself in power. The benefits of office were far too attractive to many who otherwise would have little glory or affluence to allow them to contemplate the forfeiture of these perquisites without carrying on the most effective fight regardless of means.

We have leaders who cannot suffer or endure discomfort or hardship to provide meaningful leadership and record marked economic and political progress. Leadership in the service of others, which servant-leadership is all about, requires a great deal of courage. It is by far easier for the existing leaders to favour the old top-down kind of relationship which is its opposite. They will certainly not necessarily be receptive to being servant first, which is at the core of servant-leadership.

The task of building a team of servant-leaders can, therefore, not be a one fell swoop event or one that is introduced suddenly or a "quick fix" approach. Nor is it something that can quickly be instilled into an institution. At the core of servant-leadership is long-term, "transformational approach to life and work—in essence, a way of being—that has the potential for creating positive change throughout our society." (Autry, p. 4). It, therefore, has to be gradual and has to go with appropriate education and training about the change. The essence of this is to provide insights into the various styles of leadership and organizational culture, and to enlighten the people, particularly about the nature of the culture that is going to be created and its advantages over the top-down hierarchical culture. So, no sudden miracle should be expected. It is expected to be a long-haul before the values can be internalized or replace the old ones. This is another problem which relates to the other strand

of our discussion on creating a culture of servant-leadership. Granted that the President who is the only known 'servant-leader' at the Federal level, has a maximum of two terms of eight years, what is the prospect for developing the culture?

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, the other task of creating a culture of servant-leadership is even more problematic. As pointed out earlier, the two are interdependent. The task of building a team of servant-leaders is easier if there is in existence a culture of servant-leadership. In the absence of such a culture, efforts that go into building servant-leadership on the long-run facilitate such a culture.

It has to be pointed out that creating a culture of servant-leadership in Nigeria would mean the replacement of the top-bottom culture with one where attributes of servant-leadership as already identified flourish. It would require having in place a "pattern of shared basic assumptions and values" on servant-leadership that have "worked well enough to be considered valid." It is, therefore, an evidence of internalization of values and "a stabilizing force which creates social reality for its participants." The central issue here is on the mechanics or techniques for creating a culture of servant-leadership which is not possible except there is progress in evolving a team of servant-leaders. It is through the existence of a culture of servant-leadership that the method can be firmly rooted and outlive the administration. But this cannot be done in eight years. Except there is commitment by its successors, there is no guarantee of continuity.

In Nigeria, for such a culture to emerge, the task of servant-leadership must succeed and there has to be an understanding of its imports and evidence of its advantages. Since creating a culture is contingent on building a team of servant-leaders, we will not go as far as discussing the stages and mechanisms for creating such a culture here. But it should be noted that as in the case of building a team of servant-leaders, the leadership also has a critical role to play in creating a culture of servant-leadership. Here, the leader's role modelling is potent in creating a culture of servant-leadership.

In all of the above, the servant-leader, in this case the President, is the most important element. Therefore, a lot depends on the extent to which the leader can act out the



attributes of servant leadership as earlier identified. The behaviour and example that he sets carry the greatest message on the import of servant, and provides "the substance that holds the team together in common purpose toward the right objectives." It is through team-building experience that a trustworthy team of servant-leadership can emerge.

If the model will see the light of the day, there is the need to give substance and effect to it. As at now, there is no attempt at developing and popularizing the style of leadership. People including potential and serving leaders, hardly know what this entails. Something has to be done to reverse this if servant-leadership style will have any meaning in Nigeria. A at now we have a self proclaimed servant leader without a team of servant leaders in the real sense. This is possibly a challenge to the Presidency, media and the National Orientation Agency. But the message has to be right. But one has to admit that there are many problems that undermine the appropriateness of servant – leadership in Nigeria.

### **Conclusion**

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, Servant-Leadership as an approach to leadership in Nigeria may not have emerged or may never emerge sense, but there has been a constant and renewed promise by the President to restore the virtues of good leadership (The Guardian, 15 August, 2008). There has also been some tremendous changes in the county's governance and political leadership especially by the President. These include many reversals of policies and actions that were unfavourable to the national interest, many probes and public hearing with disheartening revelations, there has been some appreciation in respect for human rights and the rule of law while executive lawlessness have reduced significantly. The Lagos State Local Government fund was released without any change in circumstance under the past administration that withheld it even after the Supreme Court judgment.

Progress has been made in intergovernmental relations and separation of powers among the organs of governments. Issues that were without agreement or areas of conflict between the state and federal have been resolved amicably while new ones are not being contrived. Two of such issues on which there has

been agreement are the power project and the management of excess crude oil account. Also the war on corruption—contrary to belief that the removal of the former EFCC boss was to thwart the efforts of the Commission—is being waged more vigorously with the trials of some individuals whose crimes were uncovered before the arrival of new anti-graft regime, but could not be tried. In addition, Nigeria's anti-corruption rating has appreciated.

On the whole, there is better, but justifiably slow governance, an administration under which as Chief Chukwu Emeka Ezeife put it, "the nerves of Nigerians are a little cool compared with the last" (*Nigerian Tribune*, 30 September, 2008). The difference between the eight years before May 29, 2007 and now is in character of the leadership. The atrocities of the last administration made scrutinizing past actions—as against his avowed commitment to continuity during its inauguration—the preoccupation of the Yar'Adua administration. Most of the actions are avoidable and not inevitable. How to end the kind of leadership in the eight years before May 29, 2007 which in some ways was consistent, with the trend in Nigeria and evolve credible leadership remain the greatest challenges in our time. Without addressing the leadership question, outcomes of constitution reform, say a peoples' constitution; electoral reforms, visions of all kind, economic prosperity and avowed and continued commitment to the democratic system, among other attempts at overcoming the national malaise, may be futile without purposive leadership. This is an issue that should be taken seriously.

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Mr. Vice-Chancellor, distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, I thank you all for listening. God Bless you all.

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