

Review

Africa's leadership challenges in the 21st century: A Nigerian perspective

Sheriff Folarin

Department of International Relations/ Strategic Studies, Covenant University, Canaanland, Ota, Nigeria. E-mail: sheffie2004@yahoo.co.uk.

Accepted 07 October, 2019

Leadership crisis in Africa is often seen from the point of view of the misdemeanor of various political rulers dotting the continental landscape. This paper sees it differently. It explores the fundamental cause of the misleadership parody, ranging from the personal capacity underdevelopment, to social-psychological and value deficiencies and misunderstandings that need to be addressed for Africa to be repositioned politically.

Key words: Leadership, role model, challenges.

INTRODUCTION

Interactions with the journals, radio and television media, and of course colleagues and students before now, has thrown more light on the declining quality of leadership on the continent, and indeed the spatial culture of nonexistent exemplary leadership, which David Oyedepo calls "Role Model". We shall come to that shortly. There is lack of "leadership in Africa." In our context, we will be looking at leadership in general and within the perspective of the environment as it relates to Africa. In terms of the ecological situation of leadership, it has to do with the socio-political environment, in which we have three key players namely, the leader, the follower and then the environment. Leadership responds to the environment, the same way followership works with leadership. In other words, there is a quintessential interface between leadership and followership, and the social space or environment.

In Africa, all we have seen is rulership or at best "managership". Such rulership or misleadership often carries along with it the excess baggage of more innocuous problems for the continent-from Abidjan to Djibouti, Lagos to Johannesburg, Freetown to Kinshasa, Darfur to Kampala, and Cape to Cairo. Any impassioned person about the continent, capable of reading the context of the African dilemma and analyzing it, it is same

story of one leadership ineptitude or the other. This does not however, mean the expression of afro-pessimism as some scholars have done (Ayodele, et al., 2005), but rather an afro-optimistic approach to developments as they unfold.

THE PROBLEM

Leadership has not been oversubscribed to as the problem of Africa, contrary to how some scholars have argued in recent times. It is contended in that line of thought that there are other dire straits in 21st century Africa that tend to render leadership to a secondary matter as they defy leadership (Anan, 2003). However, it is pertinent to note, leadership is an intervening variable in modern governable society as it increases or decreases the rate of the crisis, depending on policy choices, decisions and implementation (Samuel, 2006). There are three types of leadership challenges at the generic level in the 21st century, namely, the contextual, the personal and the changing paradigms. At the contextual level in the case of Africa, the historical, environmental, diseases, poverty, wars and political instability, infrastructural and general underdevelopment

are the turbulent issues. For instance, in Congo, there is the poverty of infrastructural development from independence to date. At the personal level, observation has shown that there is low drive or motivation towards self development on the part of Africans (leaders or followers), absence of leadership and general performance skills and a warped educational system, which started dying with the advent of unfocused military rule and political instability. For instance, it is largely evident that one can count the number of African rulers that is schooled up to the university level, or how many go back to school after one level of service. In Congo-Leopoldville (later Congo-Kinshasa, Zaire and now DR Congo) at independence for instance, only Patrice Lumumba had any significant tertiary education. The third is the challenge of whether Africa is responding well to changing paradigms such as globalization, world perspectives, technology, international speed of events and democratization.

Indeed there are other problems of Africa in the 21st century that is natural, as they are phenomenal. The pandemic HIV-AIDS, like malaria is pivotal to development, but is closely tied to leadership. The way this is done is by the effective or ineffective control and management of such natural/health maladies by governments. It will be proper to quickly remind you of many other challenges of the 21st century that you already know, which are either engendered or got, that have exacerbated by failures of leadership. They include:

Economic

poverty; infrastructural underdevelopment; urban decay; economic dependency upon western nations for financial aid, loans, technical assistance, and technical expertise; external indebtedness; misappropriation of public funds; embezzlement and financial mismanagement; prebendalism; money laundering; contractocracy; cyber fraud; poor economic, including agricultural policies and poorly implemented engineering programmes like SAP.

Social

These include ethnicity, irredentism, ethnic violence and genocide and civil wars like in Rwanda and Burundi between the Hutu, Tutsi and Twa, Darfur in Sudan, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Niger Delta in Nigeria; sectarian or religious violence; sectionalism and communal violence; widening social disequilibrium and injustices arising from escalating economic misfortunes; unemployment and underemployment crises; anti-social activities, including rape, prostitution, robbery and a creeping culture of violence among the idle or unemployed youths; declining educational quality and collapsed university system; food insecurity and general social insecurity therefrom.

Health and climatic challenges

In the 21st century include HIV-AIDS, malaria, cataract blindness, bird flu, environmental crisis, water resource and soil crises, and many more.

Political

By far, the political challenges are more perennial and indeed central to the causation or escalation of the other challenges. These are political instability, sit-tightism that manifests in the Machiavellian arrogance of power consciousness or civilian dictatorship or even in third term bids of septuagenarian leaders; construction of a pseudo-democratic subsystem or otherwise militarization of the ostensibly democratic institutions; praetorianism (Amuwo et al., 1997) excessive politicization of issues and policy-making; political corruption, manipulations of electoral processes; political assassinations; rulers compromised to western dictates; maladministration; ideological differences; disunity; failed policies; failed unions, etc.

The Nigerian situation is more critical. Thus, its response in the 21st century to leadership challenges is not far from prognosis. First, as the most populous nation in the continent, it stands the greatest risk in the event of one act of ill-governance or the other such as collapse of inter group relations, outbreak or mismanagement of diseases, etc. Second, Nigeria's acclaimed "giant" of Africa status, its afrocentric approach to continental issues, and unsavory political experience of the past-distant and recent- do not only make it concerned, on democratizing, about the future of modern democracy and good governance in Africa; but have stimulated its repositioning for favourable leadership turn over in the present century (Fawole, 1999). This paper therefore, addresses the multidimensional or multifaceted crises of leadership in Africa, making more references to Nigeria, and looking at the issues in a characteristically concerned afrocentric Nigerian way, and suggesting profound solutions to the tragic rulership crisis.

WHERE DID WE GO WRONG?

In a lecture by a radical Nigerian historian, Yusufu (1999) tilted, "History and the challenge to the peoples and polities of Africa in the 21st century" delivered to honour the memory of Kenneth (1917 - 1983), an iconoclast of Nigerian History, he noted:

"liberation of feelings, and of the mind, with regards to humanity's conception of what constitutes the humankind and the variety of the nature of the historical processes that produce this humanity, over the millennia and over the centuries, was achieved with particular reference to African history. But, given the position of Africa, and Africans, in world history, it has world-wide significance. Its universality was derived from its

particularity. This is because of what Africa and Africans had come to stand for in the world, before and after the fifteenth century. For, as that philosopher, and revolutionary with a long-range encyclopedic vision of mankind, Mao Tse-Tung, pointed out, during the height of the civil rights struggle of the African-Americans in 1963, the evil system of colonialism and imperialism was built on the enslavement of Negroes and the trade in Negroes. It will only come to an end with the complete emancipation of the Black People”.

The fundamental message here is that, the roots of present or 21st century African problem lie in pre-colonial slavery and succeeding colonial misadventures, and that it can only be overcome when there is a complete deliverance from the vestiges of colonial or neocolonial manipulations and an exorcising of the ghost of western imperialism, which haunts the continent by the perpetuation or recycling of the compradors in post colonial African leadership. How is colonial power or political arrangements carried into the post-colonial state? Power configurations and politicking after independence were deliberately arranged-as they were encouraged-along ethnic lines, with excessive power and privileges bequeathed to ethnic groups that were unrepentantly loyal to the *ex-metropoles*. As the favored group rules to favor itself and the colonial master that gave power to it, a kind of interregnum erupts in which there is endless struggle for power and ethnic balancing among the groups, which most times results in extreme acts of violence and civil wars (Ikime, 1985).

Again, this struggle for power, according to Morgenthau (1992) is the main essence of inter-group relations, is exemplified by the coups and counter coups staged by different ethnic groups within an ethicized and deprofessionalized military institution in Nigeria and elsewhere. In Nigeria for instance, Generals Mohammed, Buhari, Babangida, Abacha and Abubakar, staged separate coups at different points in time to become heads of state of Nigeria between 1975 and 1999 to fulfill the leadership destinies of either the Hausas, the Fulanis or the Kanuris; while others also made their attempts to occupy this exalted position, but by the virtue of the firm placement of the instruments of coercion in the hands of the north long ago, and which they have consolidated over the years, these aggrieved groups in the army have ended up failing. The institutional machinery for the exercise of power and its basis in occupational groups, social strata and social classes and their concrete economic and political interests are not perceived with this shallow outlook. This perception of politics is, itself, derived from certain false assumptions about what constitutes nations, nationalities, ethnic groups and polities.

It may be of some use if this lecture draws your attention to some issues raised by the study of our history with regards to the very nature of the polities whose democracy is soon going to face the challenges of the

21st century. The degree to which this democracy is realized, sustained and grown, is going to depend, very much, on how the question of the nature, and relationships, between the nationalities of these democratic polities are grasped and used in political practice. Already, the national question has become very explosive, involving violent ethnic conflicts, stresses and tension all over this country. A discussion of the future direction of this country and its options in the 21st century has to squarely face this question, at a deeper level than has hitherto largely been done.

According to Usman (1999) echoing Dike (1980), mankind has always been made up of distinct races, which are distinct biological entities, with distinctive physiological, mental and emotional attributes. Each race is said to be composed of distinct nations, made up of populations of largely the same racial stock, existing as distinct entities on their-own territory, with their language, cultures and identities, going back to the beginning of time. This is the racio-ethnic conception of the nation. The terms, "tribe", "ethnic group" and "nationality" are applied to smaller, or more dispersed, racio-ethnic groups, which are yet to attain proper nationhood, as they are seen to be economically, culturally and politically backward, in comparison with the nations of Western Europe, which are presented as representing the standard model of the nation.

This conception of the nation which European imperialism has imposed on the world, since the nineteenth century, is racio-ethnic, because it views the nation as essentially a biological community produced by biological processes and linked together by "blood ties", irrespective of language, culture, religion, territorial location and political loyalty and identity.

The present nationality law of Germany is one of the best examples of the contemporary legal manifestation of this racio-ethnic conception of nation and of nationality. Under this law, you cannot be a German citizen, unless you have what is called "German blood" in your veins. Once you can prove that you are of German ancestry, and you have "German blood", through the male, or, the female line, you automatically get German citizenship, even if you do not speak the German Language, have never been an inhabitant of the territory of Germany and hardly know anything about Germany, or German culture.

Several millions of migrants into Germany, from central and eastern Europe, who are supposed to have "German blood" have on this basis, been given German citizenship. But, the 7.4 million Poles, Turks, Serbs, Kurds, Asians West and North Africans working in Germany, for decades, many of whom were born there, and work there, have no other home and can only speak German and know no other country can deny German citizenship, because they have no "German blood" in their veins.

Other European countries, like the United Kingdom, have provisions along these lines, in their nationality and citizenship laws, but they are not as brazen as those of

Germany. The racio-ethnic conception of the nation, which informs this position, is at variance with other conceptions of the nation found with most other sections of mankind and these conceptions have much deeper and wider roots, all over the world.

These conceptions view the nation as, essentially, a political community, which may be multi-ethnic, and even multi-racial, but whose citizens" share closely related historical experiences and are bound by common citizenship, identity, see themselves and are seen by others, as a distinct political entity, with defined territorial and other sovereign rights. Some of the conceptions of the nation, within this broad type, emphasize shared habitation and territoriality. Others emphasize common religious faith and cultural values. But, what they all do, does not insist on this race, ancestry and blood ties as the European racist, concept of the nation and nationality does.

But, although the racio-ethnic conception of the nation is a peculiar one, it has been imposed on the rest of mankind, together with the concept of "the nation-state". This is supposed to be a political community, in which this racio-ethnic nation has developed state structures, ruling over a definite territory over which it claims ownership, and sovereign rights. For, most of mankind, this conception of the nation and the nation-state is an aberration. Yet, for most of the period since the First World War, most of humanity has been made to aspire to this peculiar type of nationhood and statehood, emanating from nineteenth century European obsessions and confusion.

BEYOND THE NATION-STATE: WITHER PEACE, WITHER UNITY?

Before we are even clear about what this nation-state is, which we are expected to develop our post-colonial polities into, it is now widely propagated that this entity known as the nation-state, is no longer viable, or, useful. It is said to have become redundant, and in some areas, like in Africa, to be destructive of peace, harmony and human development. A number of factors are said to be responsible for this. One of them is said to be the resurgence of sub-national, ethnic and communal consciousness, identity and organization, which challenge and reject the existing nation state, and are seeking to retain only formal links with it, or secede from it altogether. The nation-state is also said to be challenged by other primordial forces, in the form of fundamentalist, Christian, Islamic, Hindi and Jewish, and other religious, and cultural, movements, which, in the name of the purification and protection of religion and culture, reject the nation-state and its claims to secularity and modernity. The nation-state is said to have helped to create the conditions for these challenges to arise and to become serious, because of what is said to have been its failure in nation-building, in the post-colonial milieu, where it is

said to be virtually under siege.

It is in the light of what is said to be the failure of the nation-state, that the future development of the post colonial societies of Africa, the Caribbeans, Asia and the Pacific, is said to require the building of new types of political communities, based on the formal recognition and empowerment of the national, ethnic and communal groups, which are said to have existed since time immemorial and have re-emerged to assert their sovereign autochthonous rights, which have been subjugated to the power structures of the dominant ethnic groups of the nation -state.

The other challenge to the nation-state, which is said to have made it unviable and redundant, is said to come from what is called "globalization". This, is said to be the process, starting from the 1980s, which, as a result of certain economic and technological changes, particularly in the Organization and structure of transnational corporations and in satellite and computer technology, is said to have integrated almost every part of this planet, in a way in which has never been done before. The development and application of digital technology and of fiber optics, among other technological advances, have made it possible for information to be communicated and processed in massive amounts, and in seconds, from any part of the world to another. This, together with the new corporate business Organization, in the high-tech, finance and services, sectors, is said to have created a single global economy, which has simply bypassed the horizon, the frontiers, and the regulations of even the most developed of the model nation-states.

For the nation-states of Europe and North America, the future, beyond the nation-state, is said to be in the regional organizations they have already formed, particularly the European Union and the North American Free Trade Area, and the harmonization and eventual integration of these. For those of us in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and the Pacific, the future is said to be in restoring sovereignty to the autochthonous nationalities of what is called the nation-states and arranging for either a peaceful break-up of this nation-state, or, some confederal arrangement. Any failure to face up this future, and to act now, to break-up the existing nation-state, or set up some confederal arrangements, is supposed to inevitably lead to the intensification of ethnic conflicts, to civil war and possible ethnic genocide.

This projection of the future is, as far as we are concerned in Africa, most alarming. For, while Europe and North America, are moving towards integration, into more cohesive, broader, and powerful political and economic communities, we either dismantle the existing polities, called nation-states like Nigeria, India, Pakistan, or Indonesia, and allow the component nationalities to set up sovereign nations-states, on their own, or transform into confederations, or run the risk of sinking into chronic civil wars. Whichever of the three alternatives prevails, we appear to be doomed to further economic cultural and

political retardation and to further, and more permanent, subjugation to the large and integrated power blocs of Europe and North America.

The consequence of this projection of the future and the alternative possibilities it sets before us is, to undermine our confidence in our ability to control our destiny. It also paralyses our will to stand up and face up to the challenges of the 21st century. But is this projection of the future meaningful? Is it based on the realities of the historical development of political communities here and in the rest of the world? We have, therefore, no alternative, but to critically analyze this projection of the future, going right down to the basic premises and concepts that inform it.

THE MINGLING OF PEOPLES AND EUROPEAN CONTACT

Dike (1956) in *Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta, 1830-1885: An Introduction to the Economic and Political History of Nigeria*, saw migration into the Niger Delta, due to overpopulation and land hunger in the hinterland and as a part of the trading systems there, which included slavery and slave trade, leading to the emergence of communities which transcend the old tribal entities. He stated that: "The seaboard trading communities which emerged with this commerce transcended tribal boundaries, their history belongs to both the Atlantic and tribal history. (1956: 20). Dike puts a lot of emphasis on the ethnic heterogeneity of the population of the Niger Delta, even going to the extent of arguing that in the peopling of the Delta no one Nigerian tribe had monopoly. Benins, Ijaws, Sobos, Jerkris, Ekoi, Ibibio Efik and even the northern Nigerian tribes were represented"(1956:30-31). This, according to him, produced polities, which would not be regarded as tribal. According to Dike, this "mingling of peoples" in the Delta, had far-reaching impact even on the legal system, an essential determinant of the nature of citizenship in a polity. He said: "The mixture of people often meant that African law and custom vanished and a new law and order was evolved based partly on African precedent and experience and partly on the lesson of the contact with Europe (Dike, 1956:34)".

It is in the same manner of the creation of dissimilarities between African groups caused by contact with Europe that the Rwanda and Burundi genocide can be understood. The Hutus and Tutsis do not form two different ethnic groups. They speak the same language, share the same culture and religion. The idea that Hutus and Tutsis were physically different was first aired in the 1860s by the British explorer John Speke. Anyone who attempts to pinpoint these differences is likely to get it wrong. The only accurate available data were gathered by a German anthropologist in 1907 - 08, who found a 12 cm difference in average height between Hutus and Tutsis. The differences in height can be explained by

their different lifestyles and eating habits, and by the fact that Tutsi noblemen, unlike Hutus do not till the land. The trouble is that all anthropological work on the Tutsi is used to focus solely on those Tutsi who belong to the court of the Rwandan King. They did not have the same physical traits as people living on the outer confines of the kingdom who are now also called Tutsis.

The stereotyping of peoples which Dominique (1997) exposes here is widely used to distort the complex realities of society and history in Africa and all over the world in order to serve particular racist and ethnicist political agenda, with very destructive and retrogressive consequences. Now, it is clear that if racism is external and tragic to African psychological and mental liberation wherever the African finds himself, ethnicity is a self-induced affliction upon himself, but whose structures, as we have attempted to establish in this presentation, had been firmly put on ground by the former colonial masters to cause enough disaffection, disunity and distraction to allow neocolonialism.

These differences-including creation of states as against creation of nations, division of nations into two or more separate states, and designing of artificial boundaries to accomplish and fulfill colonial destinies as against developing the African self-worth and achievement, created by the Europeans in the past-have remained very much alive in the mindset of Africans and permanently constructed a wall of obstruction to unity and development in the present times. And their manifestations are decisive and destructive: military interference and political instability, ethnic warfare and acts of genocide, winner-take-all syndrome leading to all manner of electoral fraud, corruption, and ultimately leadership crisis (Easton, 1963).

THE OTHER CHALLENGES OF LEADERSHIP

What is more pertinent here is to examine the fundamental causes of the crisis discussed. We cannot place in correct perspective, the crisis of leadership, if we do not know the meaning of leadership itself. Leadership is qualitative governance as against mere quantitative governance. Leadership as qualitative and quantitative governance connotes a leadership style, approach and policy that have delivered ample (quantitative) dividends or blessings. For Oyedepo (2000) leadership simply means service. According to him, a leader is actually a servant, a selfless servant who is preoccupied with the tasks assigned to him and delivers as expected or positively as unexpected. That is, he is an "extra" ordinary performer who is results-oriented and collectivist in diligently and commitally seeking and finding solutions to concerns of mankind. In sum, Oyedepo views leadership as sacrifice and commitment to humanity.

Leadership on the other hand, connotes excellence. Thus, there is a marked difference between leading and managing. Managing denotes average performance with

the risk of failure or happenstance of success. Managing undergoes supervision, but leadership administers it and seeks mastery. Diligence makes the manager, but discipline makes the leader. Dedication makes the manager, commitment makes the leader. Hard work makes the manager, sacrifice makes the leader. Ability makes the manager, ingenuity makes the leader. Accountability makes the manager, responsibility makes the leader; opportunity makes the manager, discovery makes the leader; innovativeness makes the manager, creativity makes the leader; planning makes the manager, accomplishment makes the leader; fore-sightedness makes the manager, envisioning makes the leader; genesis makes the manager, revelation makes the leader. Credibility makes the leader. Integrity makes the leader. Wisdom makes the leader. And above all, godliness makes the leader.

We must quickly add here that all these qualities are never in-born. People are taught in the school of life to be responsible, diligent, sacrificial, selfless, honest, sound-thinkers, godly, and visionary. We learn these from formal or informal processes of acculturation or socialization. It is in this wise therefore that it can be understood that leaders are not born, but raised. Put differently, who will be a leader is trained or made to do so. Not born, because whoever claims to be a born leader may have all his virtues or qualities washed away if he grows up in a wrong culture or with the wrong people. A “born-leader” in Rwanda in 1994 for instance would carry the machete along with his kinsmen-leading or following- to cut down those he had been made to believe were his worst enemies, that is, the “cockroaches” or rival ethnic group.

The question therefore is, do we have a leader in Africa? Is there any such person with true leadership qualities as described hitherto in Nigeria? The answers are “yes” and “no”. Yes, there are such persons, but no they are very few and what more, they are apolitical, or they are political but do not have the money or means to come to power, or they have the means but do not belong to the apposite party or clique, or they belong there but get changed by the consuming wave and overbearing weight of corrupting influences. Herein lies the root-cause of the leadership crisis of Africa. Colonialism may have sown the seeds of ineptitude and sufficient discord for leadership problem in our time, however trends in the 21st century show a continent wallowing in unchecked blighted leadership values and demonstrating a lack of care to readjust for positive change.

The second problem in 21st century Africa is lack of visionary leadership. Leadership without a vision is actually not leadership but rulership. Vision means focus, and according to a motivational leader, Femi Emmanuel, in one his quotable quotes series (2002), the person without a vision is the most pitiable creature on earth. According to him, “where there is no focus, confusion takes over. Until you have a focus, you cannot become a focus; until you know where you are going, there is no

way anyone can help you get there” (2002: 29). The African ruler, unfortunately, is there either by inheritance because he is the heir, or by default through military coup or its civilian version, namely election rigging. He may want power for economic, ethnic, or political reasons. His coming to power may be circumstantial, and as such, he is at crossroads as to where to go, how to go, and when to start going. He is waiting for crisis before he seeks solution, he is not having the solution desired because he had no agenda *ab initio*, no goals, and hence, no ambition, except to just have power.

This is the most fundamental of Africa’s leadership problems. It is a major setback that has created a wide lacuna in governance on the continent. It will interest you to note however that some African rulers have been rare exceptions to the rule in this case. For instance, despite the fact that Olusegun Obasanjo got to power by default in 1976, his administration made landmark contributions to Nigeria’s development because he had a vision that had not departed from that of Nzeogwu, his friend in 1966 and Murtala his boss in 1975 to make Nigeria a united, strong and prosperous nation (Obasanjo, 1986). That was a vision that drove Obasanjo’s Nigeria to the front-row of African and International relevance.

Another rare exception was Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, whose idea of *Ujamaa* or African socialism and villagization changed the fortunes of agriculture and economy of Tanzania in his time. Nelson Mandela (1999) had a vision of no negotiations, no compromises with the apartheid regime or the white natives of South Africa, but by 1994 when he became the President, he saw the need to bend and reach agreements with them for the sake of a greater post-apartheid South Africa. What this implies is that a visionary leadership will have to constantly show flexibility when desirable so as to accomplish the vision.

Obayan (2006) notes that Africa has not had too many in the likes of Mandela and Nyerere. African rulers have dreams but not visions and they soon tire out and get stuck or reach a *cul de sac* when their dreams have been accomplished. What follow such “height” of accomplishment of dream are diminishing returns or what he calls anti-climax. Put more succinctly, when a ruler has had his dream fulfilled, he does not know what else to do, or how else to act because the actualizing of that dream represents the ultimate aspiration. A vision how-ever is not just a long-term plan but a life-long projection. After a stage, another stage unfolds, and another, and another, until God’s kingdom comes. For the African in the 21st century, a dream come true is a tempest to ruin.

For instance, on achieving independence, African nationalists got lost in the charade of power and forgot their mission because they lacked a vision. Some like Nkrumah, Emperor Bokassa, Kamuzu Banda, Gnassingbe Eyadema, and Mobutu Sese Seko lost their focus and became power drunk and made themselves life presidents or monarchs as the case may be because they lacked a vision. Some like Nnamdi Azikwe, Ahmadu Bello and Joseph Kasavubu degenerated from

“nationalists to ethnic or even tribal leaders at independence because they had no vision, but dreams of independence, thereby knowing not what else to do after achieving this great feat. Without vision, rulership reaches a bus stop of ideas, running out of ideas and destroying great legacies that had been built. There are instances in the bible; just as the likes of Arap Moi, Sese Seko, Laurent Kabila and Eyadema have demonstrated in Africa.

Yet, there were some other Africans that had a vision and pursued it vigorously and conclusively such as Patrice Lumumba, Amilcar Cabral, Jomo Kenyatta and Sekou Toure. You will notice that their ideas have outlived them, despite their death many years ago. This is because visions do not die as dreams. Obafemi Awolowo is today celebrated because he did not merely have a dream of just becoming the Premier of Western Nigeria or President of the nation; rather, his vision which transcended colonial and post colonial Nigeria berthed the first and perhaps only national and best television station in Nigeria, the most celebrated and politically educative newspaper, *Nigerian Tribune* and the free education legacy that has put the west in front educationally ahead of other parts of the country. Vision is thus pivotal to national and continental preservation and prosperity. Even the bible recognizes vision as a manifestation of wisdom. Vision is seeing it, understanding and doing it; the people perish for lack of vision. Leadership is visionary and such is what Africa needs in the 21st century to catch up with the pace of global development, which has since taken a fast flight in the Industrialized North and Second World South. To close this point, it is pertinent to see what Pastor Femi Emmanuel says again about vision: “vision plus revelation equals distinction” (27); in other words, vision must be clearly understood. Put differently, it is a clear mapping of how to carry out the assignment in your vision.

Another problem of leadership in 21st century Africa is the perspective of leadership itself. It will be proper to quickly submit before identifying the locators of leadership, that the environment of leadership including followers and leaders in Africa has a consumer perspective, rather than a producer perspective that has changed the fortunes of the west. We merely consume, we do not produce finished exotic goods that is transferable for acquisition of wealth or capital. In the same vein, we sell raw materials because we do not and have not developed capacity to turn it to finished product. Mensah Otabil, Chancellor of Central University, Accra at a Shiloh Program in Canaanland, Ota in 2004, in a message titled, “Buying the Future” identified this feature as an Esau mentality whereby we sell our birthright because of our shortsightedness. Now, among the locators of leadership identified by Obayan (2006), the most fascinatingly dangerous for Africa is positional leadership perspective. This represents the get-there-by-all-means syndrome but with infinitesimal, insignificant or

no achievements at all. What constitutes achievements are rewarding efforts to the aspirant for getting there, the titular recognition, addition to or richness of his curriculum vitae, and of course, the spoils of office. The “position” therefore is the focus of attention, not the results, neither the policies, nor the actions and inactions. The inactions are more likely to find space and speed.

In Africa, titles have driven our men-politicians, soldiers, and even area boys crazy. Hence, big sounding titles like „President, General, Chief Doctor, Honorable Minister, Senator, Governor, Alhaji Chief Dr., Rev. Colonel, Prophet Architect“, etc have tended to make us lose a sense of our calling and responsibility for mundane title contest and irrelevances. The culture of seeking and taking titles extends to the area boys who also bear „Professor, Chief, Alaye baba“. It is this same positional perception that has driven politicians in Nigeria to begin assassinations of perceived and real political threats or enemies, to get to power position at all costs by 2007. This explains the murders of Funsho Williams in Lagos, and Dr. Ayo Daramola in Ekiti. Who knows who and who are next! The cycle goes on.

The opposite of positional leadership is responsible leadership. This is what Africa needs in the 21st century. Let us query, for instance, the ambitions of General Ibrahim Babangida in Nigeria, to return to power. Why does he want power again? In whose interest? What has he got to offer? What did he do in his eight years the first time to merit a return? The rhetorical questions are answerable when we place Babangida’s ambition within the purview of the positional leadership perspective that is ruining Africa.

Babangida just wants to return to power, that is all! He should have accomplished his vision for the country when he spent eight years in power (1985 - 1993). Could returning mean he had failed in leadership when he had the first opportunity? Like many other African heads of states, retired generals, Babangida may have become a spentforce who probably wishes to return for the sake of covering up his first loopholes. As a matter of fact, he has precedence to refer to- Milton Obote came back in Uganda, Yoweri Museveni came back in Uganda, Matthew Kerekou did same in Benin Republic, and of course our own General Obasanjo has done same in Nigeria. Babangida’s ambition is apparently parochial and very self-serving. Positional leadership syndrome is responsible for this. “I was this, I was that, I am this, I will be this...etc” without any driving philosophy, ideology or vision and without any accomplishments worthy of envy. The madness must stop! Babangida, like other retired generals, must quit the scene completely. Their re-intervention is an arrogant display of how they have permanently captured Africa. What is more? Nigeria’s examples are setting a very dangerous precedence for the continent’s nascent democracy. We cannot afford to have a return of soldiers to power under any guise if we must move ahead in the 21st century.

Furthermore, African rulers must stop running their

states like personal estates. Most of them see the states as an extension of themselves, thus, personifying power as well as personalizing the state. They are like one patriarch whose children are the citizens, nation their household and hence, whose might is right. This is what leads to sit-tightism and protracted dictatorship. The state is a patrimonial state even in 21st century Africa, but the development represents a misnomer that risks progress in the new age.

The issue of come-backs brings us to the problem of lack of role models, or better put, inadequacy of all-round role models. Some role models are excellent in the outside, but cannot be copied because of problems with them in the inside, e.g. poor family men or women, morally bankrupt, etc. A role model is a sparkling example for leadership or attainment of heights in one's chosen career. He is one great achiever that those who admire him want to be like. A role model is a perfect example, an ideal reference point (if you like) that one emulates or copies to do exploits in the same field or career. In sum, he is a good influence. In Africa, there are few of such (Elaiywu, 1986). Either because of greed and selfishness in leadership or as a result of poor orientation and personality, what are available are mere influences, good or bad. In the military and among the political class, what exist are godfathers, godmothers (not even mentors) and at times, godfathers destroy their own godson for selfish reasons, and godsons consume their godfathers when they have come of age. Africa needs role models in leadership, the likes of Mandela and Nyerere in Africa; the likes of Lincoln and Wilson in the USA; and the likes of Bismarck and Churchill in Europe.

The maxim that knowledge is constant is unscientific, antiquated and antediluvian, not in our present century and millennium. Old knowledge cannot build today, because old knowledge bore relevance for the problems of past; and as such new, refined and fresh knowledge is desirable for the present problems. Knowledge represents information bank, a cumulative of which becomes wisdom. While old information, which is a product of history and traditions can be helpful to know the foundation of the African state, new information need to be sought to build on the foundation. What this implies therefore is that, new and fresh ideas should govern modern Africa as old ideas may have run out of tune with current trends. When the world is talking about Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and securing humanity in terms of food and social life, we cannot be talking about slavery, pre-colonialism and pan-Africanism alone. With younger people with fresh ideas in governance, Africa may well come out of the mundane issues of famine, hunger, provision of anti tetanus vaccines, bore-hole water provision and electricity generation, when the world has already passed that stage of pre-conditions for a take off (Rostow, 1960). Like shortsighted or rulerships that lack vision, recycled old hands and performers in governance soon become spent, taking

360 degrees turn on policy issues and yet remaining on the same spot. Information is very important, collecting fresh information everyday through reading, going back to school for capacity enhancement, being receptive to new ideas, etc, matter. Information leads to reformation and transformation; lack of it ends up in deformation. To engender a rich knowledge bank, the educational systems need to be revamped and revolutionized. Such systems must be decolonized to create an independent mentality and be enriched in content to build the total man. This is one area where Covenant University is making a radical and unmatched progress.

At Covenant University, there is a slogan, "building a new generation of leaders expert thinkers and managers" that would go out and change the world. This distinguishes the University and shows commitment to its vision and mission towards changing the face of education and the educated man in Nigeria and Africa. This commitment manifests in its customized courses, Total Man Concept (TMC), Entrepreneurial Development Studies (EDS), both of that are taken and passed from 100 level to final year irrespective of course of study, and Towards a Total Graduate (TTG) taught at the graduating level. These courses have their significance- TMC builds the three components of man namely, the mind, body and soul through spiritual, philosophical, psychological and physical training and materials; EDS trains all students in entrepreneurial skills and practice to prepare them as job-providers and self-employed graduates, not job-seekers, thus, becoming solution providers. The TTG reminds them as they are graduating that they have a Herculean task ahead of them to be responsible and go and change the world and we do this by taking them out every Saturday on community development services, cleaning, construction, traffic control, etc, until their con-vocation day! Today the NUC has recognized the TMC and EDS and recommended them to other institutions, some of which are already running them. These are the kinds of leadership training and mentality African youths need in the 21st century.

Again, another fundamental cause of leadership problem in the continent, which is closely related to the foregoing, is the attitude of our people to live in their old shadows, that is, to live on past glory. Africans seem to be satisfied with what they have been able to achieve in the past. So, they speak glowingly of the past and are excited in discussing the exploits of their past-leaders, wars, victories, etc. The present means little to them, even if it is corrupt, bad and getting worse. This is a "zero" or defeatist mentality that, it can not get better, but only get worse. It is the same mentality that our rulers exhibit when they are formulating policies to change the fortunes of the economy or to stop escalating fuel prices. They are convinced that the past is always good, and prices that have gone up or situations that are bad can only be at best, managed, but never upturned for the "good old days". It is a wrong perspective. Leadership is

a thing of tomorrow, not that of yesterday. The west we try to ape has the perception that all situations are conquerable and changeable for the best. This has made them not to tire in making inventions, developing their scientific and technological knowledge base, of which we are all beneficiaries. African politicians, rulers, people must change this attitude towards development if they must make a headway in mainstream globalization that is staring them in the face.

Lastly, after decades of centralized “command and control”, government leaders espouse market-led economic growth and community empowerment without a clear understanding of the changes this likely requires in their roles and behavior. After years of operating as what many in their own lands considered “pariahs” and “profiteers”, business leaders are unfamiliar with emerging norms of public-private cooperation and corporate social responsibility. And, eternal advocates for change, civil society leaders often lack a clear understanding of the need for business and government alike to satisfy multiple stakeholders in order to create truly sustainable prosperity and peace.

WAYS FORWARD

The crisis of leadership in Africa results in continued poverty for millions of men, women and children, underdevelopment and continued dependency on the west. The causes of this crisis have been identified. But high among them is the fact that many African countries lack a broadly shared vision of the future that effectively melds the demands of globalization with local values. To overcome the perennial leadership challenges, a Zimbabwean official of the World Bank noted in 2001 that Africans must come:

- (i) To identify and address their personal strengths and weaknesses as leaders.
- (ii) To understand the challenges they face as participants in a rapidly globalizing society.
- (iii) To share and refine their respective visions of the society they would like to live in.
- (iv) To lead by example in building this society.

The continent stands on the verge of an opportunity which should be grasped. African leaders are increasingly taking the reins to define where they want to take Africa and to build a new partnership between donors and African countries. This was highlighted in July 2001, when the Heads of States of the African Union adopted the African Initiative in Lusaka. The challenge now is to take this forward forcefully. The new initiative is accompanied by a growing consensus, both within Africa and among donors, that poverty reduction should be at the center of development efforts, and that the development agenda should be led by Africans themselves. Africa is the only continent where poverty is on the rise,

and not decreasing. Decisive action is needed if we want to cut severe poverty by half by 2015. We need more growth, at least 5 to 7 percent, and we need to ensure that the poor benefit from such growth. Tangibly speaking, what are these challenges posed before Africa in the century that will reposition it for development within the global system?

Redefining leadership in Africa

This will require setting agenda, goals and targets that are well informed by a sound technical and knowledge base, and by a vision that is vigorously pursued, not mere dreams that die with the dreamer. Indeed, through the strengthening of democracy, civil society becomes a tool with a capacity to enhance sustainable peace, security, stability and development; and that there can be no civil society without our collective and direct involvement. Much international spotlight has been cast on the severity and magnitude of Africa's challenges. Addressing those challenges in a new cooperative spirit should nurture and sustain change and renewal in Africa. But problems and challenges can be hardly tackled in a vacuum.

Our getting involved, all of us, in all spheres of leadership is half of the battle in overcoming the challenges we face. After all, history and great accomplishments start and end with us as individuals and the commitment and sacrifices we are willing to make in the public interest.

Leadership training and culture

This is the belief that becoming a leader is only possible when training grounds are not just available, but are properly positioned for great acculturation for the youth.

Emergence of role models

Africa's 21st century is secure if there are role models for the leadership “apprentice” or student to emulate or to inspire them. The youth best learns by example, not experience. Old ideas are good guides, but fresh ones build changing societies.

Improving governance and resolving conflicts

It is observable that well-managed countries, countries with effective institutions and sound policies tend to be more successful. Over the last decade, dysfunctional governance has taken a heavy toll on Africa's development. Endemic corruption, skewed budget allocations and a corroded fabric of state-society relations, often continue to undermine the potential for successful development, and in some cases even foster conflict.

A quantum improvement in governance is needed. We

need to build on these islands of success, to scale them up, to replicate them across the continent. And of course we need to resolve the pressing issue of conflict, which is now becoming a major development issue and threatens the continent's prospects.

Investing in the people

The HIV/AIDS epidemic has become a major development issue for Africa. We all know the numbers – already 20 million dead, more than 25 million people infected, and a growing number of countries where the epidemic has turned into a national catastrophe. It is pertinent to note that development is not possible where the productive age of the population is ravaged by disease. In Zimbabwe about 35% of the population is infected, and there are hundreds of thousands of orphans. African leaders have a key role to play, particularly with regard to prevention. Too often, they have remained silent. Things are now moving, but in many countries it is late. The World Bank recently approved a \$500 million multi-country project, financed through concessional credits. Others, and in particular the EU, have also been very active. There is also the Global Trust Fund to fight AIDS (World Bank, 2001). The challenge before the continent now is to develop the implementation capacity to ensure that these funds can be effectively spent.

Increasing competitiveness and diversifying its economies

In spite of globalization, many African countries are at the risk of being marginalized. Over the last decade, Africa has fallen behind, in terms of both investments and productivity. In some countries, efforts have been made to improve the investment climate – but overall much remains to be done. And the small size of most economies is also an obstacle: the median African country has a GDP of \$2 to \$3 billion and a population of 15 million. These are very small markets. For most countries, the challenge is to create a larger economic space, with more opportunities for investors and entrepreneurs.

Regional cooperation and integration can be part of the solution.

Better infrastructure is also critical. How could business operate with phone systems that do not work, frequent power outages, or poorly maintained roads? And how can Africa compete effectively in today's world when only 0.4% of internet content is generated in Africa? More resources are needed. The World Bank claimed in 2001 that it was committed to doubling its financial support for infrastructure, from \$800 million to \$1.5 billion a year. Most importantly, Africa has to regain its trade position. Since the late 1960s Africa's loss of world trade has cost it almost \$70 billion a year – can we imagine what that

money could have done?

Increasing finance for development

Africa will continue to need substantial external assistance in the foreseeable future. Clearly Africa has to earn its own way and to get out of aid dependency. Africa needs to find the resources it so crucially needs through trade and private investment, through debt relief and also, of course, through official development assistance. Since 2000, 19 African countries have granted \$26 billion in debt relief. In these countries, debts are being reduced by about two thirds – and social spending is expected to increase by \$1.7 billion per year.

First, we need to ensure that debt relief does not happen to the detriment of aid. What is disturbing is that the debate on debt may divert the attention from the fact that overall aid flows to Sub-Saharan Africa are declining. Debt relief is part of the solution, but resource requirements extend well beyond that (World Bank, 2001).

Second, we need to ensure that debt relief and cancellation as it has been for African countries and Nigeria in recent times, is used effectively, for development purposes. African countries need to improve the way external and internal resources are used.

NEED TO FORGE A NEW TYPE OF AID RELATIONSHIP

African countries need to forge aid relationships built on African ownership and African leadership. We need to reduce aid dependence and to develop true partnerships, where donors and African leaders are jointly accountable for results. This will help us out of what seems like perpetual debt enslavement. Africa, it must be noted, spends about 40% of its GDP on debt repayment. This is obviously antithetical to the theory of development. The African Initiative could be an important step forward in that respect. On the other hand, donors need to put more emphasis on country leadership, on coordinating donor support, on transparency. We need to move towards medium-term commitments in support of result-oriented programs. The Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) is a promising process grounded in broad based consultation with the people.

CONCLUSION

This paper is suggesting that despite all the odds, Africa can still claim the 21st century for its children. First, we need to redefine leadership in Africa. Second, leadership needs training and that is only possible when training grounds are not just available, but are properly positioned

for great acculturation for the youth with fresh ideas. Third, Africa's 21st century is secure if there are role models for the "apprentice" or student to emulate. The youth best learns by example, not experience or old ideas.

Consolidating the changes suggested above will require improving governance stupendously, investing in the people, and in particular to fight HIV/AIDS, building more competitive and diversified economies, increasing financing for development, and finally changing the aid relationship between Africa and donors.

REFERENCES

- Anan K (2003). Address to the African Summit on HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and other Infectious Diseases Abuja, 26 April, 2001.
- Ayodele T, Cudjoe F, Nolutshungu TA, Sunwabe CK (2005). "African Perspectives on Aid: Foreign Assistance Will Not Pull Africa Out of Poverty" Cato Institute Economic Development Bulletin No. 2, September 14.
- Dike KO (1956). In Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta, 1830-1885: An Introduction to the Economic and Political History of Nigeria, Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Dike KO (1980). The Aro of South-Eastern Nigeria, 1650-1980: A Study of Socio-Economic Formation and Transformation in Nigeria, Ibadan: University Press.
- Easton SC (1963). The Rise and Fall of Western Colonialism (California: Granada Hills).
- Elaigwu IS (1986). Gowon: The Biography of A Statesman (Ibadan: West Books Publisher Ltd.).
- Emmanuel F (2002). Femi Emmanuel's Quotable Quotes: Wisdom Nuggets, Series 3 (Ibadan: Livingspring Turning Point).
- Fawole A (1999). "Diplomatic Blunders: The Ogoni crisis and Nigeria's External Relations" in (Lagos: Lagos State University). Nig. J. Pol. 4:1-2.
- Ikime O (1985). In Search of Nigerians: Changing Patterns of Inter-Group Relations in an Evolving Nation-State, Presidential Inaugural Lecture at the 30th Congress of the Historical Society of Nigeria(HSN), University of Nigeria, Nsukka, May 1.
- Mandela N (1999). Long Walk to Freedom: The Autobiography of Nelson Mandela (Gardners Books).
- Morgenthau H (1992). Politics among Nations: Struggle for Power and Peace (McGraw-Hill).
- Obasanjo O (1986). Nzeogwu: Portrait of A Soldier (Safari Books).
- Obayan A (2005). "Understanding Leadership Locators" <http://www.rattle-the-cage.com/rcc/Articles/understandingleadershiplocators.html>. Retrieved on Sunday 20th August, 2006.
- Oyedepo D (2000). Making Maximum Impact (Canaanland-Ota: Dominion Publishing House).
- Otabil M (2004). "Buying the Future," Shiloh 2004 Programme, Faith Tabernacle, Livingfaith Church Worldwide, Canaanland, Ota, December.
- Rostow WW (1960). The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non Communist Manifesto (Cambridge University Press).
- Samuel G (2006). "On Leadership", Leadership Victoria Lecture Series, Melbourne Hotel, Sofitel, June.
- Usman YB (1999). "History and the Challenge to the Peoples and Politics of Africa in the 21st Century", lecture in honour of Professor Kenneth Onwuka Dike (1917-1983).
- www.worldbank.org (2001). Reports on Africa.