

## **“THE TROUBLE WITH NIGERIA”: CONTEXTUALIZING ACHEBE’S THESIS ON NIGERIA’S LEADERSHIP CONUNDRUM**

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### **Abstract**

This paper examines the timeless relevance of Chinua Achebe's “The Trouble with Nigeria” 1983. Through the lens of Prebendal theory, it argues that the problems Achebe identified nearly four decades ago remain pervasive in contemporary Nigeria. Prebendal theory, which posits that public officials use their positions to accumulate wealth and privilege, provides a useful framework for understanding the persistence of corruption, poor leadership, and social injustice in Nigeria. Achebe's book highlighted the unwillingness or inability of Nigerian leaders to rise to the responsibility of true leadership, as well as issues like tribalism, social injustice, indiscipline, and corruption. This study contends that these problems have worsened over time, with Nigeria's ranking in global corruption indices and human development reports remaining dismal. This research aims to contribute to the ongoing debate on Nigeria's development challenges by demonstrating the enduring relevance of Achebe's insights. By applying Prebendal theory to Achebe's work, this study provides a nuanced understanding of the complex factors underlying Nigeria's persistent development challenges.

**Keywords:** Leadership, Prebendalism, Corruption, Unity and Faith

### **Introduction**

Nigeria is palpably a state blessed with vast human and natural resources, but has been plagued by a lingering and perennial curse- a crisis of leadership that has crippled its progress and prosperity. Chinua Achebe’s seminal work “The Trouble With Nigeria” attempted a surgical diagnosis of this unabated malady, with graphical and piercing clarity, laying bare the plethora of institutional failures and absence of proactive leadership that have bedeviled the country’s political leadership right from its autonomy in the earliest of sixties. Achebe’s incisive thesis holds that Nigeria’s troubles stemmed from

an inept, flawed rudderless and retroactive leadership, lacking in requisite ethos and rooted in colonial legacy, cultural alienation and selflessness. Achebe (1983, p.1) maintains that:

The issues with Nigeria is apparently and entirely a failure of leadership. There is nothing wrong with the Nigerian nature. There is nothing adverse about the country's climate, water, air or landmass. Its Problem rests solely on its docile, atrophied and vision-less leadership.

Achebe's intention of writing the thesis remains to stir the stakeholders in the Nigerian project, to intentionally resolve the country's avalanche of challenges through purposeful leadership. A closer examination of the Nigerian political space in modern era and in the second republic (1979-1983), which formed the fulcrum of the literary giant's treatise, reveals the pussy footing nature of the Nigerian political elites, in addressing urgent national issues. The pervasiveness of the national malaise impelled Achebe (1983, p.2) to assert that:

When two Nigerians run into each other, they are often compelled to discuss the national deficiencies the country is enmeshed in. The trouble with Nigeria thus, has become Nigerians' small talks in the same manner the English people talk about their moody and fugacious weather.

To Achebe, consigning national problems of Nigeria's proportion, to petty talks, has the capacity to further cripple national aspiration and stifle or inhibit the chances of becoming viable and robust state. We all crave (Achebe, 1983). This exploration delves into the epic centre of Achebe's argument, contextualizing his claims within the complex web of factors that have influenced Nigeria's political trajectory, from the independence era through second republic till date.

### **Conceptual Clarification**

The word 'Leadership' has enjoyed ample scholarly exposition and treatise to an extent that, it has become impossible to come up with a monolithic and an all acceptable definition (Anekeme, 2020). Leadership is the capacity to translate vision into reality. This implies that vision, capacity, and actualization of set goals, are vital elements that underlie leadership (Bennis, 1989). According to Nwaghoso and Duke (2012) leadership subsumes the exercise of social power, that is exerting a significant and far reaching effects on personal and group behaviour towards the attainment of set goals. Leadership is similar to a dynamic process that draws people together with a view to pursuing positive changes, and doing so in concert with the

accomplishment of shared vision and goals as the ultimate objective (Imhonopi & Ugochukwu, 2013). This is in nexus with the submission of Cole (1997, p.54) when he asserts:

Leadership is a complex and dynamic process at work in a team or organization whereby, an individual over a period of time, and in a particular organizational context, influences the other group members to commit themselves freely to the attainment of group tasks or organizational goals.

The Implication of the above position is that, leadership involves relationship between or among people, in which one attempts to influence a group of others, towards the attainment of set goals (Aboekwe, 2019). To Maxwell (2013), leadership is essentially and technically about influence. It is not about titles, positions or authority, but premised on the capacity to galvanize and influence others and make a positive impact on their lives. The skill to lead is developed and strengthened over time, and it is not restricted to a select few (Maxwell, 2013). In the opinion of Nebo (2014), leadership is the action of leading a team, or an organization or a state, or the capacity to do this. Nebo (2014, p.1) submits that:

A leader steps up in period of crises and deploys his mental and physical strengths to lead the people through hard times to desirable epoch.

Ojo (2015) challenges the traditional notion of leadership that “confines” or “restricts” the concept to occupation or position. He censures the conception, and concludes that leadership transcends this traditional orientation. Thus, Ojo (2015) defines leadership as a process of relational influence, in which a person enlists the instrumentality of others, in the accomplishment of a common task.

From the foregoing, leadership can be defined as the process of inspiring, influencing and empowering others to work towards a common goal, or objective, while fostering a culture of trust, collaboration and continuous learning. The following are ten hallmarks of effective leadership:

- i. Visionary thinking: Developing and articulating a clear direction and purpose.
- ii. Emotional Intelligence: Understanding and managing one’s own emotions and those of others.
- iii. Communication: Effectively conveying ideas, listening actively and building virile relationships.
- iv. Influence: Motivating and inspiring others to achieve a shared vision.
- v. Empowerment: Delegating authority, providing resources and supporting team members to take ownership and lead.

- vi. Decision Making: making timely, informed and decisive decisions that support organizations goals.
- vii. Accountability: Taking responsibility for actions, decisions and outcomes.
- viii. Adaptability: Navigating ambiguity, leading through uncertainty and adapting to changing circumstances.
- ix. Continuous learning: Embracing a growth mindset, seeking feedback and developing new skills and knowledge.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Prebendal theory as described by Richard Joseph, a professor of International History and a key proponent of the theory, is a political system, peculiar to the Nigeria and most African post-colonial states, in which political leaders and government employees, siphon public funds, and deploy it for personal aggrandizement, ethno-linguistic considerations, and other primordial reasons, at the expense of common good (Oni, 2017). According to the theory of prebendalism, state officers are tagged 'prebends', that are easily appropriated and hoodwinked by political office holders, who use them to acquire material benefits for themselves, their ethnic groups and relatives (Joseph, 1987) Onuoha (2022, p.24) submits that:

prebendalism expatiates that, ethnic consciousness and ethnic politics, particularly in a plural society, are the bases for organization, approval and mobilization of "ethno-clienteles" nexus of patronage, avarice, misrule and exploitative behaviour.

This primeval political class, ethnic and religious sentiments tend to breed unhealthy rivalry, politics of exclusionism and instabilities in Nigeria, before and after its political independence from the British suzerainty. Ugwuan and Nwokedi (2015, p.23) maintain that;

The prebendal attitude or mindset, explains eloquently and significantly, the "Sit-tight" syndrome of some political functionaries in Nigeria, and their manipulation of state's institutions, to circumvent people's will, by crooked means, in order to perpetuate themselves in office(s), without facilitating the achievement of democratic dividends.

The above scenario is responsible for unhealthy rivalry, greedy competition for political offices, and economic aggrandizement that more than often triggers manipulation of election results, violent and even coups, as witnessed in Niger, Mali, BurkinaFaso and Guinea (Kayode, 2024). Ugwuan and Nwokedi (2015, p.25) insist that:

Unluckily, prebendalism has largely hindered the will and the ability of the political class and governing elites, to effectively represent the people or provide the much desired transformational leadership that has eluded the country for years.

This reflected in the submission of Joseph (1984, p.10) when he contends that:

The features of neo-patrimonial politics in African nations, are the total aggregation and personalization of political power in the central head of government, the pervasive use of public funds for patronage and clientelistic practices, systemic corruption, all of which “co-habit” with, and manifest bureaucratic institutions nationally, unquestionably bequeathed by western imperialism.

Prebendalism helps to explain how Nigeria’s political system has been hijacked by ethnic and regional interests, leading to nepotism, avarice and exploitation of the state’s resources. There exist lines of symmetry between Achebe’s thesis and the theory of prebendalism as mooted by Joseph Richard.

### **Nigeria Political Leadership: An Overview**

Nigeria got her political independence on October 1<sup>st</sup>, 1960, and three years later, she attained the status of a republic, that is, the British Monarch, ceased to be her political head, and her civilian population led the political process. In less than six years journey into statehood, the military struck on January 15, 1966. The move, truncated the first Republic (Kayode, 2024). Major leaders of Northern extraction, including the prime minister, Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa and Saudauna of Sokoto, Sir Ahmadu Bello, were amongst those who were assassinated by the coup plotters, led by the very radical Major Chukwuma Kaduna Nzeogwu (Ademoyega, 1981; Omolewa, 1986). It was the event that set the tone for the Nigerian Civil War that manifested the inability of the Nigerian ruling elite, to rise beyond clannishness. This affirms the etched leadership failure in the country.

The coup was abortive because the plotters could not achieve their ultimate goal. Nevertheless, Dr. Nwafor Orizu, a top government functionary in the slain Balewa led government, handed over to the most senior Nigerian military officer, in person of Major General Agunyi Ironsi (Omolewa 1986; Falola & Heaton, 2008) To many already, the pattern of the coup was seen essentially as an Igbo malicious strike against the northern region (Ademoyega, 1981; Omolewa, 1986, Falola & Heaton, 2008) To confirm veracity of the claim, Falola and Heaton (2008, p.173) hold that:

Making matters worse, Ironsi made several moves in the first half of 1966 that led many northerners to believe that he was of an Igbo conspiracy. Ironsi was himself an Igbo, and in an unwise political move, he tended to surround himself with Igbo advisers throughout his time and he did not bring the plotters to trial, but rather kept them in prison.

This further illustrates the seeming inability of Nigerian national leaders, to rise to occasion at crucial epoch in national history via intentional, purposeful and situational style (Achebe, 1983; Joseph, 1987). It was in order not to let their position slip any further in the national equation, having lost their front-line politicians that precipitated the July 29, 1966 coup, credited to Lt Colonel Yakubu Jack Gowon and Major Theophilus Danjuma. The head of state, the military administrator of Western Region and a number of officers from the southern Nigeria, were assassinated (Osaghae & Suberu, 2005). Lt. Colonel Yakubu Gowon succeeded General Agunyi Ironsi. He immediately repealed Decree no: 34 of the previous Junta, that attempted to turn Nigeria into a unitary state. He reaffirmed his commitment to make Nigeria one indivisible state. However, his grouse with the military administrator of the Eastern region, Colonel Emeka Ojukwu, over ideological differences, amidst other factors led to the Nigerian civil war (Falola and Heaton, 2008, Omolewa 1986; Okolo, 2010; Kayode, 2022).

Okolo (2010, p.10) points out that:

The rift between the Eastern region and the national military government, cropped up immediately after the counter coup of July 29, 1966. The Igbo recognized the Gowon led Federal Government as only an interim, as Gowon wasn't the highest ranked military officer. In addition, the violence against persons of Igbo extraction in the North necessitated the calls from the axis, for people of Eastern origin to return to their enclave.

It is apposite to state that, by the time Nigeria attained independence in 1960, the stage had been set for the country to experience an avalanche of crises, starting with the infamous Wide Wild West acrimonious politics of 1962, the census crises of 1962/63, and the debilitating general election of crisis of 1964/65 (Onuoha, 2018). The amalgam of the afore-stated snowballed into the civil war. Although Nigeria survived the civil war, but its vestiges still haunt the country till date (Achebe, 1983; Omolewa, 1986; Falola & Heaton, 2008). The Gowon military junta in spite of its efforts, coupled with the country's newly found source of national wealth, could not provide the required leadership to resolve the country's ethno-linguistic crisis that has been a critical bane, to a genuine national integration, was toppled in a palace coup, by Major General Muritala Muhammed and Brigadier General

Olusegun Obasanjo, who subsequently became the head of state and second in commander respectively. The Muritala Junta recognized the schism of the Nigerian state and was intentional about creating a new Nigeria, devoid of division and ethnic chauvinism. Ogunmode (2021, p.279) maintains that:

The Muritala sanitation drives ended up creating frightening tensions within the military and international space, particularly, Western World, which censures his temerity, despite the fact that Britain had by August 1, 1975, three days after the ouster of General Gowon, given its official recognition to the new military junta.

It is a truism that leadership is critical to a country's socio-political direction and economy process. Achebe (1983, p.1) insists that:

On the morning after General Muritala seized power on July 29, 1975, civil servants in Lagos, the Federal Capital of Nigeria, were already on seats by 7:30AM, beating the ever present traffic congestion. Why? The new head of state's reputation for ruthlessness and orderliness was sufficient to transform in one night, the deep seated ineptitude of Nigerian Federal staffers.

General Muritala Ramat Muhammed was assassinated on February 13, 1976, in a coup led by Lt. Colonel Bukar Dimka, who was an in-law to the ousted General Yakubu Gowon. This further strengthened the argument that prebendalism rules the Nigerian political space, including the military. This permeates or pervades the discourse of Achebe in his scintillating text "The Trouble with Nigeria" (Omolewa, 1986). General Olusegun Obasanjo, succeeded his former commander-in-chief, and completed the task of transition to civil rule, that General Muritala had set in motion. General Olusegun Obasanjo's junta was not without blemishes. It was accused of gross corruption, especially the missing crude oil money (Ogunmode, 2021). The Second republic mirrored the politics of bitterness, nepotism, graft and democracy of wart and all that characterized the first republic. Edigbonya and Aluko (2020, p.815) note that:

The Shagari's led government "bred" a period of economic doldrums, due to its mismanagement of public fund and its appointed ministers and political advisers, which further exacerbated the already distressed economy, arising from cluelessness.

Elections during the era were marred by wholesale rigging and the out-rigged politicians resorted to wide scale violence, reminiscent of "Operation Wetie" of the first republic. Every sector of the economy was over politicized. It was also the financial crises caused by the recklessness of the politicians, that led

the country to high debt, a result of over borrowing. It was a period of internal and external borrowings, and the aftermath of the unwitting decision, was a weak balance of payment position (Ediagbonya & Aluko, 2020). The ineptitude and leadership crises that engulfed the shagari led government, got to the pinnacle and the military had to intervene to save the country from imminent collapse. Major General Muhammadu Buhari in his address to the country in 1984 mentioned that the mismanagement of public fund was aggravated by absence of probity, bribes and other manifestations of corruption, padding, arbitrage, forgery and siphoning of public funds (Major General Buhari Address to the Nation, April, 7<sup>th</sup>, 1984).

General Muhammadu Buhari was toppled in August 27, 1985 in a palace coup by Major General Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida, a member of his kitchen cabinet. The General Buhari's Junta was inflexible and biased towards some ethnic nationalities. Some of its decrees lacked human face, as they were too draconian. Despite the efficiency with which his regime tackled grave national issues, the regime's inflexibility caused national discontent, and it was on the strength of that, and other pitfalls that, Major General Ibrahim Babangida struck (Seun, 2015). General Babangida was in office for eight and the half years, and during his reign, he put in place structures and the platforms to promote national integration but his government had a lot of integrity crises and the truncation of June, 12 1993 election, was the heights of his junta's insensitivity to national will. It was amidst the pressures from civil societies, interest groups, student bodies and general populace, that he was forced to step aside. Chief MKO Abiola had won the June 12 election, adjudged till date, the freest and fairest in the annals of the country's electoral history, but the dictator annulled the results of the election (Falola, 2019) General Babangida put in place an interim National Government(ING), headed by Chief Ernest Shonekan, a lawyer and technocrat (Cindy, 1993). Cindy (1993, p.1) writes that:

General Ibrahim Babangida finally stepped aside as the military head of state of black Africa's most virile state, today and installed a businessman, lawyer and a political rookie, to lead the country out of its most severe crisis, since the civil war of over twenty years ago.

Chief Ernest Shonekan was barely in office for three months, before he was toppled by General Sanni Abacha, arguably the cruelest dictator in Nigerian political history . His junta had one of the worst human rights records. In the view of Falode (2013), three important events galvanized and mobilized civil society and human right groups against the maximum ruler's administration. The first was the refusal to release the winner of June 12 presidential election, Chief MKO Abiola, The second was the gruesome murder through hanging of thirteen MOSOP's leaders, including Ken Sarowiwa in 1995, and the most undesirable which was the inordinate ambition of General Sanni Abacha to transmute, from military head of state, to Civilian president (Falode, 2018). The sudden death of Abacha paved way for the emergence of General Abdul



Salam Abubakar (Kayode, 2022). General Abdul Salam Abubakar had been accused in some quarters to have plundered the foreign reserves, through the hosting of the Under 21, World cup, tagged the “Nigeria 99”. Nevertheless, the administration is often praised for successful transition programme, that ushered in the the fourth republic. Dagne (2006:3) submits that:

General Abdulsalem outlined a special timetable for the transition of the civil rule with local polls on December 5, 1998, gubernational and state assembly elections on January 9, followed by national assembly polls on February 20, 1999 and presidential polls on February 27. The official handing over date was set for May 29, 1999 all of which went according to plan.

The transition programmes eventually gave birth to the emergence of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, a former Military of head of state, who had allegedly been marked for elimination by the General Abacha’s junta. The emergence of a south western was said to be designed to assuage the Yoruba ethnic nationality, for the annulment of June 12, 1993, won by a Yoruba man, who subsequently died in prison (Dagie, 2006). Chief Olusegun Obasanjo emerged on the platform of the PDP. Chief Olusegun in a bid to fight corruption, established EFCC and ICPC and also put in place an economic policy to revamp the country’s comatose economy, with the acronym NEEDS (National Economic Empowerment and Development strategies), he reviewed the national minimum wage and also prioritized national security. However, his party was accused of monumental fraud in the 2003 and 2007 General Elections (Odoziobodo, et al, 2010).

Usmar Musa Yaardua succeeded Chief Olusegun Obasanjo. He tactfully addressed the Niger/Delta militancy through granting of amnesty and the creation of Niger/Delta ministry. The president was quite pious by publicly acknowledging that the election that brought him was fraudulent, unfortunately, he died in office, and was succeeded by his Vice, Dr. Goodluck Ebele Jonathan. Dr. Jonathan completed the term of Umaru Yaradua tenure, and he also won the 2011 presidential election, His administration faced criticisms on diverse forms. It was accused of corruption, economic mismanagement, patronage and nepotism, human right abuses and mismanagement of oil resources (Okechukwu, 2015). Dr. Goodluck Jonathan lost the 2015 presidential election to General Muhammadu Buhari (rtd) in 2015, and by conceding defeat, before the final results were officially announced, his concession was a significant achievement that helped to consolidate civil rule, and prevented what would have been national disaster (Okechukwu, 2015). President Muhammadu Buhari ruled for eight years and his eight years in office had been decried by Nigerians. The failure of Buhari’s administration was due to lack of wherewithal or mental capability to govern, his inability to emotionally connect with Nigerians, his utter failure to leverage on the favourable public mood to galvanize tangible social

transformation. Thus, all problems noted during Goodluck Jonathan Administration, heightened under Buhari's watch (Anekwe, 2023). PMB was succeeded by chief Bola Ahmed Tinubu (BAT) and since May, 29, 2023, he has been the president of Nigeria.

### **Contextualizing Achebe's Thesis on Nigeria Political Leadership**

"The Trouble with Nigeria" (1983) is a critical examination of Nigeria and its obvious struggles with corruption and national identity. Achebe critiques the country's governing and ruling elites for sacrificing national interest on the altar of personal interest - this proclivity of the Nigerian political office holders, technocrats and bureaucrats to place self aggrandizement, ethno-linguistic sentiments and religious inclination over the welfare of the populace (Joseph, 1987). Achebe (1983) is of the view that Nigeria's problem is essentially problem of leadership and nothing else. Achebe (1983, p.2) opines that:

The Nigerian problem is the unwillingness or inability of its leaders to rise to occasion, to the challenge of personal example, which is the hallmark of leadership.

This tendency of Nigerian political office holders and their collaborators in civil and public service is pervasive and scholars have exhaustively written on it. Joseph (1984, p.10) affirms that:

Nigerian politics as well as many other peripheral capitalist states are enmeshed in prebendal politics. This explains the patterns of political behaviour of the leadership, which reflect as their justifying principles, that the offices of the existing state may be competed for and utilized for the personal as well as that of their reference or support groups.

The dearth of genuine leaders who will fundamentally transform the country from its social and economic quagmire to a state of eldorado has bedeviled Nigeria and most African states for many years, since their respective independence. Oluwasanmi (2007, p.75) affirms that:

African countries have not had the type of selfless and progressive leaders that have helped a number of Asian countries get over the years of colonial subjugation. The leaders must buy houses in Europe, United States and even in India, Japan or South Africa. The founding fathers of the Nigerian federation such as Ahmadu Bello, Obafemi Awolowo or the zik of Africa, have not been fortunate to have genuine followers with identical vision to replicate their numerous achievements. Nigeria has

been rather characterless, painlessness' or even more grievous leaders who intended to self perpetuate.

Forty-one years after Achebe had written the "Trouble with Nigeria", the leadership conundrum has continued unabated.

### **Tribalism**

On the phenomenon of tribalism, Achebe (1983) holds that nothing in the chequered political history of Nigeria captures her problem of national cohesion or integration more typically than the word "tribe" Achebe (1985, p.5) posits that:

In the life time of many Nigerians who still enjoy an active public career, Nigeria was called "a mere geographical expression not only by the British who had in keeping it so, but even by our "nationalists" when it suited them to retreat into tribe to check their more successful rivals from other parts of the country.

Achebe (1983) is of the opinion that tribal politics remains a critical bane of the Nigerian political space, and until the country outgrows it, the process of national integration will not yield the needed results. Achebe (1983, p.5) poignantly states:

Someday when we shall outgrow tribal politics or when our children shall have done so, historians of the Nigerian nation, will see that event as the abortion of a pan Nigerian dream. Nigeria in which a citizen could live and work in a place of his choice anywhere, and pursue any legitimate goal opens to his fellows.

Achebe took exception to what he called a "momentous occasion", when chief Obafemi Awolowo "Stole" the leadership of Western Nigeria from Dr Nnamdi Azikwe in broad day light" He felt, it was the defining moment when the Nigerian dream was circumvented. Some scholars have contrary opinions though, as they tag Achebe himself an ethnic bigot. Quantum of tribal sentiments and politics ingrained in the Nigerian socio-political psyche is humongous. Umenwahuliri (2023, p.1) maintains that:

In the aftermath of 2023 presidential election in Nigeria, tensions between the Yoruba and some ethnic groups reached a crescendo, with litany of accusations of marginalization being hurled back and forth. Unfortunately, wretchedness and ethnic politics often lead to tribal mayhem.

Tribalism has noted by Achebe, has the tendency to debar genuine national coherence and stability, leading to avalanche of conflicts, with dire consequences. Forty-one years after Achebe noted this, the country has sunk further into ethnic abyss.

### **False Image of Ourselves**

Achebe believes that aside from the leadership conundrum, driven by personal and tribal considerations, Nigeria is also encumbered by false image of its people hold about themselves. He frowns at the tendency of Nigerian leaders to frequently refer to this country as “this great country of ours.” Achebe (1983) cited two profound examples between a leader of a western nation and a Nigerian leader to buttress his point. Achebe (1983, p.9) asserts that:

One of the commonest manifestations of under developments is a tendency among the ruling elite to live in a world of “make believe” and unrealistic expectations. This is the cargo cult mentality some anthropologists. Some time speak about.

Till date, Nigeria is anarchic state where cult of parochialism, ethnocentrism and egoism have ousted anything called national values and forces. It is a nation of rabble rousers, charlatans, pseudo nationalists and sycophants (Anayochukwu, 2021)

### **Unity and Faith**

Achebe (1983) faults the country’s deployment of the terms “Unity and Faith” He affirms that the two words, which are embedded in the national anthem and pledge have not been internalized and displayed by Nigerians. He doubts if most Nigerians know the impact of unity and faith. He sees unity as being vital to the country’s quest for national integration. Achebe (1983, p.12) explains that:

The most commonly enunciated Nigerian ideal is unity. So important is it to us, that it stands inscribed on our coat of arms and so scared the blood of millions of our countrymen, women and children was shed between 1967 and 1970, to uphold it against secessionist forces.

He challenges the validity of the Nigerian unity as an absolute good, and declares it nonsensical. In the opinion of Achebe (1983), Unity can only be good as the purpose for which it is desired (Achebe, 1985). Other than Unity, “Faith” is another ideal integrated as part of the badge of Nigeria, popularly called “Coat of Arms” Achebe (1983) in similar manner, avers that faith can only be good at the object on which it reposes. Achieving unity in diversity has been a challenge for Nigeria, Even before its Independence (Ojong, 2014).

## **Patriotism**

Here, Achebe is primarily concerned with who a patriot is, He defines a patriot as someone who loves his country. One who deeply cares about the happiness, and well being of his country and its entire people, not minding their ethnic differences. Achebe (1983) contends that patriotism would not be steeped in a country as badly run as Nigeria. Achebe (1983, p.16) insists that:

This patriotism is possible only when the people who rule and those under their power have a common and genuine goal of maintaining the dispensation under which its nation lives.

He believes that national pledges and pious admonitions ascribed to the ruling classes and their acolytes are totally ineffective in promoting true patriotism. In the light of the economic inequalities, that permeates Nigeria (Achebe, 1983). Patriotism is crucial to the development of Nigeria and it behooves the ruling class to find ways of facilitating it first, among themselves, and radiate it to the citizenry (Meziobi & Ukor, 2021).

## **Corruption**

Achebe (1983) is among the first set of scholars to write on endemic corruption in Nigeria. Achebe (1983, p.17) states that:

Corruption in Nigeria has passed the alarming and entered the fatal stage, and; Nigeria will die if she does not urgently and radically deal with it. And yet, the very people who should be most concerned, the leaders and their cronies are either helpless or complicit or both.

Even with the establishment of two anti-graft agencies, EFCC and ICPC, corruption tends to soar astronomically in Nigeria. At a point in the country's national history, she had the ignominious appellation of being the most corrupt nation on earth. The 2019 survey shows a significant increase in corruption index - from 52 percent in 2016 to 63 percent in 2019 (Ipadeola, 2019). This reinforces Achebe's position on the ossified corrupt practices in and outside the governmental circle. Corruption has developed the life of its own in Nigeria and goes by several names in order to legitimize in the eyes of the "Practitioners" (Okolo & Okeemute, 2014) Achebe (1983, p.17) inclines that:

One of the common manifestations of underdevelopment is the tendency among its victims to connive at their own exploitation. Nigeria is a good example. We have for instance, a most lucrative trade in corruption, with public officers and contractors and foreign businessmen conniving to plunder the nation's wealth.

Achebe's opinion is that corruption is antithetical to Nigeria's survival and that it is perpetuated in concert, by leaders and followers. He sees corruption as a manifestation of underdevelopment and a major obstacle to the country's progress. Achebe (1983) is of the notion that the only antidote to corruption is for leaders to set examples, by putting principle ahead of greed.

### **Leadership Nigeria Style**

Achebe censures the founding fathers of the Nigerian state for absence of intellectual rigour and inclination toward materialism and egoistical pedestrianism. This unhealthy greed for material acquisition has huge implications for economic growth and development of the Nigerian state. Barowski (2023) views materialism as the infatuation with concrete objects, over ethereal and intellectual experiences and relationships. Ikeke (2024) holds that, Nigeria is a country plagued by acquisitive investment in high and low places. This justifies the stance of Achebe. Achebe admits that he is also a part of the problem; he is keen about finding lasting solution to (Achebe, 1983).

### **Social Injustice and the Cult of Mediocrity**

Achebe devotes eighth pages of his book to this phenomenon. He sees the worst effect of ethnicism as perversion of justice and awarding contracts to incompetent bidders on the ground of ethno-linguistic. This phenomenon is responsible for the poor state of infrastructure. Achebe (1983, p.39) laments that:

Take a critical look at our public infrastructures, our grossly incompetent and wasteful parastatals and state-owned corporations, if you want electricity you buy generators, if you desire potable water, you have to sink borehole, if you want to travel, you set up your own airline.

Achebe (1983) adds that it is not just the above that promotes mediocrity, the trigger and more worrisome issue is the gulf between the ruling elites, who are in government and the vast majority, who wallow in abject wretchedness. This failure of leadership makes Achebe to conclude that on this matter that peace and stability are only made possible by sense of fairness, which is apparently lacking in Nigeria.

### **Indiscipline**

Achebe (1983) decries that the level of indiscipline in Nigerian public and private sectors. He sees indiscipline as failure or deliberate refusal to submit one's desires and actions to the restrictions of social conduct in recognition and desires of the right of others. This attitude is seen wherever you look at in

Nigeria. Leadership indiscipline trickles down to the followers. Achebe (1983, p.58) asserts that:

I don't know any other country globally, where you can find brazen insensitivity, indiscipline and egocentricism among those who lay claim to leadership and formal education.

The slow progress in the task of nation building process can be attributed to factors such as indiscipline, disdain for ethics, other negative attributes which are manifested in diverse forms (Pate, 2018).

### **Conclusion**

All the problems noted by Achebe in his work, "The Trouble with Nigeria", have increased in proportions and they all point to the inability of the Nigerian political leadership to rise above personal, ethnic and religious sentiments, at the expense of purposive and altruistic leadership. Till date, the ineptitude of Nigerian political leaders and their acolytes stands at the epic centre of all other problems. The country is encumbered with. To resolve the afore-stated problems, Achebe harps on intentional and deliberate leadership, as against the arrays of pretends that permeates and corrodes the Nigerian leadership realm.

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