

IGBO LEADERSHIP AND THE RHETORIC OF FEDERALISM IN POST-CIVIL WAR NIGERIA

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Abstract:

The extant reality of contemporary Nigerian politics appear to appeal more and more to the virility, value and validity of federalism as a mechanism for political management in that so much troubled polity. In spite of the fact of growing restiveness occasioned by a number of self-determination groups, there is neither any serious reason to believe that the state is not working well on the wheels of federalism, nor are there any assured hope that a recoil into small pockets of depleted states can heighten the prospects of political stability, equity in development, security, and citizen satisfaction. Yet these concerns have played out as major issues of concern propelling the many eruptions rendering the state a tension soaked social order. The Igbo are not completely outside of current self-determination projects which associates them with the championing of the MASSOB agitation. This intervention finds it rather more convenient to interrogate the claims of Igbo leadership in the aftermath of the civil war that has failed to adequately explore the reality of the mechanism of federalism and utilize same to the collective benefit of her people. Therefore, it attempts to reconfigure perception about the instrument of federalism as either a political minus, or one that is made to seem so by a leadership that takes delight in lies, self-serving purpose and distractions. The study contends that an enormous opportunity structure yet abound in the federal logic that breeds substantial benefits to the Igbo, and will still do so in the near future. It sues for a re-focus of Igbo leadership in both material and spiritual terms as the anticipated gains of federalism pales away in the face of disgruntled and deceptive leadership that is adept at pilfering resources meant of development of the Igbo homelands.

INTRODUCTION

LEADERSHIP IS A VERY CRUCIAL social variable, one so much needed for the concrete drive of humanity and its material resources to an appreciable point in the pursuit of excellence. The thoughts about excellence, therefore, are in relation to meeting the material and moral needs or expectations of a people without fail. Hence, Burns situates leadership in respect of ability to harness this “vast pools of human energy known as wants, needs, aspirations and expectations”¹ of a people. As such, failure is the often unwanted and unwarranted expectation placed on leaders of respective groups in society by its teeming populations of followers. Thus, excuses for lack of success, impoverished sense of direction, indolence and prevarication with the anticipated positive expectations of the masses,

tends to attract not only severe criticisms for the leader, but also scores such leader, or set of leaders, rather low on the popularity scale. Whatever may be the reasons for the leader's failure, it remains an incontestable fact that excuses are no useful substitute to meeting public expectations regarding his/her stewardship. That, however, depends on if such a leader, or set of leaders do consider theirs as a true call to service, which requires the amassing of creative energies, tact and intelligence to meet and merit the success anticipated.

Unhappily, however, it has become the lot of the new generation of Igbos to persistently brood over the lethargy of their leadership given its disinclination to the pursuit of collective good of all, its current slide into the embrace of frivolities and, an entrapment in visionlessness. These concerns are better gleaned when considered comparatively with ones homologues who may well be said to be getting things right, if not much better than the Igbos would ordinarily wish to have it. Indeed, such tinkering pushes concerns further to arenas of interrogation to which varied dispositions, in terms of interpretations, do firmly exist. One such candidate in the broader Nigerian context is the question of federalism, as to how each unit fares with it. How has the accretions made to the States to enable them enhance the opportunities for real development been utilized? Basically, because federalism sues for autonomous development of constituent units, or levels of government, the case of the Igbo in Nigeria engages us in this intervention.

Note that any discourse on federalism in Nigeria directs us to explore that complex logic of unsolicited association to which most of the constituent states have become bonded. In this wise, it is right and proper to envisage that constituent units in Nigeria's federalism collectively define their own in the invention of a Nigerian commonwealth, albeit, an unsolicited commonwealth that appears to hold tenaciously. The "unsolicited" status of Nigerian federalism is evidenced and supported in the marked protestations of early colonial resistance² that signaled its rejection or haphazard reception. Long after, one can still feel the loud resonance of such comments on Nigeria as a British political contrivance, or mere geographical expression.³ Whether this emerging commonwealth is able to produce and reproduce opportunities for development and advancement has been a provocative concern producing variety of answers. But, the real answers to such question must be sought for in the conditions of pulsating beings that occupy the constituent units. It must be sought for in the material conditions that underscore development in respective units - an issue which is squarely placed in the hands of leadership in respective units of government. Thus, the demands of operating federalism implicate unit leaders in the use of available resources to initiate and sustain enduring development for the collective good of the people.

Yet one thing seems so inescapable in all of the answers – that being bonded, either by accident or design, these communities of interest must either choose to work together to achieve the desired level of satisfaction needed to assure respective populations of the good life (that irreducible minimum to which all political communities must subscribe, and which must always urge on a leader), or, eventually decide to go it their separate ways (in the hope that the emerging new leadership must be apt to secure the anticipated interests). But, that also is if they, firstly, come to realize the need to seriously evaluate their anticipated interests to a point of agreement to feel somehow assured, or, too taken by fear of the unknown. Basically, such oscillations between possible acceptance and rejection/suspicion leave communities between hope and despair, fear and assurance, as the common binaries that preoccupy most political arrangements properly called federalism.

Presently, not only is there a massive interrogation of the current relevance of the federal arrangement in Nigeria, considering the flourishing of new sites of challenge in ethno-based cleavages, but also, much of the irreverent dispositions challenged by these interrogations can be felt and associated with leadership in respective areas to warrant questioning what such prospect of exiting from the present federal quagmire could spell for a people that have become too low on the idea of community as a collective vision and goal. For the avoidance of doubt, the Igbo people are squarely caught in this web of confusion yielding pronounced sentiments for self-determination championed by the outfit called Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) as its most pronounced militant dimension. Another resourceful component of such struggle can be figured in the *Ohaneze Ndi Igbo*, largely inundated by Igbo intelligentsia and men of business.

The major problematic, however, is that both wings hardly meet to discuss the matter of common goal leading to isolated pursuit of interest, and to cross purposes in who is in rightful position to speak for the Igbo. Yet, while similar currents can be felt with other communities, the case of the Igbo proves a crucial view lens on a leadership that fails to work to bring her people together. Thus, by current trend, being “ones brother’s keeper (*onye aghala nwanne ya*)” has become a cliché seriously experiencing denudation among the Igbo, and gradually being replaced by “you are on your own (*onye n’ nke ya*).” Indeed, it is the latter trend that applies between these two leadership forces of MASSOB and Ohaneze. It is this problematic of anti-integration objectives, one that places greater premium on self-serving leadership that has been brought to bear on the relationship of managing the Igbo in the context of a federal complex. Yet the much more culpable remains those occupying governorship and Houses of Assembly position and the teeming population of their cronies that, by

implication, have direct access to revenue accretions to the state from the federal purse, and whose direct responsibility it is to see that such revenues are properly utilized to cause development to happen to their people.

Following pointers such as heightening divisiveness and the obsession with hyper-individualism, grand loss of control of cultural meaning and the essence of Igboness, self-serving leadership and paucity of readily accessible and emphasized models to draw from, the Igbo has been seriously hit by the problem of lack of continuity in positive leadership in post-civil war terms. From among them, we now find a gamble through a wild sway of a copy-culture (Igbos *who speak other languages better than their native dialect of identity*), governors whose official language to their people is English rather than Igbo language, coupled with a reservoir of profoundly disgruntled youth not only lacking in cultural depth, but whose penchant for get rich quick from the shortest, if inordinate pathway, have all contributed to leave the place in a ruinous situation. The claim of a prevailing leadership failure in Igbo land, against the foregoing backdrop, therefore, remains a truism. And for what is the most conspicuous feature attendant with majority of the underclass, it is the heightening of endangerment of populations therein in the face of burgeoning leadership neglect and mass poverty in the midst of plenty, caused and enhanced by their own who blatantly abuse scarce resources meant for collective development.

Today, the flight of respect is no longer contested as an uncertain social mood, and the trauma of poverty can only earn a discomfiting acquiescence from parents whose sons and daughters who have barely left school, probably, have never had any known apprenticeship or employment, returns home to a tumultuous welcome rather than interrogation of the source of some surprising, if extraordinary affluence, they arrive with. Chinua Achebe's reminiscences on Igbo life scripted through his most popular novel, *Things Fall Apart*⁴ taught us about the dint of hard work and quest for dignity that characterizes and orders Igbo life. He brought this in bold relief in the characters of Okonkwo and Unoka. While the penchant for honor, dignity and diligence took *Okonkwo* to a position of prominence, his chronically indebted father, *Unoka*, that symbolizes indolence and laziness reaped the dividend of tardiness and nonchalant disposition to duty. Today, in several aspects of Igbo life, it would seem that it no longer matters to many as *the very money* is the sole drive, not honor, no longer dignity, and much less about how it is gotten. Money has substituted for respect and can force the relegation of extant cultural values as it becomes the centerpiece of action and reconfiguring the social order of Igbo nationhood into a grab-grab mentality space, even at the consequence of utter neglect of rules of engagement. This remains pronounced

in the actions of Igbo leaderships so engrossed in official thievery, lack of accountability and low penchant for penalization.

A close and careful rendition and interpretation of these pungent effusions has become so imminent. If for nothing else, we must be able to tell the Truth, as Truth, another property which has suddenly become a rapidly disappearing social capital in ferocious flight among our leaders, and a major problematic of intense proportion that imperils support and trust from the people to their leaders. Among other things, the relationships of federalism, based on the standpoint of the state as a unique cultural model in union with adversely constituted centre in Nigeria, have not always been at the fore of social analysis in the Nigerian context as to keep constituents sufficiently aware of its meanings and what it is worth for them⁵. This raging blind spot which the leadership so much relishes and relies on in dealing with the masses need no further escape interrogation if only to spread the range of understanding about persistently shifted responsibilities. Furthermore, the study sues for a panoramic view on acts of legislation, appropriation and the general conduct of a set of leadership engrossed in self adulation, primitive accumulation and the building of personality cults through which they heighten terror and cultivation of animosities and divisions among the Igbos rather than the pursuit of selfless service.

In what follows, we consider conceptual issues of this study, situate a historical background to the problematic of Igbo leadership quagmire in a federal complex, and examine the empirical contexts of the raging problem of Political Malfeasance among Igbo leaders and, lastly, offer recommendations for a conclusion.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

Leadership and *Federalism* are the basic concepts for our clarification in this paper. Both terms are commonly associated with social science. Leadership is often discussed in lieu of efforts by pulsating beings to articulate, direct, and control social energies in areas where it proves profitable rather than yield irritations in failure. Precisely on account of the latter, we find talks about the irritations of bad leadership to speak to the possible exertions of pains and denials provoked by its vastly negative deployment⁶. Thus, to lead implies efforts in providing initiatives in decisions and actions, and in directing and controlling wide ranging human affairs as profitable as possible. As an embedded social norm, leadership holds in relation to followership. The latter underscores the retinue of persons – supporters and others – affected by a leader's effort. Basically, therefore, leadership gains in force and meaning in the context of politics. In this wise, leadership is the lot of leaders just as followership is the lot of fol-

lowers. Following James H. Parker, "people who have a reputation for self-seeking and who might have a conflict of interest (*over common good versus own good*) would not be chosen"⁷ or, better still, taken as leaders; and from Buzz McCoy, drawing on Peter Robinson's *How Ronald Reagan Changed My Life*, real leaders are associated with a "sustained...theological sense of hope, strength, resiliency, and an innate sense of the basic goodness of creation."⁸ It is about "a social function which involves initiating, organizing, coordinating and directing collective action towards the attainment of community agreed group goals or objectives."⁹ Thus, rendering "objective selfless service"¹⁰ to a people is the epicenter of leadership concerns.

Federalism, the other term for our clarification, is not a term that has a precise meaning, but refers to an extant social current that underscores a relational type among political systems. A phantom word with considerable ambiguity, yet the current to which it refers, and the basic philosophical essence it seeks to project, help in according it a familiar, if unique, note of relevance. Mainly, the deployment of the term has always been in reference to a discernible structure of things that has tended to implicate the relational. As a matter of fact, it is more about a type of relational form of a given political system that the idea points up. The prime point of appeal has been the extant reality of underscoring of difference in terms of levels of power arrangements and natural differences to which people are wont to guide jealously while still finding a ground to cohere. It is, therefore, to a social current of sort that takes into account the possibility of cohering with differences without wishing for its final collapse; one that can be appreciated in terms of forces capable of linking diverse people into a common core and allowing them to subscribe to both a common and peculiar governance schemes. In this wise, sharing a common ground while protecting their unique cultural peculiarities is always taken into cognizance.

Attracting a welter of skepticism, it is a familiar trend that description and explanations of federalism vary from author to author and, in terms of practice, from country to country. Max Beloff notes of K. C. Wheare's uncertain mood about the federal idea in observing the "fact that much of what he had written ...*about it* might soon be out of date"¹¹. Fortunately, the term has survived the pressures of the war years, but not without persistent pressures for adaptation into newer moods. Currently, Charles D. Tarlton characterizes the federal in terms of "Symmetry and Asymmetry, to capture what constituent units in such a union Share and do not share in common."¹² Basically, because of the facts of similarities and differences which order those under its influence, Leach would have us understand "federalism as a device for dividing decisions *or power* and functions of government...between levels of government."¹³ In most cases, thoughts about levels of government have tended to focus on either two levels, that

is, the central and state governments, or, on a tripartite arrangement that considers the central government, state and local governments. All of these are to the extent that each level of government is considered not only crucially strategic, but, more importantly, as having a statutory character as autonomous. Thus, "the arrangement of most federalism is such that the characterization of government takes into serious consideration each level of government as a vital strand of recognized authority rooted in the constitution."¹⁴

It is necessary to note that a core concern that necessitates the federal order stem from the very nature of the groups or constituents that constitute the order. This is particularly so in terms of their commitment to survive, develop and achieve things for the collective benefit of their people in the context of that union. In most cases, the federal arrangement does not always exist between homogeneous groups of persons who may not be perturbed by the very fact of seeking to protect any difference. There are, as it were, polities that are profoundly heterogeneous in character that, by the very reason of bringing these groups into a common governance umbrella, makes the federal order most propitiatory. Thus, conditions of difference rather than similarities appeal more to such political design that allows for power sharing. But, in specific terms, it is for purposes of securing the peculiarities of groups that federalism gains in meaning and relevance. Baring the niceties of a definition of federalism, the more crucial question it addresses is that of power and authority, as to how these are deployed to cause the so much desired autonomous development of respective constituents.

NIGERIAN FEDERALISM: A HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

A number of issues gave fillip to the emergence of federalism in Nigeria. In the main, however, Nigerian federalism owe so much to British political and administrative expedience than to any clearly known domestic resolve on the part of its constituents to connect and cohere in a union. Lugard's merger of the North and Southern parts in 1914 proves a crucial watershed in the evolution of Nigerian federalism.¹⁵ A matter of intense controversy, the mapping of federalism for Nigeria can best be appreciated from the standpoint of advancing a colonial legacy that was aimed at putting the British colonial administration in a position of foremost advantage to manage a vast, albeit contiguous territories, that they acquired in the European architectonic program that was the scramble for Africa championed by the German Chancellor, Otto von Bismarck, in the Berlin conference debacle of 1885.¹⁶ It is noteworthy that the territories now defined as Nigeria is constitutive of no less than 250 respective ethnic groups¹⁷, The implication is that we are focusing on a stupendous project

on how to successfully bring these 250 distinct cultural, religious and linguistic groups under the single control of a colonial, alien power, Britain.

At inception of colonialism, control of indigenous people was the quintessential goal. It was tied to the effective realization of colonial objective of successful exploitation of acquired territories, and the instrumental position of undeterred coercion through conquest, or the more subtle scheme of fake treaty contracting.¹⁸ Thus, this British contrivance for Nigeria can best be understood in this regard. The union making efforts, it must have been thought by them, was aimed at putting a finite signature to the goal of effective control than any conceivable intent to assure for political accommodation for the merging territories. Therefore, given the vast territories, and the urgent need to secure the attractive resources therein, the British were torn between the pressures of direct control, (which was made difficult by the shortage of colonial staff and the inhospitable hinterlands) and the deployment of administrative decentralization to indirectly manage the territories through recognizing extant traditional institutions that looked similar to theirs (as in the aristocratic emirate system, or in the creation of traditional leadership institutions in those areas that were said to be acephalous as in the case of creation of Warrant Chiefs among the Igbo).¹⁹ This, in itself, was an exercise in power sharing from the cradle of colonialism.

By dint of coercion and deceit in treaty formulations with indigenous social formations, colonial Britain gained more than a foothold on the territories that presently define and constitute the Nigerian state. That the federal idea was never a program freely agreed to is evident in the various resistance wars staged by indigenous elements against the colonialists in a bid to maintain their local identities and freedoms, and to sustain their cultural peculiarities.²⁰ Indeed, at the level of their development at the point where colonialism happened to Nigeria, it was difficult to assume that there were enough informed men in place to have the mental composition and demeanor that was necessary for understanding the complex relation called federalism, a product of western political experience the operation of which was somehow linked to education. Thus, being informed was necessary for seeing to its successful management. Only in later days development in post second world war terms, which had seen the appreciation and blossoming of interests in western education, could indigenous Nigerian elements have become better aware and prepared for more accurate and sophisticated response to the emergent idea of alien federal rule. Even at that, early nationalists were not particularly courted by colonial authorities as viable hands in development, but as people whose education, in fact, made them unsuitable to the interest of the local classes.²¹ They were considered disdainful and suspect in the project of colonial interest by the colonizers. This was the stance and mood from

which the early nationalists may have taken the cause of liberation struggles to reassert the lost freedoms of their people and contribute to the design of an emergent new Nigeria.

The interests of the people may have converged initially in trade relations (one in which they were equally shortchanged), mainly in the development of local inter-group relations among contiguous neighbors.²² The slave trade may well have enhanced these trade relations in the unconscious promotion of contacts, and may equally have brought in new knowledge to neighbors living distances apart, but, certainly, not with the immediate intention to evolve a union on the part of the indigenous constituent elements.²³ The later demand, therefore, for effectively and efficiently partaking in controlling the vast territories under British colonial control, brought the idea into bold relief as an after-thought since the initial exertion of power was intended as centralized and held together more by coercion than consent. It is unthinkable that at the cradle of colonialism, any known local personality, or community had cause to suggest or act out federalism as a viable political variant to manage the territories. Hence, we are not aware of early demands for sharing power than the Indirect Rule System (IRS) made possible which, invariably, was another political expedience contrived by the colonizing power to facilitate her more effective exploitation of indigenous people by such subtle considerations that made it seem like the indigenous rulers were regarded as 'partners in progress.'²⁴

The fact is that they did not have sufficient manpower in the mosquito infested tropics that was considered very hostile compared to the colonial experiences of Kenya, Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe and South Africa that presented the case of settler colonialism. Thus, the problem of an inhospitable environment was a major source of low morale for British colonial administration and a deterring factor in generating colonial staff from Europe to work in the tropics.²⁵ And this shortage of manpower, in post war terms, brought low the morale to expedite the process of more direct administration full-scale. It therefore gave greater impetus to the idea of power sharing in the project of indirect rule from where the norms of power sharing began its formalization.

Therefore, given the anticipated scope of knowledge open to a largely preliterate people, it was almost impossible to figure the invention of federalism as a key option against the backdrop of raging suspicions with which the indigenous elements engaged themselves and with Britain too. Thus, the cradle years of colonialism was marked by a remarkable suspicion and lack of trust from among the constituent indigenous elements from the onset as to impair any thinking of a compacting or union between them that may conduce to federalism as an agreeable political blueprint to follow. Yet the instance of indirect rule proved a veritable

scheme for nurturing power sharing values between the indigenous classes and the colonizers to make for a preliminary springboard for launching federalism ahead of time.

Overtime, however, the exigencies of being compacted together under a common colonial power opened to a new vista of understanding among the indigenous elements that have come to share common experiences in colonial exploitation, violence and coercion which Britain was so adept at exercising. It would seem equally right to hazard the claim that initial build ups to the federal idea may have been necessitated by the emerging challenges at the time to seek and evolve avenues of cooperation among hitherto distrusting communities against a common enemy. It is concerns like this that looks most likely to provide the impetus for a collective response to British colonialism. The notion of "common enemy" would seem rather appropriate if we note that everywhere, colonialism was prompted, projected and promoted by conquest, which was well intoned with violence and prompting resistance struggles. It is, therefore, within the context of this shared political experiences, made possible by the fact of being common victims of British exploitation and colonial violence, as well as, the fact of age-old established contacts through inter-regional trade in both slaves and other legitimate commodities of exchange, and the growing appreciation of power sharing ushered by the indirect rule system, that the idea of collective engagement began to flow from. Indeed, any serious idea about federalism must be seen in the light of a collective engagement, one that allows for the pulling and pooling of resources to draw on a more formidable and impacting force.

Consider also the fact that long before the invention of the name, Nigeria, no constituent member nation went by that label of identity. Indeed, by the common nomenclatures for identification, it was not until the spurious invention of Flora Shaw that they gradually began to underscore the promptings of closer knit identities for the groups.²⁶ The thinking of an all-time homogenous Northern Hausa-Fulani was only a late successor to specific labels like Sokotawa for people from Sokoto and Kanawa for those from Kano; the same goes for the Yoruba label equally as a more recent invention that came to replace individuated labels like Ibadan, Oyo, Ekiti-kete, Eko, Ijesha and the likes; a similar current can be found among the traditional Bini, Eshan, Itsekiri, and Urhobo within the Mid-West, and Ngwoo, Nkanu, Onitsha, Owerri, Ngwa and Mbaise, to mention these few, from the Igbo section. There are reasons, therefore to believe that not much of intellectual scrutiny has been cast in his direction to unravel the meaning of that label of identity that is "Nigeria" which the state has been bearing from the hey days of colonialism. Perhaps it makes for a less thrilling intellectual excursion, but there is certainly something in a name that makes it worth bearing. Were we to content ourselves with the fact that

others name themselves by the rivers around them, then, there are multiple rivers in Nigeria, and the Benue rivals the Niger in such a context which has long been assigned to the latter. Howbeit, it suffices to note that the exigencies of a collective response to a common enemy made the closer labeling of Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo, to mention the three dominant groups, a necessary socio-political cum cultural invention for the cultivation of the inertia for integration.

It may well have served the purpose of a springboard for the launching of closer group integration programs among Nigeria's constituents seen to encourage cooperation and collaboration. In providing a common platform for the rallying of ethnic likes, the people may have begun to see in earnest the possible challenges presented before them of the forcible political compacting contrived by the British. Subsequent relations saw to the specific articulation of group interests on the basis of this development. To be sure, the initial focus was on the colonial overlord, Britain; but, in time, it eventually emerged into suing for definitive stakes on power and development for respective ethnic groups. This was reminiscent of concerns in post war years that saw to concerted efforts of nationalists to enlist challenges against colonialism which saw them evolving News Papers and engaging in constitutional conferences that would allow them greater modicum of space to exercise their political rights. Such agitation leading to the evolvment of the 1946 constitution had provided a vital leverage in contestation of rights and liberties of Nigerians manifesting in the development of regionalism as a precursor to Federalism. The key to understanding the project of regionalism is in its claims in the decentralization of power thereby making the regional governments an ultimate arena for serious politics for freedom and liberty. It could not have stopped there given that the scope of participation remained narrow and called for wider expansion.

Yet, efforts in respect of an integrated Nigerian entity had begun much earlier in 1914 with the Lugardian amalgamation of the North and South. That, is not to discountenance developments long before that date ranging from the complete annexation of Lagos in 1861 to the cordoning off of larger areas of the Northern part, and bringing these under the Royal Niger Company, whose steadfast acquisition and alignment with the Northern oligarchies saw it in a protective disposition towards the Hausa-Fulani territories against the unbridled incursion of Christianity, that must be guaranteed²⁷. The guarantee which the company got in the Northern part was duly paid for in the checking of the influx and influence of western education, which was rapidly spread alongside Christianity. To the Mohammedan North, a familiar reference by Flora Shaw, the need to maintain intact the consolidated achievements of Islam cannot be compromised. A way of life, it depicted a structure of both religion and poli-

tics and served the useful purpose of preserving long won heritages that reveal itself in the aristocratic ordering of that part of the country. This sentiment, it must be said, was well founded for the purity of an established order. But the contradiction that stared the North in the face was the fact that this protector, the British, was more inclined to Christianity than Islam, and their people would have to observe the rites of prayer which required their religion to find a place close to them among the people.

This current that speaks to a protective disposition to Islam against the possible incursion of Christianity in the North must be appropriately understood in the light of holding on to a respectful pact to which the North will reciprocate in the compliant yielding of taxes to the colonial government for the success of colonial administration. However, the more pertinent fact about this relation that point up to the building of a stronger federal current lies in the rendition of this experience as an act that underscores the peculiarity of a people in terms of religion, and the willful disposition on the part of the colonial government to let it thrive outside of the vast importation of belief models. It is in this wise that we can more clearly understand the development of stranger settlement cities by the label, *Sabon Gari*.²⁸

Northern Nigeria has an established hold on Islam dating back to the pre-colonial jihad that attended earlier Arabian colonialism of Africa through the exploits of Uthman Dan Fodio and his co-jihadists.²⁹ The implanting of Islam set the stage for a religio-structural experience in insisting on a secure ground of almost zero competition in the Hausa hinterlands. By so doing, a concrete assent was given to one of the major strands of interest in the establishment and thriving of federalism – the attempt to underscore the cultural peculiarities of a people. Religion, as a way of Life, was per excellence, a cultural model with its specific rituals. Hence, on the score of religious peculiarity, the North and the British appear to have agreed to a common culture, a religious way of life that must be protected that is Islam. This is more particularly so because the colonial government did not find a better rationale to dismantle a structure that offered an opportunity structure that was likened to their own aristocratic order, and which was not disturbing their established foothold on power in the area. Thus, the emergence of the Emirate system was strengthened in the close supervision and protection of the colonial government.³⁰

Another outcome of this engagement is the development of the stranger town settlements outside of the inner city, the *Sabon Gari* phenomenon, which made for strangers a place to limit the practices of their imported religions. This development, though not immediately thought in any federalizing terms, may have been, in part, a precursor in proving the attention to, and the attendant consciousness of the particularity of reli-

gion as an integral factor in the embrace of federalism. Indeed, federalism as a current, insists on guiding the cultural peculiarities of a people so jealously. An inference may well be drawn here that in encouraging the development of missions and limiting the rapid spread of Islam in the South, the quest for protective cultural zones defined by emergent new religions in Islam and Christianity became key issues in the calculations of an emerging federal Nigeria. This would imply that the British, from earliest days, recognized the cultural and religious diversities that betokened the people, but they were nevertheless adamant on compacting the areas in inventing a union in administrative terms, which answered more to the question of expedience of a successful colonial administration than any indigenously informed interest in the possible coherence of profoundly diverse and less trusting locals into a federal configuration.

All of these were to undergo serious changes overtime where it found a resolution in, firstly, the Lugardian amalgamation of 1914, then in regionalism under Sir Arthur Richards in 1946. Subsequent constitutional conferences thereafter were aimed not at declassifying this emerging current, but towards its further fanning into prominence. The culmination of that march to a consolidated union, therefore, found a more definitive expression in the Lyttleton constitution of 1954 in the context of which regionalism, the constitutional stance from the 1946 Arthur Richards constitution, became a more clearly marked interest pursued by constituents who saw it as valuable because of the prospects of autonomous development³¹. Thus, by dint of that adoption, the Nigerian union became formally consolidated as a federation of three dominant regions with a more dominant North, the size of which was larger than the West and Eastern regions.

Indeed, by the established structure, another crucial component in the federal design, the fear of domination by lesser populated areas, became more crystallized as a reality that was going to haunt the emerging social order.³² A fear that cannot be wished away, it can only be contained by creation of further states as autonomous and equal entities in power and status to the dominant other, or by the further partitioning of the larger portion to break its size into separate, autonomous, and equal pockets of interest with all others. But, beyond the design of 1954, it would seem that the state worked in the direction of consolidation towards independence than any serious interrogation towards reviewing or expunging the federal idea. At independence on 1st October, 1960, therefore, it entered the comity of sovereign nations as a Federation of three regions – North, West and Eastern regions.³³

Ever since, the Nigerian federation can rightly be argued to have kept faith with the federal idea as a formal system of relation for the management of its diversity. That this interest in sustaining it was not an issue to

early inheritors of independence is attested to by the satisfaction revealed in the maintenance of the regions as crucial sites of power and authority and, as an agreeable alternative to the center. It is in this wise that the increasing influence of the regional governments between 1960 and before the January 1966 coup, can best be appreciated. What prominent nationalists lost in not being placed squarely at the center, they gained in maintaining a superb influence at the regions. Thus, such political big weights like Chief Obafemi Awolowo, could gain more than a foothold on power as Premier of the Western region and leader of opposition at the federal house; Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, would find a place at the premiership of the Eastern region with a retreat that displaced Eyo Ita having been discounted in Lagos, Sir Ahmadu Bello, occupied the North with no immediate zest to move to the center. Instead, for him, Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, who became first Nigerian Prime Minister, was considered more suited to allow the former to oversee to both the cultural and political tending of the core Northern region.

Thus, until the coupist exploits of January 1966, federalism was appropriately in place and bringing out the best in the peculiarities of people in allowing them a wide space in the exercise of power and authority over their people. As anticipated, the demand of such experience was very much awaited in development programs and efforts of a given region, For the West, eternal praise would continue to grace the name of Chief Obafemi Awolowo, in his vision of hope in the enhancement of the potentials of the West through his free education program. Today, he ranks as the doyen of free education in Nigeria being a cardinal policy of his Action Group Party. Today also, no ethnic group in the Nigerian State can obviously claim to have more literate citizenry, and more prized on infrastructural development than the Yoruba states. This may not be said for Azikiwe, Akanu Ibiam or Michael Okpara with due respect to the East. The key to meaningful federalism, therefore, lay in the capacity for autonomous development. But this capacity was also to become a victim in an emergent center-centric federal project authored by the military³⁴.

At this point, it is needful to underscore a particular thrust in the consolidation of federalism in Nigeria by situating the emergence of the Mid-Western State. Still an outcome of the fear of domination, the greater part of that creation hitherto had been under the authority of the Western region. The thinking that development efforts were more or less hijacked by the dominant Yoruba ethnic stock that held power was a major impetus to disentangle a vast majority of ethnic groups of Edo, Eshan, Ijaw, Ishekiri and Urhobo peoples from the penetrating denials of the benefits of power sharing. Dwarfing their voices in the domination of strong and prominent nationalists like Chief Awolowo and S. L. Akintola, was a key problematic that made the search for a new niche of self-expression and imperative

interest that must be secured. Thus reprieve of domination came by way of the creation of the Mid-Western state in 1964³⁵ to increase the number of regions to four. Yet again, the anticipated value of possessing a new base of power was not so much in being seen as having so than in the ability of its leaders to cause development to happen in their areas. Albeit, with a growing sense of healthy competition, and the understanding that the seeds of rapid development was placed on their hands, respective regions can be blamed for the quality and quantity of development they were able to secure for their people thereby reliving the federal assumption that the destiny of a people is better served with those who know what that is. For all the groups, development was the most immediate focus; how much of it was attracted was a function of leadership vision.

By January 1966, Nigerian federalism experienced a very pathetic convulsion. The emergent revulsions can be credited to an overzealous military that thought they were more messianic to save a fledgling democratic system. The ironic dimension to this interest is the intent to manage a system that sues for persistent decentralization of power from an institution whose penchant for unity of command was impeccable. Gen. Aguiyi Ironsi, the Head of the military government that took power in the January coup worked in the direction of abolishing federalism for a unitary. Stiff opposition followed his choice and by July of the same year, General Gowon had succeeded him through another coup. This ensuing contraption had a swell time with the state in authoring a project of center-centric federation that usurped power from the regions in massive terms. The era of military managed federalism has since left the state with stupendous problems in economic and political miscalculations³⁶. It is the case that the ailment that they claimed to have set eyes to cure eventually afflicted them and producing worst results in both Generals Babangida and Abacha.

Yet, a much more directly impacting measure taken by the military in affecting federalism in Nigeria is the issue of state creation. Stemming from attempts to appreciate the imbalance in the federal configuration, and a bid to proffer a meaningful solution that can allay fears of domination by one segment over others, the military embarked, at respective moments, on the project of state creation. Indeed, these measures were intended to answer to differing circumstances and events emerging in that persistently heated polity. Beginning with General Yakubu Gowon in 1967, a twelve state structure was created basically not just in response to the problematic of domination, but specifically to preempt and break the seceding Eastern region that had declared itself the Republic of Biafra, and at war with Nigeria. The bulk of that Eastern state is made up of Ethnic Igbo stocks and the adjoining communities like the Efik, Ibibio and Ijaw. Further balkanization of the Nigerian federation followed in 1975 with the

coming to Power of Gen. Muritala Mohammed who configured it to a nineteen states structure.

For all of these architectonic efforts, Nigeria is now a federation of Thirty-six states and a capital city, Abuja that deputizes as a Mayoralty. Even with this enormous number, the agitation for further state creation has neither subsided nor are the present state structures showing signs of good understanding of the logic and embedded meanings of that choice of political relation. For the most part, the dominant elite order of the states appear to mask the reality and benefits of a federal arrangement for the mass majority who may not be too thrilled beyond the fact that they now have their own state. Thus it is often forgotten that a concomitant of federalism is in development of the capacities of those contained therein, and the effective and efficient harnessing of their resources. But, even this concern owes so much to the driving element in the extant federal arrangement for it to achieve set goals. In this wise the generic source of the disavowal of Nigerian federalism and its greatest bane is in its predication on consumptive/distributive federalism rather than a productive federalism³⁷.

Hence, in a state where the value of sharing the national cake is the norm, it remains ironic that the baking of that cake is considered an aberration. Yet granting that there is ever something to bake/share (as the oil windfalls readily suggests), what is expected of each state is no less than equity in resource re-allocation and a constant focus on concrete transformative development. It is on this last score that federalism, with diverse result for its constituents, continues to heighten the perturbations of Nigerians. It is worth adding that it is not the ordinary Nigerian citizen that champions development in the respective states in the federation; rather, it is the leading elites of the respective segments that carry the responsibility of unleashing credible development, it is concern like this that bring us to the question of leadership in the Nigerian federation and the relative contributions each leader has made with the available resources. And given the fact that the center has always kept faith on the matter of federal accretions to state, who, then, holds back the key to effective and efficient development of the respective constituents? More pertinently, we may well be asking the following questions: 1). What constitutes the responsibility of Igbo leadership in the context of Nigeria's federal experience? 2). How have they applied themselves to the issues of concrete development of Igbo nationhood? 3). What may well pass for empirical evidence for justifying the claims they make? It is questions like the above that can enable us have a more nuanced and realistic view of the lethargy of leadership that has gripped Igbo leadership in Nigeria.

IGBO LEADERSHIP QUESTION IN THE CONTEXT OF NIGERIAN FEDERALISM

It is often difficult to question what is right and proper. This is basically because the attraction of interrogation emerges as a result of the prevalence of frills of reprehensible social conducts. Therefore, right and proper conducts hardly cause us provocations. What does, then, is the leaning and usual resort to wrongful acts or performances within social context. And, a lot of people are caught up with this difficult experience at the individual level which may not worry us very deeply. Yet, in more general terms, the benefit of interrogation is in scrutiny which is apt to reveal the truth, or, perhaps help us consolidate the culture of lying, always very ready to engulf us and render us as wholesome moral sores. Indeed, scrutiny has tended to assume a dual dimension - as self-examination, in which case, we place ourselves as the accused and try to prove our innocence from the self-interrogation of our concrete behaviors, actions and conducts at the private, if individuated level; on the other hand, we can indulge in public scrutiny, one in which we focus on public performances of others which have implications for the collective. Whichever of these we resort to allows us a chance to genuinely resume a re-connection to an imagined moral birth, to clean up the poor dimensions of our dirty lives, accept our errors and refrain from committing any further blunder.

This is particularly very important in our present epoch characterized by massive failure of leadership in Africa writ large. But we elect to take it from the primordial in situating our immediate clime, the Igbo nation, and the problematic of slide of her leadership which she continues to register in enormous terms. Igbo leadership would imply the existence of elites that are profoundly involved in the management of its public affairs, and that the elites of that community of people clearly understand that they are no more than valued custodians involved in public performance in the service of power and authority as to seriously place them before the people's court.

Unhappily, however, it would seem that these leaders hardly do realize that their position places them as prime custodians of the norms and values of worthy and rewarding social existence and as models for emulation for the younger and succeeding generations. Hence, to the extent that they become self-serving, the people now countless except when their votes are needed to secure their interests. And, these votes, it must be said, make appearances at two important levels of leadership engagements. At the rational-legal level, it is the political elites or Igbo politicians - Governors, Senators, Representative members, House of Assembly members, Party Chieftains, Ward Leaders etc - who, through the party structures, contest for power and privileges; the other is the traditional elites, the

chiefly estates, who are held as core cultural leaders whose constitution presents a persistent case for widespread social irritations – all Royalties – Eze, Obi, Igwe, *Ndi-Nze n'Ozo* title holders, heads of Otu-ebiri and Umuada, all Opara/Okpara who are held as divinely instituted leaders of respective Igbo families.

Thus, in the face of a dangerous tilt towards the collapse of a people's value system, then, we must be justified not only to feel worried, but also to query those custodians for their prevarications with power and authority that cause us great pains and irritations. Such is the problematic of leadership in contemporary Nigeria that there is a near collective agreement of a phenomenon of collapse in place. But, Nigeria is a federal state, and federalism yields yet a notion of confounding formulation the implication of which is not always very clear to non-initiates in political science, history and sociology, to mention those most preoccupied with its persistent interrogation. While the concept admits of interpretation from any informed mind, it depends, however, the logical standpoint adduced to support ones argument. Indeed, we do not all need to belong to the above mentioned disciplines to understand and appraise the notion of federalism, and to understand the implications it holds for us in difficult times like the present epoch of extreme contention and confusion that defines the Nigerian State.

For sure, leadership failure has become a dominant feature in Africa. The Nigerian federation is, therefore, an integral part of that order. Logically, she is implicated in the raging problematic of leadership crisis. Being then a federation, it follows that whatever the prevarications of the leadership in that order, all is done in the context of an underpinning structural foundation. This structural foundation is federalism, a scheme of political arrangement contrived for the management of polities characterized by degrees of diversity. Recall that we had earlier mentioned Nigeria's composition of, at least, 250 respective ethnic groups, each with its own language, culture, customs and traditions. The real gist of a federal arrangement is that it creates an opportunity for groups of diverse people to pull together their different endowments, and evolve a rich and rewarding resource base upon which all can draw life. It does so by delineating structures of governance engagements that allows for levels of exercise of power and authority in which problems can be attended to from the inputs of all, and another level where only those defined by a specific cultural peculiarity can solely decide their own fate.

Beyond the usual constitutional delineation of jurisdiction and levels of power – centre, state and local government, the preoccupation of federalism with the protection of the peculiarities of the federating units is an uncompromising fact We must understand these units as a people, say Igbo, Yoruba, Hausa-Fulani, to mention these few, and as a much signifi-

cant factor aimed at assuring the longevity of groups as distinctive characteristics. It has become crystal clear that federalism in the Nigerian context aim at carving up the state in ethnic or cultural terms rather than any other basis. Hence the need to prioritize cultural peculiarities at the apex of all consideration allowing for a people to say what is best for them and be seen to ensure that those anticipations happen to their people from the effective and efficient utilization of available resources. Essentially, federalism allows for a people to decide for themselves their interests in relation to a number of things such as development. The implication, then, is that, in the circumstance where a particular state is allocated resources, the decision as to how to use it, or, in what areas it would prioritize higher, is dependent on the management of the state by its leadership. Hence, if for example, the accretion to, say Imo State, from the federation revenue account is N100, it is the leadership of Imo state that can be blamed for wasting or mismanaging that financial resource; not the federal government which has respected its obligation in making such fund(s) available. Note also that states are allowed more than a modicum of economic space to enter into business to make for internally generated revenue (IGR) which it needs not owe to the center. Therefore, the concrete reality of the development of any given state in a federation is largely dependent on what such state does with its available leadership. This is not an issue for the underclass but for the leadership

Thus far, three questions foreground our study: firstly, given the assured fact of a recognition of cultural peculiarity in Nigeria's federalism, is there a way that the centre appears to interfere unduly with this crucial norm of federal existence, or is it the case that we are our own problems; secondly, can it be proven that the center, in very serious ways affect our fortunes by the withholding of resource accretions in terms of fiscal or material resources as to cause development lethargy, or is it the case that we are once more our own problem; lastly, even if there are such possible impediments at the center, can an inward looking approach provide us a positive leverage to more than merely cope with the problematic of a profoundly traumatized political economy?

To place this matter in its more correct perspective, *Igboland* marks a specific geographic space (*Ala Igbo*), a definite population called (*Ndi Igbo*) and boundary (*Oke-ala Igbo nile*). What is not associated with it is a sovereign status, and for which the reference, Igbo nation, therefore, gains greater relevance. We do not refer to *Igboland* as a state; rather, as a nation, for the properties so identified. Such properties too, she shares with communities such as the Yoruba nation or Hausa-Fulani nation, to clearly mark it out as profoundly a cultural cum political space whose unique peculiarities can be felt in the near homogenous ordering of language, customs and tradition, a near homogeneity in religion and belief system, and

similar political culture. These features constitute important binding and bonding factors for which the tinkering of brotherhood finds a fair provocation to take a place at the fore of their relations. It is for reason of such concern that the cliché, *onye aghala nwanne ya*, that is, be your brother's keeper, gain in importance in the whole question of their private and public affairs.

As wide as this glorious geographic space that is the Igbo nation in Nigeria, it is the case that they are often converged on a common cosmological order, *Ala*, which is seen as the footstool of *Chi* or *Chukwu*, the Divine Almighty,³⁸ and for which another cliché, *ala nwe mmadu nile.*, an attempt to underscore a common stance of belongingness or oneness. It pleads a crucial reminder to their common or collective fate, and a reason to persistently sue for the humane, fair and just dispositions in most of their dealings. The stretch of the Igboland, therefore, would include those state delineated as Enugu, Anambra, Imo, Ebonyi, and Abia states in a federation of thirty-six states.

Let us note also that what particularly marks one out as Igbo is largely embedded more in cultural characteristics than in artificial geographic delineation. Thus we find Igboland, by extension among the Asaba, Ogwashi-ukwu, and Kwale in Delta state and in Akwette, Etchee, Omanelu, Ikwere in Rivers State. A close observation of the cultures and languages of these outskirts communities is apt to reveal volumes in similarities in language and cultural practices akin to the core Igbo areas to make for a relatively culturally homogenous group of people. Trends of culture reflected in food types, dance and songs, masquerades and dress codes are but some of the common features of that collective identity. Above all, the traditional political institutions of these communities equally reveal marked similarities akin to the core Igbo communities. It suffices to say that, irrespective of where one is situate, as far as s/he, by ancestry, is linked to the extant codes of Igbo culture in customs, traditions, language and even religious practices, the common identity of Igbo nationhood prevails and cannot be wished away.

For all Igbo people, therefore, it is in the gainful hope of begetting the humane, just and fair dealings that leadership must aspire. Thus, wherever leadership questions have been raised as a matter of social interrogation, it has largely been in response to some failings on these virtuous precepts that otherwise ought not to be the case. That, therefore, is to suggest that any serious interrogation may well be exploring the details of a thriving lethargy, of indolence or, of outright commitment on the part of the leader to outdo the people. The crucial social fact of leadership is that it is hardly considered in isolation of a certain following that becomes, as it were, the proper measure of the efforts of leadership. Everywhere in the world, the standards of leadership are well known to be linked to a proper

moral resolve, sensitivity to the problems of the people and the anticipation of some enhancements in the lives of the people from the correct application of leadership to the rules of engagement. Where it fails to identify with virtuous ideals, it makes for the labeling of leadership as negative, unproductive and a dismissible drudgery. Thus, two things confront us in any serious evaluation of leadership, that is, that a particular leadership is positively or negatively disposed.

Nowhere in Nigeria is the expectation of people about their leadership focused on its failure. Therefore, the delivery of public goods in fair, just, and above all, honest terms, defines the key expectations of followers. It is such thing that brings about the enhancement of that important social capital, trust, which in turn, provides as the springboard of support for leadership to succeed. The story of leadership in Igbo land, however, has been very pathetic to the point that one wonders if such exertions were ever discharged in due consideration to positive values. The deplorable nature of leadership in Igbo land, therefore, has so much heightened in more recent times arising from growing insensitivity of leaders to the problems of the people and the penchant for self-serving interests that preoccupy them. One of the last to accept British colonialism, several excruciating experiences in post-colonial Nigeria have provided veritable grounds to suggest their understanding of the urgent need to self-organize and resist the misdemeanor of current leaderships therein.

Specifically, what we need to know about Igbo leadership in the context of Nigerian federalism is hardly ever discussed. A number of occasions have brought Igbo people in conflict with the federal government of Nigeria. Mainly these occasions are about marked insensitivity of the security apparatus of the federal government to protect Igbo elements who found themselves in the midst of conflicts arising from cultural dissonance. Essentially, the bulk of these concerns are often misconstrued to be directed to the Igbo generally. The reason is that, in all the matters of Ethno-religious conflicts in the Northern part of the country, the main focus is on Christians versus Muslims. It is right conjecture to see the smaller picture of a predominantly Igbo people living in the Northern parts of the country, and to see them as the immediate focus of attack. As much as this is not a fair experience in co-existence, it is the case, however, that any known non-Muslim, or even Muslims with some sympathetic disposition to Christians, equally become susceptible to attack. It is a recurrent wave that can be address through the institutionalization of inter-religious dialogue commission and the placing of premium on the values of accommodation and co-existence emphasized through the leaders of these religions. This has never made headline among Igbo leadership who wait for the next mayhem to score cheap political points over the media.

We no longer need media tigers, but more pragmatic leaders who will persist upon the federal government on the need for such institutional checks that can effectively monitor the odd ebbs and flows of bigotry and fanaticism to control for peaceful coexistence. There is no doubt that Nigeria is a multi-religious society, a feature that adds up to the idea of cultural peculiarity which federalism seeks both to contain and promote. There is need on the part of populations therein to understand the implications of a plethora of belief systems and, more so, to appreciate that amity and friendship is promoted in showing respect for other people's cultures and value system. In that wise, people can be seen less in the light of their confrontational attitudes and more in their respectful dispositions to other people's ways of doing things. All of this would imply that the matter of belief is a core cultural phenomenon, and the consequences of having a plethora of belief system is the possible confrontations arising from one denigrating the other. It would be fair to promote behaviors that make it possible for us to understand that in a federal Nigeria with plethora of religious forms – Christians, Muslims, pagans, animists, atheists and agnostics – the principle of non-domination and non-inferiorization should always prevail. Even this cannot be achieved with a leadership that is more preoccupied with enlarging the boundaries of personal pockets than being sensitive to the plight of its diasporic population in troubled arenas. Essentially, that has been the lot of Igbo leadership in recent times.

Yet, the bigger picture is different; it points up to the reactions of leadership in assessing and providing solution to the problem of that troubled population caught up in the midst of conflict. Aside the leadership, the marked behavior of some privileged Igbo sons and daughters who find such conflicts a veritable opportunity to heighten the burden of insecurity is even worse off. Note that anytime there is the problem of ethno-religious conflicts in the North, Igbo transporters have had cause to turn emergency situations to advantage thereby putting the pursuit of money or profit over and above the life of their people. To them, it hardly matters who gets caught, what matters is the profit. If this is coming from Igbo themselves, what then is expected from the non-Igbo in such a context. Yet these are leading figures in respective Igbo areas, some of them titled men, if not all. For them, money has not only equaled prominence, but also determines who is accorded a title in Igboland, and that is what counts. The same men are equally the ones that make the honors list for the governments of the Igbo areas even with the knowledge of their activities by the leadership.

Indeed, the lot of Igbo leadership in the many conflict situations has not been very commendable. The timing of response and rescue, and their inability to prevail over their counterpart governments to protect their citizens is a major minus for leadership. Where they decide for a rescue, it

is more attended by press hype than the emergency requires. The lethargy in responding to the recurrent mayhem bred by these conflicts puts a big question mark on their claims to responsibility to lead. Meanwhile, the leadership does nothing to draw the attention of these diasporic communities of Igbos to the need for a relocation and resettlement. Such programs are never front burner issues to compete with official thievery and the awarding of contracts that expand their pockets.

Federalism's lot with Igbo leadership is therefore in the responsibility of leadership to persistently sue for the protection of the cultural peculiarities of their people. The leadership also owes it to the people to institute projects of good governance; certainly, not by way of withholding disclosures which are not made about the regular accretions from the federal revenue allocations they receive for development. Igbo leadership may not get it right in the persistent neglect of what constitutes the priority problems of the people. Presently, it would seem that good leadership is in flight, and can only be felt through the electronic media where our leaders construct skyscrapers, bridges and wonderful buildup of infrastructural facilities. The days of the Nnamdi Azikiwe Akanu Ibiam, Michael Okpara, Denis Osadebe, the mercurial Sam Onunaka Mbakwe, Chief Jim Nwobodo, Roy Umenyi, C. C. Onoh, have become more than euphoric to force the mention of these scions of civic leadership in Igbo land.

Meritocracy has seen them appear on the golden pages of Igbo leadership history. Ironically, they did not ask, or, pray that these golden pages be closed. Unhappily, however, more recent leadership now earn names not for monumental evidences of their stewardship, but for the embedding of the culture of sycophancy, official thievery, growing insensitivity, pretence and undue ostentatious ways of living with a deeply traumatized and impoverished populations. They now work assiduously to see that the people's ears are filled with lofty achievements that are neither directly impacting on their upliftment, nor able to raise their hopes of a better tomorrow. In Imo state, for instance, one needs to put former Governor, Ikedi Ohakim, as a concrete study on government by radio; or, that of Achike Udenwa, the Governor before Ohakim, a worthy and viable study in politics of assassination. Opening to the ideals of loss of civic vision and the promotion of political banditry, Ohakim may well be remembered for the excesses of his security aides' constant abuse of power in dealing deadly blows and flogging a Priest and a journalist in a democratic system. We may thank Achike Udenwa, in establishing the culture of impunity which has taken strong root and shape in recent times. As for the present regime, there is still ample time to avoid the rapid slide into political abyss. One needs not be beclouded by populist inertia; it is a transient feature that can disappear in very disappointing ways. Thus, government is best in a democracy when it operates on the basis of rules of

engagement. In that case, it must live by openness and accountability to underscore the relevance of annual budgets even if you would offer them heaven on earth.

IMPONDERABLES OF IGBO LEADERSHIP

It is correct to observe that Igboland is one of the most endowed, if wholesome, among human communities. Its claim to wholesomeness can be gleaned from several standpoints. Prior to colonial economy, pre-colonial economy of Igboland had resolved the question of social exchange of goods and services and even matters of marriage, in developing a political economy of both money and matter. Recall the *Ojonma* and *Eze-ego* (cowries) used in trading and in paying for dowry in marriage matters, to depict trends of development of social exchange schemes in her ancient civilization. Recall also of the significant culture of pottery that produced the earthen wares for cooking and serving meals, and for preservation Water Pots that can even be buried deep into the earth to ensure for the availability of cold water in the pre-colonial epoch, then one will be coming to grips with the reality of a people who were not glued to any mono-economic culture. The art of carving, of blacksmiths and Iron works, for which the discipline of Anthropology accords respect to the Nok culture, allows us to focus on a vast scenario of an enterprising people emerging in the identity of that nation

A largely agrarian people, they have had cause to explore options in merchandising, an enterprise helped by their penchant for interaction and migration. Long in history are the narratives of Arochukwu in the then profitable slave trade that helped in the implantation of diasporas of Igbo extraction in several of those places that their health and strength allowed them to reach.³⁹ The myth of Igbo merchandising can be further gleaned from the exploits of *Omenuko* story, an erstwhile reader in our primary and secondary schools, depicting the dignity in labor and efforts to achieve greatness. Or, do we need to over emphasize the lessons of two contrasting characters in *Igbo Life*, *Okonkwo* and his father, *Unoka*, with which the late doyen of African literature, Chinua Achebe, conveyed the cultural preference of the people, as well as their penchant to aspire to greatness and remain resolute in interrogating what is unknown and perhaps destabilizing.

That momentum for interrogation has not died down among the Igbo; rather, it has assumed greater impetus in the light of emergent new shortcomings confronting Igbo land in current terms. This anomalous trend has to do with a leadership that has lost touch with the cultures, customs and traditions of the people to resort to the promotion of laziness, indolence and theft. The pungent effusions of Igbo leadership so far regis-

ter a range of stomach churning experiences in the service of power. Thus with this stance, it is difficult to see these set of personalities as worthy of trust and capable of securing the interest of the people in a competitive federal order. From all indications, it would seem the preference of current Igbo leadership (traditional/modern) not to be interrogated by any one, but to be eulogized even for shortchanging the people in various ways.

Leadership influence is often better considered from what it can offer a people in pragmatic terms. As earlier averred, a dual perspective exists for viewing the leadership issue not only in Nigeria, but also in Africa writ large. To be sure, the impact of colonialism left the continent with a solid implantation of leadership type predicated on alien value system that was largely European. The logic of that order imposes a new character in the management of public affairs based on market ideals or capitalist values. By implication, it offers a bureaucratic system that emphasizes impersonal disposition of officials in the discharge of responsibilities, and represents a marked contrast to the logic of affective social relationship that informs the preexisting traditional African systems. The tensions and conflicts produced by the practices of both patterns side-by-side are with us today. Ekeh, made an elaborate attempt to situate the ideals and preoccupations of these logics and the more direct implications it holds for the confusion of political management of the African post-colonies. Today, in the retention rather than extirpation of the alien system, most African countries are hardly insulated from the pressures, tensions and conflicts arising from the operations of a dual pattern in the perceptions of publicness and the demands it places on officials in its management.⁴⁰

Retaining the colonial logic, which came to assume more prominence than the traditional, implies the acceptance of a model of rational-legal governance. On the other hand, the tenacity of the traditional form can be felt in the continued use of the traditional institutions in the operations of government. But the powers of the latter appear to have been seriously vitiated in its subordination to the former. In this wise, each of these segments produced its unique frame of leaders. The rational-legal order, which is predicated on the constitution, accommodates the politicians who seek power through the political party structures. The traditional order is seen in the light of customs and traditions, but its retention has been to the extent that it is used as an instrument for mobilizing political support for the politicians. Much of its inherent values from inception have undergone characteristic changes transforming them from the near stance of absolutism into acceding to the emergence of a 'dictating democratic order'. It is in this context of conflicts and tensions that most leadership in the African post-colonies operate and Nigeria is no exception in

going the extra mile of providing for House of chiefs in its early constitutional order of the first republic.

Today, it is no exaggeration that the institution of the chiefly estates, the traditional leadership level, cannot be trusted. The recurrent alliance it builds with a 'guiding' modern political class of politicians can easily be felt everywhere. They have become no more than strands of appeal through which government reaches the localities to plead for calm and understanding even in the face of drastic failings of the politicians. Coming to grips with the reality of its relevance to political calculation, they defer for largesse from politicians and sell out their people to the state. In their shifting allegiances, not unconnected with the emoluments and recognition they receive from the state, and the hierarchical ranking it accords them (1st, 2nd, 3rd...class), makes this institution wont to play close to politicians who claim to solve people's problems. It has, for the most part, become a structure of deceit and a palpable onlooker in the debilitating experience that is post-colonial governance in Igbo land.

Thus, the narrative of traditional leadership institutions in Igbo land appeal more in the sustenance of it as surrogates to the higher order politicians who sack them at their whims and caprices, replace or re-instate the apologetic, offer or deny them staff of office and payroll them as staff of the state. The State also dictates what they do and the limits they can go. The most palpable dimension of it is that the creation of traditional rulership institution is not necessarily done in such a way that it reflects the rules of engagement. For instance, it marked a common practice under Governor Ikedi Ohakim in Imo state, the indiscriminate creation of autonomous communities for purposes of scoring political points on possible re-election ahead of time. The conflicts generated in the process have not yet abated under the incumbent governor Rochas Okorocha that succeeded him. The examples can be multiplied across the length and breadth of the Igbo areas. Indeed, at every turn, it produced a particular new label of identity for all those who contested the 'royal' seats in 'Eze-elect'. Worse still, was the churning out of so many depraved minds and questionable characters and many that were by no means rooted in the knowledge of the core customs and traditions. Otherwise, how would some *Eze* celebrating his new yam festival be purchasing yam from the market to do so? Indeed, for the traditional leadership institution in Nigeria, we have already entered the era of its grand abuse, disillusionment and possible dismissal.

The better known institutions of the Nri royalty, Oguta, Onitsha, and Arochukwu, pales at the collective denigration of traditional leadership institution that have become infiltrated by imposters, pretenders and persons of no credible identity. To be sure, just as the *Nze* and *Ozo* title holders are traditionally not expected to sleep outside of their domains, it is the

case that Night Clubs in Owerri, the capital of Imo state, play host in receiving plenty of them as disc jockeys and jack pot pundits. Similarly, there are instances in which the traditional leadership institutions have ceased to be a matter of the choice of the people, but the imposition of the powerful. Perhaps, one only needs a glance at Laagwa in Aboh-Mbaise in Imo State to understand the foisting of tyranny and how far it goes to render communities restive. Where traditional leadership is now a matter of must rule, who else is safe in the exercise of a burgeoning traditional tyranny. This, and many more like it, informs the traditional leadership in many Igbo areas to suggest the bleak expectations of progressive co-existence among the people.

If the current derision that has engulfed the traditional leadership in Igbo land offers a window on cultural dissonance and loss of control over the collective allegiance of the people, the narratives of the exploits of their superior rational-legal homologues suggest no reprieve from the drudgery of negative leadership. In their persistent prevarications with power, they have unleashed social irritations as the new leadership culture to which the people must submit. Basically, what has been fundamental to the interest of leadership of both the traditional and political classes is captured in the vast disillusionment that pervades their enclaves that anxiously awaits the promise of good life to no avail. Disappointment, therefore trail the exploits of these new men of power who forget so easily that there have been others who offered services to which the Igbo people are eternally grateful. The quality of governance offered to the people certainly leaves much to be desired in the scratching of the development matters and misappropriation of public resources.

From Abia to Anambra, from Enugu to Imo and Ebonyi, and to the outskirts communities in Igbo Delta and Rivers States, the story of woes, of a shortchanged citizenry, is the dominant feature. A critical point of this inchoate disposition to the articulations of power for service to humanity may well owe to the gross negligence over the historical past of the Igbo nation. This concern, for the active leaders in power, is not about being able to recount the histories of our sufferings in Biafra; it is more accurately in lifting our heads above the ordinary in contemporary Nigeria, a leading reason for handing them the mandate to rule in these areas. These men of widely presumed competence appear to ascend to indecency in letting personal bickering becloud concerns for the good life for all. It is becoming increasingly difficult to underscore this anticipated competence in the persistent refusal of current Igbo leadership to tow the path of honor and rectitude in the attempt to deliver the public good. What it exhibits presently proves far less than the expectations of the Igbo nation. It may well be the matter of individual leader's problem. For, all other Igbo leader had emanated from that same cultural model. To the present corps of

leadership, how do they wish to be remembered has never been an issue, thus there is no real focus on any lasting legacy. But, were they ever left any historical anecdotes to which they can refer and emulate?

Certainly, there are quite outstanding phenomenal figures to which we can eke out historical legacies to shape and direct present leadership. Beginning with Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, we have the profile of an eminent nationalist, foremost freedom fighter and Pan-Africanist personality, and the first President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, personalities like Chief Nwafor Orizu and Dr. Kingsley Ozuomba Mbadiwe were at the fore of the struggles and gave Igbos a name that unleashed a measure of fear on the part of other competing ethnics. Thereafter, in the wake of the January 1966 coup, Major Gen. Aguiyi Ironsi, became the first head of state. His stay in power was, however, short-lived with the July 1966 counter coup that saw to his end. Recall also that the sensitivity to political radicalism which informed the January coup owe so much to young officers of Igbo extraction with Major Chkwuma Kaduna Nzeogwu at the fore of the project.

If ever the Igbo had cause to sprawl from the rear and accept tokenism, the flicker of prosperity that can be felt today could not have existed. At the end of the civil war, the Nigerian policy was to exchange whatever the amount of British currency with a meager 20 Pounds/Naira.⁴¹ Yet this deplorable post war political economy was turned gold under the guiding eyes of the indefatigable Ajei Ukpabi Asika, the first Administrator of East Central State, the parent state from where all others have emerged. Recall also that the era of military government threw up such names like Admirals Ndubuisi Kanu and Alison Madueke to mention these few who made it to the Igbo golden pages of history, the emergence of the second republic brings us to eternal reverence to such war lords in the civic arena like Chief Sam Onunaka Mbakwe, the notoriously tagged crying governor who would stop at nothing to offer his people a reprieve from their sufferings, the amiable Chief Jim Nwobodo in whose charge the fame of the Igbos in national sports rose tremendously with the rising profile of Enugu Rangers International, Honorable Gideon Atulomah, whose meticulous directing of legislative affairs in Imo state offered us insights into the meaning of leading by good laws, not the stuff of legislatures that are adept at promoting abortion in an area that experienced drastic decimation of her population in a civil war; not the production of laws legalizing Abortion and the promotion of self-appropriation by members. Who knows, maybe when next their poor instincts prevail over reason, they may be asking for the legalization of homosexuality. Are we to mention veritable examples in loyalty expressed by Chief Uzoigwe and Dr. Roy Umenyi, deputy governors to Chiefs Sam Mbakwe and Jim Nwobodo. Even back in to the reinvention of the military in power, the name Ebitu

Ukiwe stood for honor and integrity; not pettiness and the drudgery that is the penchant for corruption. There is no doubt that many past leaders can still fit here to swell the margins of Igbos of integrity and honor to keep us very worried about the present paucity of positive leadership.

How may we categorize the character of Igbo leadership in current times? Definitely, it represents a far cry from yesteryears that threw up the said leaders of integrity and honor. The fact that the present corps of Igbo leadership has succeeded in spawning social irritations and mass disillusionment among the citizenry, confirms the failure of leadership in Igbo land. Rudderless, may well be a valid descriptive epithet that captures the welter of cross purposes that underscore the programs and policies of respective Igbo governments in a federal Nigeria, one in which there is no concerted effort to think together for the collective benefit of the area.

The demand for pragmatic leadership goes beyond cosmetics, populist appeals and the pursuit of vendetta, which presently imprison the consciences of the leading actors of the governments in the Igbo area. Party affiliation notwithstanding, there is more to concrete performances in the service of power that yields enormous result in terms of the expectations of the next election. Essentially, it appears that the next election takes priority in the programs and compels the stashing of funds away that impedes development efforts. From the point of inauguration to date, the thinking that they occupy a personal estate, not a public trust, has taken the governors of Igbo areas in their strides. The result is the massive equipment of legionaries of hangers on, barrage of settlement population that would be pleased with bags of rice to risk the life of any interrogator of the breaches of order by state executives. Perhaps we do not need over-emphasis of the effect of accumulation of thugs, settled and unsettled, who are persistently unleashed on the ordinary Igbo voter who should be a beneficiary of good governance. This good governance is what they get in the hyper insecurity that engulfs the state. It constitutes a valid paycheck in the increase of robbery and kidnappings that no longer let the people sleep with both eyes closed. One can only close one eye to note when to take off from the violence and brigand that now dominates the landscape.

There is perhaps no governor in the Igbo area that is glued on thinking school to land project to begin a project in food security in the face of escalating prices of things and the depletion of family capital. Non has deemed it necessary to seek avenues to parley with the markets/business to negotiate for price reduction of initiate programs of price control even when many have been driven off to the sidelines to permanently embrace poverty. Touching the consciousness of the youthful population in the area of agriculture may well be an insightful drive that may yield positive dividend against the coming days of locust. Certainly, such perturbation

is beyond their imagination in the event of the excess funds from federal crude oil for their unbridled misappropriation. It is not the federal government that should begin the sensitization program of food insecurity; the states are the actual core for such thinking aimed at keeping a satisfied and healthy population. It is hardly imagined the devastating effects suffered by many homes that find it difficult to feed once a day let alone three times on a decent meal. Yet, the radio and the television are awash with lofty news of wonders about their unplaced performances. Meanwhile, the people so shortchanged are as bereft of their own criminalization by these leaders as they follow crowd effect to make up pictures of supporters. They are not really supporters; they are samplings of the trauma of leadership who have become transfixed in the politics of the stomach, waiting for crumbs while it lasts and constituting a deluge of the cheated, traumatized and persistently harassed and embarrassed. That is what the current leadership has offered to the Igbo at home.

Leadership responsibilities of leaders in the Igbo area would include a focus on Infra-structural development as crucial matters. This has not received the appropriate kind of attention that can lift the states from their present level of decadence to something meaningful. For sure, there have been some efforts in this regard, but it is not the federal government that instructs the state on the quality of these infrastructural features. The responsibility for ensuring durability is squarely with the states. Hence, the whole question of who is constructing what? The recent take suggest a situation where carpenters and traders have suddenly become civil engineers involved in road construction. The Imo state example is a case in point where individuals who taught they have links to government went crazy with turning the state capital into the most gated capital in the world. The ensuing disappointment following the claims of loss of funds by the state has left the streets in the city with deplorable looks. With aesthetics gone with the wind, the roads are not now littered with abandoned caterpillars of contractors that have received sufficient funds to build their uncouth roads, nor are they basking for any immediate relief of serving the purpose of access. With so many square pegs in round holes, ours is the poor fate we visited on ourselves in the abuse of our federal revenue accretions through leadership misappropriation.

Do we need to talk about the failure of social services, the squalor that the states and its environs have become, or the taxing of the unemployed in the purchase of employment forms as part of internally generated revenue, in Imo State? Again, this disingenuous contrivance of former Governor Ikedi Ohakim has gained new impetus with Governor Rochas Okorocha. What perhaps is the morality of taxing an unemployed youth, or even further suffering their sufficiently suffered consciences to file out for job placement only to go home more disgruntled. The unemployed

has become, for government, not a subject of attention to tackle; instead, it adds to the advertorials of government as 'humanely disposed' to the plight of these young citizens. Truth may be suffocated for a while, but, like smoke, it will rise to the surface at the appointed time to vindicate the just. The point is, the governance of Igbo land is held down more by the ridiculous dispositions of its leaders than the federal government. The issues are almost endless and reflect in varied dimensions of governance in these areas.

The most disheartening is the exiting of co-Igbos from the services of particular states. For this, The Abia State governor, T.A. Orji, assumes prominence after his predecessor who has become the object of his constant scorn. Recall that the state sued for the honorary doctorate degree awarded to its former boss, Dr. Orji Uzor Kalu, be rescinded and retrieved without convincing reasons to portray the extent of personal animosity between these principal leaders of Abia state. Meanwhile, onye *aghala nwanne ya*, is in flight for *onye n' nkeya* to situate comfortably as a new way of life. Indeed, the recollections can go on and on to make for a textbook on the misdemeanor of leadership among Igbo leaders that offer negative leadership to keep the people away from the reality of benefiting from the federal complex.

CONCLUSION

The study has attempted an examination of the problematic of Igbo leadership in the context of Nigerian Federalism. It argued that the present relation, rather than constitute an impediment to the growth and development of the Igbo areas, has much to offer in the opportunity for autonomous development of units. As such, a closer search for the disillusionment and dissatisfaction that has caught up with the Igbo's in contemporary times can be linked to internal management of their resources mainly by her own. It is the lot of federalism to protect the cultural peculiarities of its constituent units and to encourage these units towards close cooperation. In providing resources to units, it is expected that the leadership in respective units utilize same to good effect. Unhappily, however, there has been a dominant case of leadership prevarications with the goals of the good life and resultant citizen neglect.

The blame, we venture to aver, is squarely located in Igbo leadership that has not only lost touch with history, but has equally a low penchant for selfless service, Evidence abound through the historical records of Igbo leaders that sued for honor and integrity and employed their skills to the collective benefit of the people. The same cannot, with strong assurance, be said of her present corps of leaders deeply engrossed in crowd pleasing, bickering, building of personality cults and pronouncedly self-

serving. Thus, to this lot of leaders, the resources/revenue accretions from the federal purse can only serve the interest of running their personal estate. The co-citizen becomes their subjects and the target of violence of underdevelopment. Lastly, we sue for an inward looking approach, one that compels leaders to think about efforts to merit the golden pages of history. Only an Igbo leadership centered on selfless service can be good enough. It is therefore not too late to reconnect to the values of a greater Igbo development by asserting their commitment to positive leadership to accord the people a worthy mention in Nigeria's enduring federalism.

NOTES

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