

## Losing the Self While Trying to Save it: An Exposition of the ‘Agentic’ Disposition of Political Leadership in Nigeria

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### Abstract

*The Nigerian political leadership had been unstable and underdeveloped since independence in 1960. This is evident in the history of coups and counter coups that were results of a seemingly failed leadership at the formative years of self-governance. Achebe (1983) boldly pointed out that leadership is the problem with Nigeria. In addition, many scholars blame this political instability and underdevelopment on corruption and misappropriation of public funds, thus, pointing to persistent cases of corruption at the top. Others opined that the political actors seem to have been psychologically withdrawn from the political system, and therefore felt less need to fight for the collective interest of all Nigerians. We contend that at the root of these leadership crises, instability and underdevelopment is a self that has given up its autonomy, thus, playing the role of “agent” to the system of corruption as implied in the agency theory of obedience and the groupthink model. These theories suggest that the beauties of constructive thinking and creative self are lost in course of “deindividuation” of political attitude and behaviour. The present study seeks to explore the psychological incapacitation of both political leadership and followership by exposing the decay of self from “autonomic” to “agentic” state. This, hopefully, will expose the areas of possible behaviour modification in National politics. We therefore conclude that a rebirth of functional Nigeria will involve recourse to the practice of politics as a matter of public concern, self-discipline and thoughtful input.*

**Keywords:** *agency, corruption, groupthink, leadership, self*

### Introduction

Leadership depicts a process of directing the affairs of people to achieve beneficial goals. In a democratic system, leadership may be defined as a body of people who lead and direct the activities of others towards a shared goal. Chemers (2002) opines that leadership is a process of social influence of an individual on others to accomplish an objective and directs the organisation in ways that make it more cohesive and coherent. A leader therefore is expected to demonstrate qualities, which embrace but

are not limited to good character, vision, tact, prudence, and ability to lead by example. Ogbeidi (2012) explains political leadership by referring political leaders to the ruling class and its responsibility for managing the affairs and resources of a political entity. They set and influence policy priorities and affect the territory through the diverse decision-making structures and institutions created for the orderly development of the territory. He further stated that political leadership could also be described as the human element that operates the machineries of government on behalf of an organised territory. This includes people who hold decision making positions in government, and people who seek those positions, whether by means of election, coup d'état, appointment, electoral fraud, conquest, right of inheritance or other means (Prinz, 1993). Broadly defined, political leadership goes beyond the ruling elites that directly manage the affairs of a territory, to embrace the totality of the political class that has the capacity to manipulate the machineries of government even from “behind the scene”.

Structurally, the Nigerian political leadership is anchored on a tripodal system of government-legislative, executive and judiciary. There is a bicameral legislature – the Senate and the Federal House of Representatives (lower house/chamber) both commonly referred to as the National Assembly under the leadership of the Senate President and the Speaker respectively. While the National Assembly is the legislative arm under the Senate President/and Speaker, the executive is under the President, the judiciary interprets the laws initiated by the executive and made by the legislative arm. This structure is replicated at the state and local government levels. The institutionality of these organs of government is designed to ensure a unidirectional focus on the growth and development of the country through the instrumentality of checks and balances and separation of powers. However, in spite of this ‘administrative security’, corruption and abuse of power still thrive in significant proportions.

Though there is no comprehensive definition as to what constitutes ‘corrupt behaviour’, the most prominent definitions share a common emphasis on the abuse of public power or position for personal advantage (Ogbeidi, 2012). A dictionary definition of the phenomenon refers to it as “an impairment of virtue and moral principles” (Lewis, 2006). According to the World Bank and Transparency International (TI), corruption is the abuse of public office for private gains, either for the benefit of the office holder or some third party. From this premise, Heidenheimer and Johnston (1993) define political

corruption as unethical behaviour which violates the norms of the system or the political order. Political corruption can be for private and group enrichment and for power preservation purposes. Often, both forms are connected with some of the larger, more serious political corruption scandals characterized by both processes. Political corruption usually encompasses embezzlement and cronyism by government officials and acts linking public and private actors such as bribery, extortion, influence peddling, and fraud, to mention a few. In this regard, corruption threatens good governance, sustainable development, democratic process, and fair business practices (Ogbeidi, 2012).

Eyo (2001), in reference to corruption as a result of greed for personal wealth and power, associated it to deep-seated disregard for the Nigerian project. Uzoka (2001) holds that corruption among the leaders and the led, reflects levels of alienation from the political system. Denters and Geurts (1993) defined alienation subjectively, in terms of the psychological state of an individual. According to them, alienation is defined by “feelings of political powerlessness and meaninglessness” (p.447). Uzoka (2001) defined alienation in terms of:

“..behavioural tendency or disposition, which induces withdrawal from  
and or antagonism towards an existing political order or system” (P. 93).

According to him these tendencies are products of learning. Political alienation as discussed in literatures (Seeman, 1959, Denters & Geurts, 1993) is by no means one-dimensional; however, this paper deals with on model of political alienation; powerlessness. Political powerlessness refers to the individual’s feeling that he or she is unable to influence government decisions (Seeman, 1959).

Powerlessness, according to Denters and Geurts (1993) refers to a sense of political inefficacy. However, it is necessary to recognize that the traditional concept of efficacy incorporates two analytically and empirically distinct basic attitudes. Lane (1959) stressed this point conceptually. He distinguished two components of efficacy. The first component, the individual’s sense of political competence, refers to the individual’s perceived credibility of his/her political leadership. The second component, the individuals’ sense of political responsiveness, refers to the individuals’ assessment of the openness of the political system to the citizens’ needs and demands. The relationship between

powerlessness and the propensity of a political actor to participate meaningfully seems one of the best documented in political science. As Wright (1981) posits,

“it is no exaggeration to say that the tendency for the alienated to participate less, at least in conventional channels of political behaviour, has been reported by virtually every investigator who has ever inquired into the matter” (p. 2).

There are also sound theoretical reasons to expect such an empirical relation. For some, politics is a realm beyond the control of ordinary citizens. On the one hand, these people feel that they are unable to influence the outcome of political decisions. On the other hand, the political system is deemed unresponsive to the demands of common people. One would be surprised if leaders with such a set of **attitudes** would participate as much in sincere and progressive politics as people with a higher sense of competence and system responsiveness.

The present study seeks to explore the psychological incapacitation of political leadership by exposing the decay of self from “autonomic” to “agentic” state. In discussing the woes of Nigeria, many studies (Ibekwe, 2015; Ogbeidi, 2012; Eyo, 2001; Gboyega, 1996) point to corruption, where corruption is seen as result of personal greed for wealth and power; others (Danfulani & Atowoju, 2012; Achabe, 1983) point to leadership, where leadership is considered as lack of focus and sincerity of purpose. Yet, others (Okafor, 2013; Uzoka, 2001) point to political alienation, where alienation is seen as withdrawal or antagonism to the political system. However, no study has examined the Nation’s distress as a product of lost personal autonomy and self-originality, resulting from unhealthy sense of self-competence and the unexamined need to conform to the “louder voices”. This is the point at which the present study differs from other studies on political leadership in Nigeria. To better appreciate the psychological foundation of this “failed self”, theoretical reviews are necessary.

### **Agency Theories**

Agency theory is the study of the agency relationship and the issues that arise from this, particularly the dilemma that the principal and agent, while nominally working toward the same goal, may not always share the same interests. Perhaps the most recognisable form of agency relationship is that of employer and employee. Ross (1973) outlined agency as a universal principle and not just a theory of the firm. Even so, he limited the scope of his paper to the problem of incentive, and laid out a model for inducing

the agent to produce maximum gains for the principal. In contrast, Mitnick (1973) laid out a much more general theory of agency with possible application to numerous societal contexts. Mitnick identified the problems of agency as (1) the principal's problem, (2) the agent's problem, (3) policing mechanisms and incentives.

The principal's problem is to motivate the agent to act in a manner that will achieve the principal's goals. Examples of motivational tools are financial incentives, prospect of sanctions, and supplying information to activate norms (such as loyalty or obedience) and preferences that coincide with the principal's goals. The agent's problem is that he may be faced with decisions to act either in the principal's interest, his own interest, or some compromise between the two when they do not coincide. Policing mechanisms are mechanisms intended to limit the agent's discretion, such as surveillance or specifically directed tasks. Incentive systems are mechanisms that offer rewards to the agent for acting in accordance with the principal's wishes, such as bonuses and increased pay (positive incentives) or fear of reprisals (negative incentives).

### **Agency Theory of Self**

A starting point for understanding the development of self-agency is the assumption that all organisms require resources for physical growth and development (Hawley, 1999; Little, Hawley & Henrich, 2002; Ricklefs, 1979). Resources are the appetite for biological needs. To meet basic needs that are difficult or impossible to obtain individually, a person can participate in a social group where the presence of others facilitates acquisition of resources. This social group, however, can become a source of competition for the very resources that it facilitates. An evolutionarily inevitable duality therefore arises in the pursuit of resources, creating a competition for resources within the social group so that as group members, individuals experience wins and losses. These interpersonal patterns of wins and losses lead to what ethologists describe as a dominance hierarchy. Hawley (1999) defines such hierarchies as the emergent ordering of individuals based on their relative competitive abilities. Similarly, Little et al. (2002) argue that the history of both early and life-long win-loss experiences influence the development of personal agency, and these early experiences can be viewed as the seeds of agency.

One important feature in the development of an agentic self is that different behavioral strategies can be used in these evolutionarily predicated skirmishes. Hawley (1999) has outlined two classes of strategy that individuals may use. First, there are coercive strategies such as aggression, manipulation, deception, and so on. Second, there are prosocial strategies such as helping, appeasement, alliance formation, and so on. Individuals develop consistent patterns in the use strategies to pursue their goals. These consistently used strategies and the ratio of wins to losses represent building blocks to the developing self-system (Bandura, 2001; Skinner, 2002).

In addition to the biological needs that drive behavior and precipitate the development of agency, at least three fundamental psychological needs are at play: Competence, Relatedness, and Autonomy (Deci & Ryan, 2002). Competence is the basic need to successfully engage, manipulate, and negotiate the environment (White, 1959). Relatedness reflects the necessity for close emotional bonds and feelings of connectedness to others in the social world (Sroufe, 1990). Autonomy reflects the degree to which one's actions are predicated on the self or, when non-autonomous, by causes external to the self (Deci & Ryan, 2002; Wehmeyer, 2006). Little et al. (2002) have argued that goal pursuit in the service of these needs is yet another driving force in the development of personal agency. Here, the need for autonomy is perhaps the most critical. For actions to be self-agentic, possessing a strong sense of personal empowerment, they must be autonomous. In this regard, autonomy is the quality of owning one's actions and making action choices that are integrated with the self and that serve one's needs.

### **Agency Theory of Obedience**

Milgram (1963) developed a series of classic experiments to investigate obedience under, what he considered to be, conditions that could be used to explain the atrocities committed during the Nazi control of Germany. Milgram set out to investigate whether “anyone” could be ordered to harm another. Milgram conducted his obedience experiments on “normal”, healthy participants to investigate whether they would yield to an authority figure and administer electric shocks to an innocent confederate of the study. The result of his experiments led Milgram to conclude that we are all capable of complying to the demands of someone in authority, even if this means hurting another person (proxy agency). Using this conclusion as a basis for his agency theory, Milgram (1974) believed that we are all capable of extreme



obedience, which must serve some evolutionary or societal function. Milgram observed that human society was hierarchical in nature, with many at the bottom of the hierarchy and a few at the top giving instructions on how they are to behave. He proposed that this hierarchy must have evolved for some survival function, whereby societies that adopted this hierarchy survived and those that did not died out. He also thought that this hierarchical social organisation must have some stabilising function – to create social order and harmony within the group. Obedience within this social organisation is a necessary feature to maintain it. Without obedience there would be challenges to this social order resulting in chaos and societal breakdown. Within the hierarchical structure of a social group, there must be a mechanism that ensures obedience.

On the basis of obedience, Milgram (1974) proposed that humans exist in two different states: autonomy and agency. In an autonomous state, a human acts according to his/her own free will. However, when given instruction by an authority figure, humans switch to agentic states of mind, where they see themselves as ‘agents’ acting for the authority figure. Milgram observed that many participants in his obedience study experience moral strain when ordered to harm another person. Moral strain occurs when people are asked to do something they would not choose to do themselves, and which they feel is immoral or unjust. This moral strain results in an individual feeling very uncomfortable in the situation and, in extreme circumstances, they show anxiety and distress. This anxiety is felt as the individual contemplates dissent and considers behaving in a way that contradicts what he/she has been socialised to do. The shift into an agentic state of mind relieves moral strain as the individual displaces the responsibility of the situation onto the authority figure, thereby absolving him/herself of the consequence of his/her actions.

### **Groupthink Theory**

The agentic self is better captured in groupthink. Janis (1982) defined groupthink as:

“a mode of thinking people engage in when they are deeply involved in a cohesive in-group, when the members striving for unanimity override their motivation to realistically appraise alternative courses of action” (p. 9).

Janis modeled groupthink as certain “antecedent conditions”, which lead to concurrence seeking (or groupthink tendency), which results in “observable consequences”, yielding a low probability of a successful outcome. Janis (1982) defined these variables using examples, as listed below. Janis indicated

three types of “antecedent conditions”: “cohesion of the group”, “organizational structural faults”, and “situational factors”. For organizational structural faults, Janis provided four examples: insulation of the group, lack of impartial leadership, lack of methodical procedure group norms, and homogeneity of group members. Example situational factors include high stress from external threats and temporary low self-esteem induced by recent failures, excessive difficulties, or moral dilemmas. For observable consequences, Janis (1982) included two categories: symptoms of groupthink and symptoms of defective decision-making. For symptoms of groupthink, Janis listed eight symptoms grouped into three types: Type I - overestimation of the group, including (1) illusion of invulnerability, and, (2) belief in group’s inherent morality; Type II - closed mindedness, including (3) collective rationalization, and, (4) stereotypes of out-groups; Type III - pressure toward uniformity, including (5) self-censorship; (6) illusion of unanimity ;( 7) direct pressure on dissenters, and, (8) self-appointed mind guards. The paradox of groupthink is that unanimous decisions may be seen to be a display of resoluteness, when, in fact, they result from defense avoidance on the part of the individual members of the decision group (Rosenthal & Hart, 1991).

### **Political Leadership and Corruption in Nigeria: Historical Perspective**

Nigeria’s political history is intertwined between military rule and democratic governance. The First Republic presided over by Prime Minister, Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, with a ceremonial President, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, lasted from October 1960 to January 1966. The regime was plagued by antagonistic regionalism, ethnicity, declined revenues, corruption and bitter power struggle. It wobbled from one crisis to another until it was overthrown by the military (Danfulani & Atowaju, 2012). It is an incontrovertible fact that corruption has been the bane of Nigeria’s development. The phenomenon of corruption has ravaged the country and destroyed most of what is held as cherished national values. Unfortunately, the political class saddled with the responsibility of directing the affairs of the country have been the major culprit in perpetrating this act (Ogbeidi, 2012).

Pathetically, the logic of the Nigerian political leadership class has been that of self-service as some of the leaders are mired in the pursuit of selfish and personal goals at the expense of broader national interests. Consequently, emphasis has been on personal aggrandisement and self-glorification.



Commenting on the experience of the Nigerian nation, the renowned novelist, Chinua Achebe, insisted that the root cause of the Nigerian predicament should be laid squarely at the foot of bad leadership.

“The trouble with Nigeria, Achebe argued, is simply and squarely a failure of leadership. There is nothing basically wrong with the Nigerian character. There is nothing wrong with the Nigerian land, climate, water, air, or anything else. The Nigerian problem is the unwillingness or inability of its leaders to rise to their responsibility, to the challenge of personal example, which is the hallmark of true leadership (Achebe, 1983: 1)

Incidentally, these antecedents as described by Achebe in 1983 were already present in Nigeria’s First Republic, instigating a group of young middle-rank army officers to sack the First Republic politicians from power through a coup d’état on 15th January 1966, on the ground of corruption. The editorial of the *Daily Times Newspaper* of January 16, 1966 argued thus:

With the transfer of authority of the Federal Government to the Armed Forces, we reached a turning point in our national life. The old order has changed, yielding place to a new one... For a long time, instead of settling down to minister to people’s needs, the politicians were busy performing series of seven-day wonders as if the act of government was some circus show... still we groped along, as citizens watched politicians scorn the base by which they did ascend... (*Daily Times*, 1966, in Ogbeidi, 2012).

The coup was a direct response to the corruption of the First Republic; and the popular support the military received for the coup showed that Nigerians had long expected such wind of change to bail them from the claws of the politicians of that era. Interestingly, despite the killings of some major First Republic politicians, there were widespread jubilations in the country. The Second Republic, under President Shehu Shagari, witnessed a resurgence of corruption. The Shagari administration was marked by spectacular government corruption, as the President did nothing to stop the looting of public funds by elected officials. Corruption among the political leaders was amplified due to greater availability of funds. Over \$16 billion in oil revenues was lost between 1979 and 1983 during the reign of President Shehu Shagari. It became common for federal buildings to mysteriously go up in flames just before the onset of ordered audits of government accounts, making it impossible to discover evidence of embezzlement and fraud (Dash, 1983). True to his nature, President Shehu Shagari weakly administered

the country. A soft-spoken and mild-mannered gentleman, Shagari was pathetic in his inability to call his ministers and political lieutenants to order or prevent their brazen embezzlement of state funds.

On the 31<sup>st</sup> of December 1983, General Muhammadu Buhari led a popular coup to rescue the economy from the grip of corrupt politicians of the Second Republic. The 1983 coup was carried out with the aim of halting corruption and restoring discipline, integrity and dignity to public life. General Buhari's regime promised to bring corrupt officials and their agents to book. Consequently, state governors and commissioners were arrested and brought before tribunals of inquiry. The Buhari military regime, which scarcely showed respect for human rights in its bid to entrench discipline and sanity in public life, was toppled by the General Ibrahim Babangida in a bloodless inhouse coup on 27th August, 1985. The next thirteen years saw no serious attempt to checkmate corruption. Rather, corruption reached an alarming rate, becoming institutionalized during the Babangida regime. Leaders found guilty by tribunals under the Murtala Mohammed and Muhammadu Buhari regimes found their way back to public life and recovered their seized properties. According to Maduagwu quoted in Gboyega, (1996):

Not only did the regime encourage corruption by pardoning corrupt officials convicted by his predecessors and returning their seized properties, the regime officially sanctioned corruption in the country and made it difficult to apply the only potent measures, long prison terms and seizure of ill-gotten wealth, for fighting corruption in Nigeria in the future (p. 5).

In the face of intense public opposition to his rule, General Babangida reluctantly handed the reins of government to a non-elected civil-military Interim National Government on 26th August 1993 which was later ousted from power by the military under the leadership of General Sani Abacha on 17<sup>th</sup> November, 1993. Abacha's regime only furthered the deep-seated corrupt practices, which already characterised public life since the inception of the Babangida regime. Under General Abacha, corrupt practices became blatant and systematic. General Abacha and his family alongside his associates looted Nigeria's coffers with reckless abandon. The corrupt proceeds from the embezzlement of public funds by General Abacha and his family amounted to an estimated USD 4 billion (International Centre for Asset Recovery, 2009). Abacha's venality appeared to surpass that of other notorious African rulers, such as Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of Congo).

General Sani Abacha, died suddenly from a heart attack in June 1998. He was replaced by General Abdulsalami Abubakar, who subsequently handed over the reins of government to a democratically-elected civilian government in May 1999, after eleven months in power. The Abdulsalami Abubakar government showed dedicated commitment to returning the country to democracy but did not do much to fight corruption. It is instructive to state here that the Third Republic was sandwiched within the thirteen years military rule of General Babangida and Sani Abacha (1985 – 1998). During this period, a number of commissions of inquiry were instituted, yet neither the inquiries nor reports stopped the high rate of corruption. The Fourth Republic commenced with the election of General Olusegun Obasanjo as the President of Nigeria in 1999. Indeed, the sixteen unbroken years of the military era from the fall of the Second Republic in 1983 to the restoration of democracy in 1999 represent an era in the history of the country, when corruption was practically institutionalized as the foundation and essence of governance.

Ibekwe (2015) observed that corruption was one of the National problems which President Goodluck Jonathan seemed to deliberately allow to flourish under his administration. Aides and Ministers accused of corruption were either shielded or allowed to stay in their positions. One glaring example is the presidential pardon granted to the former governor of Bayelsa State, Late Diepreye Alamieyeseigha, who was convicted of money laundering. Ibekwe (2015) also noted his docility in the case of his former minister of Aviation, Stella Oduah who bought two armoured BMW cars for N255 million. She was only removed from office without orders for her prosecution. Also, rather than investigate the N20 billion alleged by the former Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria, Lamido Sanusi, as missing from the accounts of the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation, NNPC, Mr. Jonathan hounded him out of office.

Cases like these abound. Strikingly, a recurring decimal in the impunity of corruption among the public officers in Nigeria is the seeming assurance and backing of ‘the man at the helm of affairs.’ With every political actor as a follower in different capacities in the face of unspoken delegations of power to perform wrong functions, it becomes impossible for anyone to accept responsibility for any political misdemeanor (Okafor, 2016).

Former President Ibrahim Babangida did not feel obligated to apologize to Nigerians over the annulment of June 12, 1993 election (Kolawole, 2016) largely because he acted as an agent of a more powerful authority – the military junta. On this basis, Okafor (2016) refers to the Nigerian political personality as an agentic personality. One which he defines as a political lifestyle characterized by a sense of self-detachment from the consequences of the undemocratic political activities perpetrated in favour of more powerful political authorities. It has a consistently conformist outlook characterised by the denial of behaviour as self-determined and the projection of outcomes unto others. In other words, it depicts a socio-psychological disposition where a political actor feels the need to conform to a more powerful figure in the polity as a means to protect self-interests. The present study refers to this disposition of the self as a lost-self; a self that has lost its voice to propagate the agenda of the people it represents. For a closer look at this lost self, examination of recent events in the 8<sup>th</sup> National Assembly is necessary.

### **Indices of lost personal autonomy: suspension SAGA in the 8<sup>th</sup> National Assembly**

Under the leadership of President Buhari, the 8<sup>th</sup> National Assembly occupied a controversial position in the media. From Budget padding to corruption and forgery scandals, the National Assembly seemed to be the most talked about organ of government. Sadly, the leaders of the two chambers of the Assembly have at different times, faced cases of corruption while in power. In all, the struggle to get the house to speak in one voice signified a common challenge. Consequently, two lawmakers (Hon Abdulmumin Jibrin and Senator Ali Ndume) from the two Chambers, were suspended from sittings at the plenary sessions beyond the time prescribed by the Law Book of the legislative arm bordering on ethics.

Hon Abdulmumin Jibrin's "whistle-blowing" got him on the wrong side of the leadership of the Green Chambers. As Appropriation Committee Chairman, he exposed what he called 'Budget Fraud' perpetrated by the House of Representatives during the 2016 Budget process. He disclosed to the public, how a very small group of legislators illegally increased figures in the fiscal appropriation bill. On September 28, 2016, he was slammed with a 180-day suspension which he subsequently challenged in court.

On the other hand, Senator Ali Ndume's problems started with his support for the duo of Secretary to the Government of the Federation, Mr David Babachir Lawal, and the Acting Chairman of the

Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, Ibrahim Mustapha Magu - two personalities whom the leadership of the Senate did not accede to occupy positions in the current administration. He also named Senate President Bukola Saraki and Senator Dino Melaye in a vehicle importation scandal and certificate forgery case, respectively (Shobo, 2017). Ndume joined Jibrin on suspension on Wednesday, 29<sup>th</sup> March, 2017. Shobo (2017) also observed that the disciplinary actions resulted from daring to speak against the “wrongdoings” in the National Assembly. George (2017) raised questions as to why both men spoke out only after losing plum positions (Jibrin was chairman of the appropriation committee in the house of reps, while Ndume was until January 2017, the majority leader of the senate); Whether they would they have been silent if things still went their way; Whether the national assembly leaders were witch-hunting their opponents or trying to instill discipline; Whether a conspiracy exists against members who mustered courage to challenge the leaders.

From the groupthink perspective, the leadership of the National Assembly is antithetical to contrary opinions or opinions that indict their practices while the members of the National Assembly are meshed in the unexamined need to remain unanimous, a disposition that can only be guaranteed by a lost self-autonomy and originality that assesses minority opinion as rebellious. Disciplinary measures are not only punishment but also deterrents to potentially rebellious voices. This position is strengthened by the self-interest of the leaders and the led, whereby the inability of the minority voice to air its opinion may further strengthen the cult of leadership in a continuing vicious cycle.

## **Conclusion**

History has shown that no nation of the world grew and enjoyed steady development in virtually all spheres of its national life without experiencing good and selfless political leadership. This is largely because qualitative growth and development is always an outcome of good governance. Since political independence in 1960, Nigeria has experienced political turbulences at the leadership levels. These have resulted from greed for personal wealth and power and clashes of self-interest at different levels of governance.

Citizens are mired in a conundrum while the policies emanating from the leadership strengthens their grip on the “national cake”. Rather than provide leadership and service, the members of the different

organs of government concentrate more on consolidating the group tenets amongst themselves. This “institutional cultism” emanates when criticisms are abhorred, where the freedom of expression is relegated, and when the consciousness of the self as a corrective agency is lost in the crowd.

Janis (1982) provided recommendations designed to prevent groupthink. These recommendations provide the basis for the rebirth of a meaningful political participation and leadership in Nigeria’s 9<sup>th</sup> Assembly and beyond:

1. Each member of any arm of government should be a critical evaluator of the group’s course of action with an open climate of giving and accepting criticism encouraged by the leader.
2. Leaders should be impartial and refrain from exhibiting personal preferences at the outset of group discussion. Leadership at all levels of government should limit themselves to fostering open inquiry in conflict situations. In situations of religious dichotomy, leaders should exhume sense of political maturity and patriotism, and thus demonstrate to every Nigerian that national interest takes priority over individual/section interest.
3. Each member of the group (Senators or Members, House of Representatives) should consult with trusted associates and stakeholders in their respective constituencies to discuss current issues and options and decide and report on reactions.
4. Leadership at the Federal and State Assemblies should consult with experts, technocrats, renowned academics and stakeholders in the public and private sectors to evaluate the views of the members. Particularly, political leadership should embrace academic efforts geared towards research and professional political counselling in order to ensure quality decisions and representations.
5. There should be one or more advocates during every group meeting to represent contending interests and checkmate the unanimity of unproductive opinions.
6. In conflict situations, leaders should ensure that decision-making processes are cognizant of the effect of time in enabling parties to the conflicts reconsider their key decisions in second- or third-chance meetings through the interpretation and reconstruction of alternative scenarios of their intentions.



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