

Leke Alder

LEADERSHIP AND THE ECONOMY: The Nigeria Case Study – Challenges and Imperatives

Leke Alder

Principal, Alder Consulting

**Delivered at ReD Conference,
Church of God Mission, Port
Harcourt, Rivers State**

Thursday, September 24, 2015

© Leke Alder 2015



The topic, Leadership and the Economy is apropos of the time we live in. Nigeria is negotiating her transition and destiny. I will be sharing insight from my studies, ruminations and consulting experience, having been privileged by Providence to contribute to policy formulation as well as political strategy on several levels in our fatherland. I have however added a rider to our topic of consideration in order to give it laser focus. As amended, we shall be talking about Leadership and the Economy: The Nigeria Case Study – Challenges and Imperatives.

The question of political leadership and the economy is an integrated concept. Economics is inseparable from politics. Every political ideology has an economic progression – be it democracy, theocracy, socialism or communism. Even kakistocracy, which is government under the control of a nation's worst or least qualified citizens has an economic model. And every ideology has a sociological derivative, as well as a spiritual base.

I shall in this lecture seek to speak in prose, lest the lecture becomes a didactic prolixity with mind-numbing economic statistics. We are all involved in politics whether we like it or not. If you refuse to vote, you have still voted. You voted for whatever outcome emerges from the election. That reminds me of the parable of the chicken. The story goes

Unaltered

that after Noah's flood, the animals came together and had a conference. But the chicken refused to participate in the political conference, telling everyone he would abide by the resolutions from the conference. And so it was that the animals passed a resolution that the descendants of Chicken will be used in the celebrations and festivals of humans. And that was how chicken emerged the sole candidate for accompaniment of Christmas rice. But the animals did praise Chicken for his nobility, foresight, sacrifice and magnanimity. Moral, make sure you have a say in the determination of outcome. Participate.

One of the great challenges of African political leadership is the confusing of country with nation. And yet there is difference between the two. A country is nothing more than a geographical expression with delineated boundaries and an administrative apparatus. But not so a nation. A nation is not a soulless expression. A nation is an organic entity incorporating the history, covenants hopes and dreams of a people, and the aspiration of future generations. But life often presents paradoxes and the greatest political paradox is the paradox of a rich country full of poor people. It is a paradox of development, and Nigeria suffers from this affliction.

Leaders

There are four indices of poverty in economics: relative poverty, absolute poverty, dollar per day poverty and food poverty. Absolute poverty is a condition characterized by severe deprivation of basic human needs, including food, safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, health, shelter, education and information. Relative poverty is a condition in which people lack the minimum amount of income needed to maintain the average standard of living in the society in which they live. Dollar per day poverty is the people subsisting on less than a dollar a day. And food poverty is lack of access to nutritionally adequate diet. I have very sad news for you. By every standard of measurement of poverty Nigeria performs woefully. About 110m Nigerians live below the poverty line. In a study of 157 countries by the World Bank, Nigeria ranked #152 for population below poverty line. 60.9% of the people are absolute poverty poor. 69% are relative poverty poor. 61.2% of the people have consumption or income less than \$1 a day, whilst 41% of Nigerians are food poor.

The difference between a ruler and a leader is that a leader is concerned about the feelings of the infirmities of the people. That is a classical term for the humanity of the people – their fears, pains, wellbeing, development, self-actualization and happiness; whereas a ruler is narcissistically



focused on the acquisition and maintenance of political power, and its concomitant glory.

Now here's another paradox. It is the paradox of the Christian who disdains all things political, holding on to the narrowest conception of the mandate of Christ - a Christian operating in the spirit of the Essenes. The Essenes were a religious sect in the days of Jesus who avoided "contamination" with society. They lived on the fringes of society. Such a Christian does not realize that Christianity is not a religious programme. Rather it is a political expression. It's why Jesus kept talking about the kingdom of God. A kingdom is a political entity. The bane of Nigeria is Christians who will not take their place in the scheme of things, erroneously believing that politics is outside the purview of the Christian faith. Yet their God refers to them as citizens and ambassadors. And the duties of their faith are expressed as social justice – the taking care of the poor, healing of the sick, the welfare of orphans, the care for widows, the accommodation of the destitute, the purposing of the lost. These are social justice issues. Part of the problem is the moralistic interpretation of the dynamics of good and evil, as well as a misconception of Satan's titanic struggle to supplant God's hegemonic authority. The conflict between God and the devil is political, has always been. From the insurrection in Heaven to the fall of Adam, the issue has always been political, not a

polemical struggle between good and evil. Earth is Heaven's colonial outpost.

It is also to be noted that Satan's political organogram is not subtle in the titling of his principal officers: Principalities, Powers, Spiritual Wickednesses, Rulers of Darkness. What could be more political than a titular authority named Power? The word Power is the Greek word *exousia*. It denotes executive power and it is linked to government. In other words, Satan operates a parallel government.

Christianity is so political that even the titles of Jesus are political – King of kings, Lord of lords, Prince of Peace. These are political titles. El Shaddai, El Elyon, Jehovah Nissi, Jehovah Sabaoth... These are political titles, some incorporating military command. And we see the ministerial portfolio of Jesus in names like Jehovah-Raah (the Lord my shepherd) and Jehovah Rapha (the Lord that heals). We could as well have called him Minister of National Orientation as well as Minister of Health. That's what those names mean in contemporary terms.

And the salient principles in Christianity are political. Righteousness is the constitutional right of a sovereign king. Salvation is a citizenship programme. Grace is citizen privileges. If you don't



understand Christianity as a political expression, you will struggle with making sense of the Bible as well as the acts of God. And you will not be able to fulfill your mandate as a Christian. Your job as a Christian is to adapt the ideological and philosophical principles of God's kingdom to the here and now, and to carry out "The Agenda". "Thy will be done on Earth," Jesus said.

My aim is to use this lecture to define the national agenda for this generation in order to point you in the direction of a vision for Nigeria. We have been so caught up in the quotidian day-by-day challenges of governing Nigeria that we have failed to define an over-arching vision for the people. We do not have an articulated vision for Nigeria. None has been presented. Without a vision the people perish.

Let it however be known that a vision for Nigeria will not be accomplished without intellect, and this underscores the importance of education. Successful nationhood is highly dependent on the caliber of intellect applied – the ability to process thoughts, apply the faculty of imagination, mine data and see the pattern in facts. Applied intellect requires comparative analysis, development of best case scenarios, adaption of best practices and determination of a nation's comparative and competitive advantages. Intellect is so critical in the development of a nation. I do get worried at the idea

Unaltered

of an unthinking, unanalytical, unreasoning, unquestioning, unreading generation of Christians who devote themselves to motivational books and nothing more. After you have been motivated then what! To succeed as a leader you must be well-versed and well-read. You must have a working knowledge of economics, political science, philosophy and sociology. And if you aspire to lead a multi-religious multi-cultural entity like Nigeria, you require a fair grasp of comparative theology. But we are jumping ahead of ourselves in several respects. Let us begin from the fundamentals.

Nigeria is a very rich country. It is one of the most endowed nations on earth. It is bound in the West by a nation called Benin Republic, on the East by Cameroon, on the north by Chad and Niger, and on the south by a vast expanse of ocean. Nigeria has a huge landmass. It is 923,768 square kilometers. The nation can roughly be bifurcated into two atmospheric entities. The Rainforest South and the Sahel North. This should be an important consideration for power generation and agricultural endeavor, but things don't always follow the path of reason in Nigeria. Commonsense dictates that the northern part of Nigeria should be dependent on solar energy. The conditions are perfect for solar power generation, whilst hydroelectric power is

Unaltered

ideal for the South. In terms of agriculture, it is to be noted that Nigeria houses the climatic conditions of the top 10 agriculture-exporting nations by produce: North West – China; North East – Mexico; North Central – Brazil and Argentina; Middle Belt – Sierra Nevada Foothills in California; South West – Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire; South East – Malaysia and Jamaica; and South South – Thailand. In 2008, these nations earned in excess of \$74bn from agricultural export. Nigeria can potentially earn more from agriculture. But then the question arises: with such climatic blessedness how can people be hungry in Nigeria?

A confluence of two great rivers created an artificial boundary between the north and the south. It also divided the south into two, creating the East and the West. There is thus the South Western expanse of land and the South Eastern expanse of land, as well as the Northern expanse of land. But in truth this is a simplistic configuration, which unfortunately has sometimes been carried too far. The idea of a Moslem North and a Christian South is a lie perpetrated for geo-political purposes. There are very substantial percentages of Christians in the North, as there are very substantial percentages of Moslems in the South. Osun State in the South has a significant number of Moslems and Kaduna State in the North has a very significant number of Christians. Indeed states like Plateau and Taraba in



the North are predominantly Christian. The Gaddafi vision of the excision of a Moslem North is as fatuous and absurd as it is asinine. What is surprising is that some Nigerians themselves believe in this religio-geographic bifurcation irrespective of the state of facts.

The name Nigeria is believed to have been coined by the consort of the colonial master-general, a fellow named Lord Lugard. Her name was Flora Shaw. She was a British journalist. As per Lord Lugard himself, depending on the political divide you belong, he is either a saint or the devil incarnate. The name Nigeria is derived from River Niger. It is a coinage from two words: “Niger” and “Area”, hence Nigeria. Etymologically, it means “black space” or “area occupied by blacks”. The word “Niger” is derived from the Latin, *denigrates*, which is the past participle of *denigrare* from which we got the word, *denigrate*. It means to blacken. Nigeria therefore means an area occupied by black people.

The other river is River Benue, and that river has not been spared political attribution. It is strangely linked to “resource control”, one of the very topical issues in Nigeria. River Benue originates in the Adamawa Plateau of northern Cameroon. Armchair geologists of irredentist flavour insist that the river brought down the silt and the debris from the



northern part of the country, which compacted by nature created the vast oil deposits in the South South. Such views of course unnecessarily complicate the federal question. It is a highly contestable theory that stretches political science into the realm of incredulity, as it is unimaginable that a constitutional conference on Nigeria will focus on generation and ownership of waste and garbage. But pseudo scientific theories will always abound in nations such as Nigeria. When a nation shies away from reconciling itself to itself, incredulous theories will arise. The truth is that this theory of the creation of Nigerian oil deposits is a progression of the titanic struggle among the principal tribal groupings. And so, there is an intellectualisation of hegemonic tendencies.

And talking about tribal groupings, Nigeria has a peculiar composition. The nation consists of over 250 ethnic nationalities. Aggregated, these ethnic nationalities come in six blocks – the Hausa-Fulani to the north; the Yoruba to the west, Igbos to the east; the Northern “minority” conclave i.e. the Zurus, Beroms etc; the “Mid Western” tribal conclave; and the South South collective – the Ijaws, Itsekiris and Urhobos. Let it be on record that the terminology South South is ordinarily unknown to geography. It is a peculiar Nigerian creation. On any compass you have the North, South, East and West, as well as sub-divisions like South East or North West, and



I am not referring to the name of Kanye West's daughter. Political expediency led Nigeria to add a new creation to the lexicon of Geography. It's how we got "South South."

But here's the challenge for Nigeria and the challenge for her leadership: these tribal groupings date back to antiquity. They are historical remnants of the ancient kingdoms that occupied the geographical space now known as Nigeria and even beyond it. Of note are the Hausa Fulani Empire, the Kanem-Bornu Empire, the Bini Kingdom and the Oyo Empire. These entities overlapped in time and space, some involved in internecine conflicts with one another. The amalgamation of the descendants of these entities into a political collective created a challenge that continues to dog the country. The people are adept at communal intelligence but seem challenged by community intelligence. There is organisation at the communal level, but forging an integrated community of tribes and ethnic nationalities into a nation has been a challenge for Nigeria. This challenge often leads to ridicule at even intra-tribal levels. As a young man, I worked in a law firm that was engaged by a commercial entity owned by the South-West ethnic grouping – the Yorubas. I soon ran into an impasse trying to collate documents to prosecute the case. So ridiculous and splintered was the thinking within this corporation that each



floor of the building housing this commercial entity was configured along ethnic lines. And so the first floor was occupied by a certain ethnic collective, the second floor by another collective, and the third floor by yet another. What had happened was that each general manager had made sure he recruited only those from his ethnicity. You can imagine team spirit in this corporation. The company collapsed. It collapsed because the people were communal-minded not community-minded. This is one of the major problems of Nigeria.

In terms of population Nigeria is humongous. Depending on which figure you choose to work with and how far you're ready to err on the side of caution, Nigeria's population ranges between 175 million and 182 million. That's a significant amount of people. Nigeria has the 7th largest population in the world. To put things in perspective, the total population of the Republic of Ghana is 27m whilst the population of Lagos, Nigeria's commercial nerve center is 18m. West Africa is made up of 18 countries. The population of Nigeria at 175 million is more than that of the other 17 countries combined at 165 million. The countries are Benin Republic, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Sao Tome & Principe and Togo.



The essence of population studies is for fiscal and national planning. If you have an idea of the rate of population growth, you can plan for health services and schools for example. Population studies help a nation project for economic and social development. A significant aging population means there will be a huge pension burden on the state, as well a high cost of social services. Japan has this challenge. 20% percent of the population is old, and that figure is forecast to rise to 38% by 2055. In order to delay or even eliminate pension costs, some nations have shifted the retirement age from 60 to 65. An aging population signifies need for facilities like old people's homes, and the training of more professional care-givers. Population studies are critical to national planning.

The Nigeria challenge is the exact opposite of Japan. We have more young people than old people. The breakdown of Nigeria's population is as follows:

0-14 years = 43.8%
15-24 years = 19.3%
25-54 years = 30.1%
55-65 years = 3.8%
65 and above = 3%

You can see there is little or no burden on the State by old people in Nigeria. And anyway the social security system in Nigeria is familial. The old are



taken care of by their children. We like to call old people in Nigeria “pensioners” but the truth is, the majority have no access to pension, most not having worked in certain establishments. And the ones that worked in those establishments can hardly get their pension. I had had to dissuade my late father from seeking to collect his pension because of the rigour involved in endless accreditation exercises. Such exercises are not old age friendly. And so it is imperative you take care of your parents in their old age. We hope to see a better system emerge with the pension reform, but the problem of Nigeria is not old people.

If almost half the population of Nigeria is made of children 0-14 years old, it means the State has to invest significantly in education, healthcare and social services. We must ask ourselves, how many primary schools do we need to educate 77 million children? How many teachers do we need? What skills do we need in society and how do we train our children to acquire those skills to become productive members of society? How many primary, secondary and tertiary health centres do we need? Without a healthy population the nation will not be productive. We must also ask ourselves what are the most prevalent diseases in the country? We can all hazard guesses but malaria will probably top most lists. Malaria kills 300,000 Nigerians every year and Nigeria spends N480bn on malaria control



annually. That's \$2.5bn – a very significant drain of national resources. A thinking nation will prioritize the elimination of malaria. A \$500m grant to the scientific community will put the eradication of malaria within sight. Healthcare is an economic policy, it is not a social issue. We need that paradigm shift in our thinking. And if we love mosquitoes so much we can breed mosquitoes that don't carry the malaria parasite. But one thing is definite: prevention is economically better than cure.

We must as a matter of priority proliferate primary healthcare centres throughout the country. But primary healthcare centres can't handle certain medical challenges. For that we will need well-equipped tertiary health facilities, and a significant cadre of medical specialists. How many specialists do we have in Nigeria? In total, Nigeria has only 35,000 registered medical doctors. Of these the specialists are no more than 5,000. Meanwhile there are 215,000 Nigerian medical consultants in the UK alone, according to Suleiman Shuaibu, the Acting Director General of the Directorate of Technical Cooperation in Africa. Talk about brain drain!

The generic ratio of specialists to population is 1:35,000. By generic ratio we mean the total number of specialists – ENT surgeons, gynecologists, psychiatrists, neurologists etc. – to



the total population in absolute terms. We are not talking about the ratio of say, gynecologists to the population; or the ratio of ENT surgeons to total population. For example the ratio of ENT surgeons to total population is 1:1.2m, for the simple reason that there are only 150 fully qualified ENT surgeons in Nigeria. It is also important to note that 70% of the medical personnel practice in urban areas. The farther you are from urban centres the more diminished your chances of access to quality healthcare.

What the Nigerian ratios portend is that there are Nigerians who will die needlessly and suffer unnecessarily because they do not have access to certain levels of healthcare. It also means that if you have a neurological problem and it so happens to be in a month neurologists are having their international conference, you are in trouble. We don't have too many neurologists in the country in the first place. No wonder medical tourism to countries like India and Dubai have risen significantly. Because people can't access medical treatment, they fly to foreign nations for treatment. India makes an estimated \$3bn from medical tourism from Nigeria annually. By the way, pray you don't have to be flown in an air ambulance. The cost of air ambulance from Abuja to Lagos is \$11,000. It's \$135,000 from Lagos to the UK. Though there will be no need to be flown abroad in



the first place if the nation had first class medical facilities. Accessible, affordable, qualitative healthcare is thus a challenge for leadership in Nigeria.

But our 77 million children not only need quality healthcare, they will need to go to university and technical colleges as well. Not everyone will of course, but even if we assume only a third of this figure will, that is 25 million children. And we're not factoring in the 15 - 24-year olds who constitute almost 20% of the population. That's another 33 million. We're just doing anticipatory planning for the 0 - 14-year olds.

For planning purposes, we must ask ourselves what is the carrying capacity of Nigerian universities relative to the number of potential candidates. The total number of universities in Nigeria is currently 128. Combined, they can only take in 520,000 new students per annum. No matter how low we set the infamous "cut off point," it is fair to assume that a significant number of aspiring children will not go to university. The carrying capacity of the universities is thus a bottleneck preventing so many of kids from maximising their potential. And so it is we have a significant number of under-educated children. That seems like someone else's problem until you begin to do some introspection.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L. Anderson', is positioned at the top right of the page.

We are in a democracy. These under-educated children will one day constitute the voting block. Voting is age dependent, not education dependent. Once you're 18 you have a right to vote. If you have a large number of uneducated and under-educated people they will vote at the level of their educational standard. And so the quality of leadership the nation requires becomes compromised. Beset by poverty such voters can easily be persuaded to sell their vote for the price of a loaf of bread. The Esau syndrome comes into play as they sell their birthright. That cannot augur well for the development of a nation.

Don't also forget that these children we do not educate properly...out of their midst will arise the next governors, the next senators, the next representatives, and the next President. What quality of leadership will the nation then have, especially compared to other countries?

A low leadership quotient will of course determine the kinds of laws and policies emanating from government. And so you can see how our non-prioritization of education affects the development of the nation. A leader cannot give what he doesn't have. Nemo dat quad non habet. A leader needs analytical and intellectual rigour. He will need to solve challenges. An under-developed thinking



capacity stifles creative approach to the problem of development.

Since only a few people get to pass through the bottleneck created by the limited capacity of the universities, it means there will be a warehouse for those waiting to get university education. It's where they wait until their luck comes around. We can therefore imagine the sense of hopelessness, desperation and frustration in that warehouse.

And things have so nose-dived in our educational sector that there are graduates who can't write letters! The standard has fallen. And so employers of labour, especially banks have resorted to retraining of shortlisted job applicants. This retraining programme takes an average of three months. Then the applicants take a qualifying exam to be considered for employment. But even at that the combined employment capacity of all the banks in Nigeria is no more than 500,000, and this includes outsourced functions. And with electronic banking the job of tellering is disappearing. That and the back-end function used to account for high volume of employment in the banking sector. Technology is taking over many of those functions. The real opportunity for large-scale employment is in the full value chain of agriculture, though the creative arts field is also generating new jobs.



There are basically two employers of labour: the public sector (Government) and the private sector (Corporations). Government can't afford to employ too many people. It creates false employment, under-employment and bureaucracy, which I define as too many people doing the work of a few. Governors have been known to claim to employ 10,000 people overnight. It is a good political gambit but a potential economic disaster. The cost of absorbing that significant number of people into the civil service is extremely high. The state will pay for it in the future. Note how many states in Nigeria are struggling with wage bills.

And the states are largely dependent on federal allocation. According to the 2012 Annual Report of the Central Bank of Nigeria the internally generated revenue of Bayelsa State is only 2.23% of the total revenue of the state. Bornu is 3.35%. Jigawa is 3.46%. These states are thus wholly dependent on the federal allocation. The most dependent states are Bayelsa at 93.09%, Akwa Ibom at 91.53% and Delta at 89.78%. A major contraction in allocation from the center will create a seismic shift in the fortune of these states. This we are witnessing already with the bailout funds. And the states can't leverage the mineral resources in their territories. These are deemed to belong to the federal government. A major problem of Nigeria therefore is the economic structure of the federation.



Our administrative cost as a nation is too high. Recurrent expenditure is so high we have little left for capital development. And so infrastructure suffers. Almost 90% of the 2014 budget is for recurrent expenditure.

Because the State can't afford to employ too many people, the ideal approach to the issue of unemployment is to make the young create employment for themselves. But not after they leave school. They must create jobs whilst still in university. The kind of entrepreneurship we are talking about is not the selling of phone recharge cards. There is no value added. We are talking about the creation of businesses that can scale up to create significant employment and incubate other entrepreneurs. Dell, Microsoft, Facebook, Google and Yahoo were created by university students.

To achieve this objective we will need a very potent incubation system as well as a revamp of our educational curricula. Perhaps students should take one year off academic studies to create and run businesses as part of the school curriculum. There is a need to create an enterprise industrial complex, from ideation to strategic input and alliances, to incubation, to brand development, business development, international partnerships, finance, and markets. It has to be a turnkey system. A



throughput approach from college to market is what creates Silicon Valley. A hodgepodge uncoordinated approach will not suffice, and throwing money at young businesses will not solve the employment challenge. There has to be a value chain approach. It's a national imperative.

But Nigeria's problem is not limited to leadership challenge. We have a management challenge as well. I'll illustrate with a little piece of information. The No. 1 mining destination in the world is Canada. Yet Canada has only five mineral resources. Nigeria on the other hand has 34. We have Baryte, Gypsum, Kaolin, Talc, Diatomite, Bentonite, Limestone, Clay, Columbite, Bismuth, Molybdenite, Rutile, Magnesite, Marble, Feldspar, Mica, Phosphate, Fluorite, Kyanite, Gemstones, Silica Sand, Gold, Coal, Bitumen, Cassiterite, Iron Ore, Lead, Zinc, Manganese, Ilmenite, Wolframite, Lithium, Tantalite and Silver. You can therefore see our problem is not resources. Our major problem is the management of resources, human and mineral.

There is of course the challenge of liberalising the economy. Up till 15 years ago (2001) Nitel, the state telecoms monopoly boasted of 70,000 telephone lines. The 70,000 lines were of course a mirage since the lines were more or less timeshares. As



the sole communication gateway to the world Nitel was strangulating the Nigerian economy. After liberalisation in 2001, the demand for telephones soared from zero to 196m as at April 2015.

The mobile phone has become a significant platform for economic, social and political development. It affords opportunity for young people to exercise their creativity by developing apps. Online commerce has also emerged. Online brands are being created. And what the National Youth Service scheme could not achieve in 42 years the mobile phone has achieved in less than 15 years. Young people are talking to one another across political, cultural, geographic, social and economic divides – though not always politely! But at least they're talking. Twitter and Facebook have become major political platforms. They are even used to monitor elections. If we are serious about deepening and broadening our democracy we must turn the mobile phone into a polling booth. At 98%, mobile density, Nigeria is ripe for electronic voting. Within minutes of close of voting we should be able to know the winner. All it takes is an app, and a robust and secure backend infrastructure. The INEC app will auto-tabulate election results as the votes are rolling in. Can electronic voting be rigged? Of course! But isn't the system we're currently running prone to rigging as well? It's a question of relative advantage and disadvantage. Do we want



to enfranchise the majority of our people to arrive at true representative democracy, or do we want to continue to give excuses about difficulties of electronic voting? A Dubai would have tackled the challenge head on. That young country has shown the world what a “can do” spirit can achieve. The truth is, the average Nigerian is imbued with that spirit of determination. He’s resilient. He just keeps going despite the odds, making the most of his circumstances. He’s creative, intelligent, passionate, driven, hopeful, determined and loves to party. He’s very aggressive and enterprising. Drop a Nigerian in the middle of New York and within the hour he’ll start a pure water business venture. He has survivor spirit. There’s hardly a nation without a Nigerian. There’s probably one selling pure water ice at the South Pole as we speak.

The Nigerian doesn’t need spoon-feeding. All he needs is enablement and opportunity. He is no more prone to deviant behavior than the average human. The sin-nature is universal. Systemic restraint in advanced countries is what tames the bestial tendencies in people of those nations, not the pixilation of their skin. Beneath all that skin, man is man. The moral however is that we must enthrone the rule of law.



Dubai was developed in a quarter of a century. That is what a powerful vision can do. Nigeria had the opportunity to create a Dubai in Abuja but we bungled the opportunity. The highest building in the world today is the Burj Khalifa. It's in Dubai. It cost only \$1.5bn. Judging by our expense profile on public works, truth is, we could have built several Burj Khalifas.

And that leads us to the last segment of this lecture, the need for national purposing. Successful nations are developed on powerful philosophical ideas. As we noted earlier Dubai was built on the spirit of possibilities. Nothing shall be impossible to him who believes. That spirit produced the best airline in the world – Emirates, an indoor ski slope in the desert, air-conditioned bus stops, pedestrian bridges with escalators and air-conditioning; not to talk of high-end luxury police vehicles. Dubai for show! When you ask Dubai why, she reflexively replies, Why not!

We see that same spirit in Qatar, Dubai's not too distant cousin. Qatar has shown the world it can compete in the media space, and in so doing created a new global information order. It became a disruptive phenomenon. Al Jazeera grew into a global media brand in 19 short years. It simply bought the same equipment as the market leaders, and hired the best professionals. How proud



Emiratis and Qataris must feel. I get jealous of them each time I travel.

America was also built on a powerful philosophy. The philosophy is contained in the American Declaration of Independence, 1776: “We hold these truths to be self evident that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness; that to secure these Rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just Powers from the Consent of the Governed.”

Can Nigeria be great?

The answer to that question lies in a very powerful word in the superscription on our coat of arms. It reads in full, “Unity and Faith, Peace and Progress”. Four special words, but all we need is just one of those words: Faith! Faith in our future, faith in our collective destiny, faith in our young ones, faith in who we are, faith in possibilities.

Hebrews 11 tells us good reports are obtained by faith. That the visible is manufactured from the invisible through faith. That leap-frogging translation is achieved through faith. That improbable accomplishments are manufactured by faith. That monumental public works of Noahic dimensions are



facilitated by faith. In other words, national transformation can only be attained through faith. Faith is not a religious proposition. It is the technology of possibilities. We only access it through religion.

Faith is classically defined as the evidence of things not seen, the substance of things hoped for. In other words, it is the strategic steps we take as a nation that define the vision for Nigeria, not what we say. Those strategic steps constitute the evidence of things not seen, the substance of things hoped for.

We can and we will create a Nigeria of tomorrow, the Nigeria of our silent dreams. A place you and I can fulfill destiny and maximise potential. It is up to some of us, not all of us. But let it be said of the people reading this lecture that there were giants in the land in those days. Tomorrow is possible, but it is up to you, it is up to me.

Thank you and God bless!

© Leke Alder 2015