

## "No More the Taming Hawks" A Way Out of the Challenge of Leadership and Governance in Nigeria

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### ABSTRACT

*This paper examines the challenges of leadership and governance in Nigeria. It views the country within the context of Diran Ademiju-Bepo's "No More the Taming Hawks" and the realities in the country. Thus, the paper tries to compare the reality of Nigerian politics, Leadership and Governance against the backdrop of the metaphor of the "Royal Doves" and the supreme Hawks-in-council with their Commander-in-chief Wande Asagbade His "Hawkcellency" a term coined to describe the tyrant leader in the play.*

*The metaphor of the Hawks in the play as well as in the paper is a representation of unholy agitators, usurpers, disturbers of national peace, tyranny as well as bad leadership. This paper discovers that unhealthy and unbridled ambition for power only breeds and is characterized by the collapse of social infrastructures, persuasive poverty, food crisis and insecurity, political corruption and many more but equally propose ways of cultural and socio-political liberation.*

*The methodology adopted for this work is a critical analysis. As such, books, articles and other related and relevant materials are consulted for critical examination and unbiased presentation of facts and opinion.*

### INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is one of the populous and popular countries in Africa. As such, it gained popularity through the rich cultural heritage of various ethnic groups. These and other related indices place the country on a high esteem and carved out a nomenclature for the country as the "Giant of Africa". Until the coming of the Europeans in the 19th century and the amalgamation of the Northern and Southern Nigeria in 1994, each of these ethnic groups have an administrative and political infrastructure to control and organize the flow of power as well as the implementation of law and order. The Northern Nigeria which is pre-dominated by the Hausa-Fulani has "Sarki" and "Emirs" as leaders with their subjects as well as a council of magistrate for proper interpretation of its laws. While the situation is not different in Southern Nigeria, the region is recognized to be pre-dominated by the Igbos and the Yorubas among other minorities. This administrative and political infrastructure became a turgid wall for colonial invasion but they finally gain access through indirect rule as well as divide and rule in some parts of the country.

After several years of British colonialism, Nigeria became a formally independent

federation in 1960. Since then, the country continues to experience cultural and socio-political instability. It experienced a civil war from 1967 to 1970 which is associated to leadership tussle and therefore alternated between democratically elected civilian governments and military dictatorships. This instability has continued to affect the economic and socio-political growth of the country. This is characterized by Ogunmilade et al in the "Challenge of Leadership and Governance in Nigeria" by huge external debt overran, net capital flight, disinvestments, collapse of social infrastructures, food crisis and insecurity, overvalued national currency, persuasive poverty, homelessness and underdevelopment, repressive and alienating economic policies while the socio-political space is riddled with the collapse of social values, political corruption and transition crisis, the manipulation of electoral process, unstable, weak and vulnerable political structures and institutions as well as brigandage (47).

### AN OVERVIEW OF NIGERIAN POLITICS AND CULTURE

For decades, the country has continued to seek for a messiah against a government that has been immune not only to the plight of the

masses but also from their sufferings. Leadership comes and goes but the situation seems hopeless as almost every citizen continues to lament the collapse of social infrastructures, political corruption, food crisis and insecurity. This continues to raise an alarm and draws attention of scholars to begin to study and interrogate the leadership question in the country. While some scholars continue to argue and blame the country for its misfortunes, others consider it a global phenomenon. This is evident in several countries of the world as leadership and governance continue to be a problem that attracts global attention.

In Nigeria, the effect is quite pitiful looking back at the glamorous past of the country that was promising with varied mineral resources, stable economy and rich cultural heritage. These and other indices place the country on high esteem and carved itself a nomenclature as the "Giant of Africa". But how has the mighty fallen and who does not know how much we are now despised in the comity of other lands? Thus, according to Patrick Obahiagbon a Nigerian politician and legal practitioner as well as one time House of Representative,

*It is a pitiable disma pisma and regrettably lugubrious*

*That in a country that is so bless with human resources...*

*Continue to facilitate between exorbitant enthusiasm and Irrational irritability.*

He also laments these very issues in an interview with TVC Nigeria at Samuel Ogbemudia Stadium and describes the cultural and socio-political staccato as "the climax of democratic peregrination". In his arguments, he asserts the very cause of this cultural and socio-political epilepsy:

All because of mismanagement,

Because of the high handedness,

Because of the meningestial citizens and

Because of the directionless directionlessness,

Because of the consciousness conscioulessness and

Because of the purposeless purposelessness that greeted

The oil sector (and other sectors of the country).

Within these parameters, leadership and citizenship are responsible for national

development and progress which is the very perspective Diran Ademiju-Bepo proposes in "No More the Taming Hawks" as the nonchalant or inept or lackadaisical attitude of any of the duo will only plunge a nation into a serious cultural and socio-political catastrophe as " a vast majority of Nigerians still continue to facilitate between exorbitant enthusiasm and irrational irritability when a microscopic few that have piloted the affairs of this nation live in peas anted luxury and propensing solitude".

### **ANALYSIS**

Thus, "No More the Taming Hawks" is a timely play embedded with the richness of varied measures to this malignant concern as well as a new perspective to National development. It is thus a recommended text for the formation of National policy as well as strategy for National development and progress.

As a parable, the suggestions in the text are fitting to every national locale even though it reflects most of the Nigerian society. The text raises viable national questions for national development that are paramount and seek redress in our national policy proposing the need to define our collective vision for the land. Written in 1996 long before the public outcry for National conference and the structuring of Nigeria, the play has suggested these and many more ways out of this worriment bedeviling the country. Even though the policy seem to have failed in the cultural and socio-political reality of the country, it worked in the text through strategic planning rooted in the spirit of love, harmony and collective will illustrated in the story of the rock, the wind and the breeze on page sixteen of the text. According to the author, "Harmony is what we search for like an albatross and unless we find it and accord it the respect it deserves, mere rhetoric will be all we have to show for it" (16). He also suffices that "no cock, no hen, no goat, no keg of palm oil is demanded...for sacrifice (for the joy, peace and stability of the world) ...but love"(6).

The play thus disband hatred, anger, terrorism, nepotism and insurgency among other vices which negates national progress and rhetorically assert the fact that, " How can we find harmony in the mouth of a fun?" (16). It also disband regionalism, god fatherism and violence which negates/destroys the cultural and socio-political structures in the country with the rise in self-centeredness, tribalism, sectionalism and "democratic coup d'état" evident in election malpractices.

Generally, the play argues that bad leadership has stall the nation's enormous, economic and political potentials and consequently turned our land into a den surrounded by arm bearing hawks who destroy people's livelihood and take lives with such impunity leaving a trail of carnage, destruction, death, poverty, division and evil in its wake and as a result of leadership failure cause acute poverty, political instability, insurgency and the collapse of government institutions.

Thus, the need to ask ourselves questions. New questions. Old questions. Why, for instance we always fail, swore an oath and always forget it, and why have we not kept the letters of that oath and constantly live at parallel to the motto and creed of the country becomes paramount as the 2019 general election approaches. The answer to these questions and many others seem to be steering us in the eye looking back into history even though it is quite unfortunate according to the writer "that we are never willing to learn from our past"(23).

The 79 page drama published by Dynasty Gold Books and Publishers is divided into 10 parts. It tells and highlights major and minor events in the cultural and socio-political history of the country. Pre-eminent to it are the cultural clashes between ethnic groups, social and political crisis that has retarded national development. Written in parable, the play employs the use of proverbs, soliloquy, stichomythia, monologue, adage, repartee, turn allocation and dialogue for pleasurable reading. There is no doubt as well that the names of characters suggest the locale which create codified mental images and add to the appreciation of the creative prowess of the writer.

As part of his creative intuition, the structure of the play does not follow the conventional pattern of writing plays in acts and scenes and through the three unities as propose by Aristotle but adopted a whoopee hoopla endeared creative approach of "flights" divided into three phases of take off, flights and landing to trace the cultural and socio-political history of the country in a bit to give to the reader a slice of adventure into the cultural and socio-political history of the country as the take off (introduces the play and captures Nigeria before independence and shortly after independence), the flights and the intrigues through the cultural and socio-political crisis followed by an alternated change of leadership between

democratically elected civilians governments and military dictatorship, then the landing where all the conflicts are resolve yet brings us into the present day with emerging concerns such as the authenticity of our democracy and who is fitting to be the next president: the young or old, a military or civilian, a Christian or a Muslim, a male or female, becomes paramount among other ethnic dividing lines.

And despite years of debate and mounting evidence on these issues, the perception according to Uschi Schrieber is that collectively we inexplicably paid little real attention and hence made little to no improvements. This is evident in the nonchalant or the lackadaisical attitude of the electorate or rather the citizens in participating in nation politics which the writer discourages. The play rather encourage the power of political participation through collective will as seen in the attitude of the citizens in the text and consequently their achievement to disband Wanda Asagbade His Hawkcellency and his supreme Hawks-in-council a metaphor of bad leadership, usurpers, disturbers of national peace, unholy agitators and tyranny characterized by the collapse of social infrastructures, political corruption, food crisis and insecurity. Among the list of the causes of the retarded growth of the cultural and socio-political morality in a/the country is a sense according to Uschi Schrieber that the right issues are not being address or only make into the public and political discourse once it is too late. Thus laments the fact that, for much of the last century, we expected our leaders to see the future, explain the challenges and navigate this through the contradictions, dilemma, and of course the dangers. Most of all, we expected them to work on our behalf, to think carefully, critically and strategically to take us safely through the obstacles ahead. But reverse is the case looking at the scenarios in the country. Pre-eminent to this are the defection drama of political leaders in the country which according to Obahiagbon is as a result of the direction directionless...and the purposelessness of the leaders.

Even though Nigeria is said to be in the dispensation of Democracy, but the indices in place continue to reference it to the military administration looking at the trail of leaders since the start of democracy in 1999. Evidently, the country has not be govern by a true civilian until in 2010 when GoodLuck Ebele Jonathan was sworn in as president of the country base on

necessity following the demise of President Musa Yar'Adua and his election in 2011 after which President Muhammadu Buhari who has military linkages.

With this and many other political staccato and youths clamoring for a better Nigeria and the attempt to rephrase the popular adage of "Youths are the leaders of tomorrow": the tomorrow that never seem to come, the country passed a bill of the "Not Too Young to Rule". But it is worthy to note that credibility is not in age, size or stature: seeing the rise and fall of young leaders around the world, but in wisdom, love for the people, harmony by deemphasizing our differences and emphasizing our collective will/goals which is the very concern of the text "No More The Taming Hawks" as it is evident in the mutual respect accorded to each other by the citizens in the text.

The climax of the text comes with the victory of the citizens through collective will to disband Wande Asagbade His Hawkcellency and his supreme Hawks-in-council who are a metaphor of self-centered politics, oppression and bad leadership. Their victory wouldn't have come if they had not broken down the wall of their differences which Ogbahiabon describes as "meningestial citizens", thus reluctant and insensitive to power. This insensitivity captures the predicament of the citizens in "No More the Taming Hawks" (and to a large extent of Nigeria) before the realization of the need for harmony to fight against the enemy of community and national development. It is this very concern that Diran Ademiju Bepo portray through varying shades of characters and characterization including: Riokan, the conscience, Lameto, Luko, Doki, Lasi, the family of Kofo, Baba Oja and Iya Oja who are community organizers, emancipators and agents of liberation against bad leadership. Most of all, we expected them to work on our behalf, to think carefully, critically and strategically to take us safely through the obstacles ahead.

However, the political behavior in the text (at the opening and few flights into the text) as well as in the country has continue to cause setbacks. This political behavior highlighted is characterized by the nonchalant and lackadaisical attitude of citizens to participate in politics and consequently leech the country of national development as well as plunge it into acute poverty, cultural and socio-political instability, insurgence and the collapse of government institutions.

"No More the Taming Hawks" provides hope and proposes the pursuit of people based economic programmes as having the potential to foster democratic governance within the context of quality followership as it argues against coercion and socio-political participation.

The whole play is a metaphor and can be understood in several shades of interpretation. The author is however optimistic, a philanthropist, a theatre advocate, community builder, an emancipator and national developer. He has written several books interrogating national policy and strategies including: "Rhythm of the Wind", "Rape of the Last Sultan" and "Virus of Anomie"- a parable on life, love, politics, choices, and the ultimate triumph of individual wills in the face of the new ideology of our time: individualism and survivalism: and preaches the ideology of togetherness and a better society.

Influenced by Anthony Adah, Chukwuma Okeye, Sanctus Anyanwu, Sola Fosudo, Ola Rotimi, Fela Kuti, Greg Odutayo, Joseph Uchea, Late Professor Samuel Ayedime Kafewo, Sola Adeyemi, Peter Adekunle, Professor Bakare Ojo Rasaki and Femi Osofisan, he is a prominent voice and pioneered of the academic discourse on the Post Osofisan generation of playwrights with his PhD thesis in 2005.

He has contributed immensely to scholarship in theatre, film and dramatic literatures which attempt to probe and interrogate national policies/strategies as well as suggest ways for national progress. At the centre of this ideology is the power of collective will, love, harmony and a hope for a better society against dictatorship, self-centeredness and personal aggrandizement. He has equally written scripts for Radio, stage and screen for this very concern and other concerns of national interest. His ingenious versatility in philosophy, criticism, directing and playwriting as well as his ambidextrous use of media forms for cultural and socio-political awareness and consciencetization is commendable.

Diran Ademiju Bepo was born into a royal family and grew in the arts to be a member of the Society of Nigeria Theatre Artist (SONTA), Association of Nigerian Authors (ANA) and National Association of Nigerian Theatre Arts Practitioners (NANTAP).

As a student, he was twice the playwright of the year with two of his manuscripts: "Rhythm of the Wind" and "No More the Taming Hawks"

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chosen to represent the University of Ibadan at the Annual Nigerian Universities Theatre Arts Festival (NUTAF) as none of the scripts submitted to the Association of Theatre Arts Students, ATAS UI NUTAF Committee met expectations. Since then, the play continues to draw attention on public and scholarly platforms to discuss politics and strategies for national development and progress.

### CONCLUSION

With the cultural and socio-political crisis be deviling the country, "No More the Taming Hawks" holds some facts, opinion and strategies. This is rooted in the spirit of love, harmony and collective will as no cock, no hen, no goat, no keg of palm oil is demanded...for sacrifice... (for the joy, peace and stability of the world) but love (16).

The text is an optimistic text despite years and seasons of gory tales through the cultural and socio-political history of the country. The play text fights against hatred, anger, terrorism, nepotism, sectionalism, god fatherism, violence, and self-centered politics among other vices that

retards national development and proposes the pursuit of people based economic programmes as having the potentials to foster democratic governance within the context of quality followership.

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