

UNIVERSITY OF PORT HARCOURT

**THEFT AS A NATIONAL CREED:
THE BURDENS OF A
“PHARISEED” SOCIETY**

By

PROFESSOR WILLIE J. OKOWA

B.Sc (Lagos), PhD (Uppsala)

Professor of Economics

VALEDICTORY LECTURE SERIES

NO. 25

DECEMBER 6, 2022

University of Port Harcourt Printing Press Ltd.
University of Port Harcourt,
Port Harcourt,
Nigeria.
E-mail: uniport.press@uniport.edu.ng

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ISSN: 1119-9849
VALEDICTORY LECTURE SERIES NO 25.
DELIVERED: 6TH DECEMBER, 2022.

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PROGRAMME

1. GUEST ARE SEATED

2. INTRODUCTION

3. THE VICE CHANCELLOR'S OPENING REMARKS

4. CITATION

5. THE VALEDICTORY LECTURE

The lecturer shall remain standing during the citation. He shall step on the rostrum, and deliver his Valedictory Lecture. After the lecture, he shall step towards the Vice Chancellor, and deliver a copy of the Valedictory Lecture and return to his seat.

6. CLOSING REMARKS BY THE VICE CHANCELLOR

7. VOTE OF THANKS

8. DEPARTURE

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PROTOCOL

Vice-Chancellor, Sir

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Deans of Faculties

Heads of Department

Distinguish Professors and Scholars

Staff and Students of the University of Port Harcourt

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

1.0 Preliminary Notes

1.1 Appreciation

After about 70 years of life on earth, one is indebted to a legion of people and Institutions.

Let me start by paying my respects to the Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Owunari Georgewill, for the opportunity to deliver my valedictory lecture.

Next, I have to pay my respects to my late parents, Chief E.J. Okowa and Madam E.L. Okowa.

My wife Dr. (Mrs.) Ezaal Okowa has shared with me 44 years of my life. She has been a great wife, a great friend, and a great sister. She has also been a great mother to our children. Thank you “the mama”. God bless you.

As the only child of my mother, my two sons Pinibi and Aghudum have been my two brothers while my two daughters Amutolani and Ela have been my two sisters. I also remember my late son Otuami, who left us at the tender age of 5 back in 1987. Thanks for your love and respect. God bless you all. Let me also salute my grandchildren, Olami, Aniela, Erolibi, Bughe, Alisebh and Kwemi. God bless you all.

I have had great teachers in the primary school (Adibom Central School, Emelego-Odual), the secondary school (Nyemoni Grammar School, Abonnema) and the University (University of Lagos, Lagos, and Uppsala University, Uppsala). I remember with gratitude my late Vice Principal at Nyemoni Grammar school, Mr. I.W. Bob Manuel (Emeritus Prof. Willie Abbey’s father) from whom I received the baptism

of basic honesty, fair play and justice to all irrespective of tribe or religion.

I remember with nostalgia my PhD supervisor in Uppsala, late Prof. Göran Ohlin. Bless you Sir, wherever you are, for being a father to me. I cannot forget my HOD and Secretary of the Nobel Prize Committee for Economics, late Prof. Ragnar Bentzel, who loved and respected me so much. Bless you Sir, wherever you are.

Let me remember my Political Economy mentor, Late Prof. Claude Ake, for his love. Bless you Sir, wherever you are. My gratitude also goes to our second Vice-Chancellor, Prof. S.J.S Cookey who approved my study leave.

I owe a huge debt of gratitude to my colleagues in my department, my faculty, and the university at large. Thank you all for your love and understanding.

In our days as children, a child was raised by the whole community. My undying love and gratitude to the Okolomade Community for raising me.

I love the unique students of Uniport and they also love me. Thank you all.

My parents, teachers and community are largely responsible for what is good in me. I am largely responsible for whatever bad left in me.

1.2 Background Citations

When the citizens of a Nation deem their most accomplished thieves as the most electable then they lose the right to complain when theft becomes their National creed.

Modibo Keita
(1915 - 1977)

Nigeria has no common language, no common culture, no common religion, no common heritage and no common history. Only one ideology binds all of us together: commitment to thievery, stealing and looting.

Willie Jeremiah Okowa
(1953 -).

Governance in contemporary Nigeria has been turned to a thieving enterprise run by chartered thieves for thieving competition.*

Willie Jeremiah Okowa
(1953 -).

**Late Mr. Nmezi, a then messenger in our Bursary Department gave me the concept of chartered thieves, though the definition is mine. A chartered thief is someone “licensed” by the state to practice stealing.*

OPTION A

NIGERIA		DEVELOPMENT	
-		+	
SYSTEMIC	=	GIANT OF AFRICA	= LIFE
CORRUPTION			
-		+	
INDISCIPLINE		BLACKMAN'S GLORY	

OPTION B

NIGERIA		RWANDA	
+		+	
SYSTEMIC	=	SOMALIA	= DEATH
CORRUPTION			
+		+	
INDISCIPLINE		YUGOSLAVIA	

Nigeria's Life and Death Choice.
Source, Okowa (1994) "Abdulistic Capitalism".

2 The Need for Ruthless and Brutal Frankness in Contemporary Nigerian Social Discourse

The desires to tell the truth is one condition for being an intellectual. The other is courage, readiness to carry rational inquiry to wherever it may lead, to undertake ruthless criticism of everything that exists; ruthless in the sense that the criticism will not shrink from its own conclusions or from conflict with the powers that be.¹ {See Okowa 2005}

*The scholar is the only person charged by society to carry the burden of thought to its extremes, even when thought hits back.²
{Wayne C. Booth; see Okowa (2005)}*

When a society is decadent and diseased, to conform and to follow convention is an act of cowardice and unpatriotism. Indeed, from the point of view of the long run and fundamental interest of society, conformity with the values of such a decadent society is treasonable. {Okowa (2005)}

Our lecture today will ruthlessly condemn the Hobbesian state that our country has been reduced to. It will also prescribe the way forward to a Nigeria that is the black man's glory and a blessing first to the black race and thence to the human race. Our medicine may be very bitter indeed but then its purpose is to cure the Nigerian disease. A Nigeria, based on justice and fair play for all, irrespective of ethnicity, religion, gender or region, is the only sustainable way to ensure peace, unity and progress.

3. Preamble

Nigeria is a society that has been completely swallowed by Pharisee values and Pharisee attitudes. Stealing, lying, lawlessness, gossiping, hypocrisy have become our socio-cultural normalities.

It has been said that our problem is that of leadership. But then is our leadership problem not a symptom of a larger social malady. If day in, day out, we produce incompetent, tribalistic and thieving leaders in all stratas of society, is it not reasonable to argue that thieving, tribalism and incompetence are dominant propensities in our society.

A government can give expression to the will of the people but the people must have that will, if you don't have it, there is nothing the government can do.

Lee Kuan Yew

Of course, if you are a thief, then you need the moral support of your fellow tribalists when you are caught and these tribalists will give you the necessary support because they also harbour the thieving propensity. It is only that they have not had the opportunity.

In his “Abdulistic Capitalism”, Okowa (1994) argued that the value of wanting to make money without doing corresponding work has become a dominant one in our society, particularly among the elites. People are told to say a loud “Amen” to become millionaires. Economics teaches us that you need the inputs of factors of production (land, labour, capital and entrepreneurship) in order to produce wealth. The new breed Nigerian “men of God” tell us that they have founded a new economics in which you can become wealthy by saying

“Amen” to their relevant pronouncements. Indeed, the louder the Amen the more millions you get. And yet we are dismayed when young boys and girls believe they can become millionaires by eating the body parts of their fellow human beings.

It is important to note at this point, that in the said publication, that is Okowa (1994), the author made it clear that the only way Nigeria may be saved from the Somalian and Yugoslavian tragedies is a political economy restructuring of the country’s political system. The fundamental element in the said restructuring is complete resource control. The property rights of the natural owners of land should be returned to them. Relevant taxes may be imposed on such landed property owners. I don’t know if that solution is still sufficient today.

The upshot of the foregoing is that the nationalization of the oil wealth of the peoples of the Niger Delta is the fundamental enabling element in the creation of systemic corruption and “Abdulistic Capitalism”. When we nationalized such huge landed wealth in the context of a Nigerian State that is controlled by hegemonic feudal powers, systemic corruption is inevitable. This is why the war against systemic corruption in the context of our extant unitary political system is unwinnable. Each new government, whatever the name of the party in power, will be more corrupt than its predecessor. Without political restructuring based on return of landed property rights to the natural owners of the land, systemic corruption will inevitably drive Nigeria to destruction via Somalia or Yugoslavia.

4 The Nigerian Inhuman Drama

In order to reduce the volume of this lecture, we shall list below in bullet points format the dramatic oddities that afflict Nigerian politics, economy and society at large.

Nigeria

- A nation where a clear unitary constitution is labeled and celebrated as federal
- A nation where a constitution created by a military oligarchy is framed fraudulently as the peoples constitution
- A nation where the state has appropriated the landed resources of her poor minorities living in a difficult terrain and shared out as “oil blocks” to the “big boys” who do not own the land.
- A capitalist nation where land, a key factor of production, has been taken away from the natural owners and shared to the “big boys” in an ungodly and unjust display/abuse of power
- A nation that exports millions of tons of crude oil but imports petroleum products
- A nation that has millions of hectares of arable land and millions of unemployed youths but with hunger endemic
- A nation with a vast array of mineral and agricultural resources and yet is the poverty capital of the world
- A nation where the very poor, driven by poverty and hunger to steal for survival are burnt alive while the elites who steal in billions are given chieftaincy titles, national honours and celebrated
- A nation that celebrates endemic liars but castigates those who speak the truth
- A nation in which human beings in the 21st century believe that they can become millionaires by eating the body parts of their fellow human beings

- A nation where professors who lie and cheat to earn accreditation for their departments shamelessly punish students who copy their methods in order to pass their exams
- A nation where professors kowtow before crooks masquerading as pastors and “men of God” for wealth and protection

Let me pause to answer those who may think that Okowa is too critical of our country.

To criticize one's country is to do it a service and pay it a compliment. It is a service because it may spur the country to do better than it is doing; it is a compliment because it evidences a belief that the country can do better than it is doing....Criticism, in short is more than a right; it is an act of patriotism a higher form of patriotism.

{Fulbright (1966), p. 25}

For those who may think that my criticism of our county implies a lack of love for the country, I do not think I can do better than quote the great French Existentialist Philosopher, Albert Camus.

No I didn't love my country, if pointing out what is unjust in what we love amounts to not loving, if insisting that what we love should measure up to the finest image we have of her amounts to not loving.

{See Fulbright (1966) p. 25-26}

Indeed, when we speak the truth to power, we are helping to beam powerful light on evil corridors and of course doers of evil cannot help but hate us.

Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.

{St. John's Gospel, chp. 3 verse 20}

How did Nigeria come to this position? Who did this to us? We shall attempt in the next two sections to provide answers to the above questions.

5 Greediot, Pharisees and “Abdulistic Capitalism”

We have already noted that Okowa (1994) in his “Abdulistic Capitalism” lamented the situation in our beloved country in which the leaders and other powerful men of the society have internalized the value of making money without a corresponding input of factors of production. Only fools need to work in order to “make it”. As nobody wants to remain a fool, many have joined the band wagon of “Abdulistic” thinking and behavior. Yahoo boys, kidnappers, armed robbers, “political robbers”, looters, bandits, ritual killers, terrorists etc; have one thing in common and that is the use of force or fraud or both to take what does not belong to them.

The Cambridge Dictionary defines a greediot as a greedy fellow who wants a lot more food, money etc than he/she really needs. There is an element of greed and an element of idiocy in the defined behavior. When our political leaders steal public funds in billions of naira and even dollars, there is an element of extreme greed and an element of stupendous idiocy in such behavior, particularly in a society where tens of millions are facing starvation. Yet, these greediot are the role

models of our society. They are the “men in town”, the “big boys” and the “movers and shakers of society”. They are found in all departments, in all stratas of our unfortunate country. The Greediot is the first son of “Abdulistic Capitalism”, while the second son is the Pharisee.

The Oxford Dictionary defines a Pharisee as a self-righteous or hypocritical person. When a public official known to have wealth beyond what he/she could legitimately earn in ten lifetimes, mounts the rostrum to condemn stealing in public agencies, we are clearly notified that a Pharisee has arrived. When a pastor known to be sleeping with the beautiful ladies in his congregation mounts the pulpit to condemn fornication, we observe a Pharisee in town. The Pharisee phenomenon is everywhere in our country. They dominate government and her agencies, they rule the universities, they are lords of our religious organizations, etc. These are the men and women who set the tone for others to copy. This is why corruption is endemic.

We will have time to examine this Pharisee matter later on in this lecture, from the Biblical point of view. For now, let us simply say that these two powerful sons of “Abdulistic Capitalism” have turned life in Nigeria into a death orchestra. Unless we stop them, Nigeria will certainly die through the orchestra of “Somalia” or “Yugoslavia”.

As we proceed, let us remind ourselves that as been demonstrated by Okowa (1994), we came to this sad “Abdulistic Capitalism” situation through systemic corruption which itself came about because the big boys of the ethnic majors used the instrumentality of the Nigerian state to transfer the landed properties of the powerless minorities of the Niger Delta to themselves. The logic was, might is right. It is the

same logic that drives the armed robber, kidnapper, unknown gunmen, etc.

6. Nigeria: Dangerous Burdens/Curses

It is now time to identify and highlight a number of burdens/curses that afflict the Nigerian society. These burdens/curses are:

- i. The Resource Burden/Curse: Naboth's Vineyard
- ii. The Ethnic Burden/Curse
- iii. The Malthusian Burden/Curse
- iv. The Feudal Burden: Greediot Feudalism
- v. The Religious/Pharisee Burden/Curse
 - The Mathew Curse
 - The Samuelian Curse
 - The Timothian Curse

6.1 The Resource Burden/Curse: Naboth's Vineyard

The inequitable management of our oil resources is the fundamental cause of the Nigerian descent towards Somalia and Yugoslavia. Hegemonic feudal forces captured the Nigerian State and utilized state power to transfer the oil wealth of the powerless minorities of the Niger Delta in their favour in line with the doctrine of "Babylonian Matthewnomics" a la Okowa (2005).

It was the Venezuelan Oil Minister Pablo who in 1976 referred to crude oil as the "devil's excrement" Okowa (2017). Apparently, our leaders swallowed a heavy dose of the "devil's excrement" and have since been behaving like the devil.

Let me use this opportunity to clarify an issue which was left hanging in my Inaugural lecture of 2005. In the parable of the Talents, Matthew (25:14-29) our Lord Jesus Christ posited that "for everyone who has will be given more, and he will have an

abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him” (see verse 29). This conclusion came about in relation to the necessity to invest. If you invest, you will derive some profit. However, if you do not invest, you will lose even the little that you have. We may label this as “Christian Matthewnomics” as opposed to “Babylonian Matthewnomics” where the powerful use state power to transfer to themselves the wealth of the powerless.

Finally the treatment of the powerless minorities of the Niger Delta by the hegemons who control the Nigerian state is akin to King Ahab’s treatment of Naboth and his vineyard (see 1st Kings Chapter 21). This was the final act that doomed Ahab’s kingdom.

6.2 The Ethnic Burden/Curse

The ethno religious diversity in Nigeria represents a major burden in the political management of the country. People have argued that a country like India for example has far more ethnic diversity than Nigeria but she has been able to better manage her diversity. However, there are two major significant differences between India and Nigeria in terms of ethnic diversity.

First, the Indians have lived together for thousands of years as a country and in the process have created an Indian nation with a civilization dated back some four thousand years or so. On the other hand, Nigerian was cobbled together by British imperialism a little over one hundred years ago. In fact the name Nigeria was given her by the British. Hence, we can talk of Indian nationalism, while Nigerians are still debating about rotational presidency.

Secondly, the Hindi (Urdu speakers) account for almost 50 percent of the population while no other nationality accounts for up to 10 percent of the population in India. It is easy in this situation for the Urdu language to be taken as the national language. On the other hand, Nigeria has three major nationalities /languages. It is therefore more difficult to pick one of them as the national language and create some form of unity and nationalism based on a common language.

6.3 The Malthusian Burden/Curse

The Malthusian burden/curse relates to the issue of population growth. The population rate of growth is a crucial element in the development process. The rate of growth of per capita income is equal to rate of growth of national income less the rate of growth of population. In addition to the above direct relationship, a rapid rate of population growth entails the diversion of a significant quantum of resources into provisions for childcare thus diminishing what is available for growth enhancing investment.

Table 1 presents the data on population growth for a selected number of countries and groups. Sub Saharan Africa (Black Africa) stands distinctly different from other groups in terms of its heavy rate of population growth. Most parts of the non-black world have reduced their population rate of growth to 1 percent or less. Black African countries have rates in excess of 2.5 percent. Chad and Niger Republics which share the Northern border with Nigeria have rates of 2.96 and 3.77 percent. Do we now appreciate the “invasion” of Nigeria by bandits from the North.

Table 1: Population Rate of Growth (Selected Countries and Groups) for 2020

S/No	Country/Group	Annual Population Growth (%)
1	Nigeria	2.54
2	Chad	2.96
3	Niger	3.77
4	Bangladesh	1.00
5	Indonesia	1.07
6	Malaysia	1.29
7	Turkey	1.08
8	Sub Saharan African	2.63
9	Euro Area	0.20
10	European Union	0.14
11	Heavily Indebted Poor Countries	2.74
12	China	0.23
13	India	0.99
14	Low income	2.67
15	Lower Middle Income	1.38
16	Middle Income	0.98
17	Upper Middle Income	0.47
18	High Income	0.34

Source: data.worldbank.org

Let also note that Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia and Turkey are all Muslim countries. Indeed the proportion of Muslims in countries like Bangladesh, Indonesia and Turkey are in excess of 90 percent. Yet, they have all succeeded in bringing down their population rate of growth to about 1 percent. Turkey actually criminalized polygamy in 1926 as part of Ataturk's secularist reforms. (See [en.m.wikipedia.org](http://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki)>wiki). So Nigeria cannot hide under any religion to refuse to do the needful in the area of population management.

One is reminded here of the famous Reverend gentleman Thomas Robert Malthus and his population doctrine. If we insist on breeding like rats, then we should be prepared to live

and die like rats. This is the Malthusian Burden/Curse which is afflicting Nigeria.

6.4 The Feudal Burden: Greediot Feudalism

William Lee created the “stocking frame” a knitting machine to replace labourous hand knitting in England in 1589. The reigning queen, Queen Elizabeth the 1st (1588 - 1603) and her successor King James the 1st (1603 - 1625) opposed the innovation. This invention which promised to revolutionize textile production and massively increase productivity in the textile industry was opposed by the queen and king for fear of losing political power {Acemoglu and Robinson (2012)}.

Until 1688, all the land in England was ultimately owned by the crown. However after the glorious revolution of 1688, property in land was increasingly privatized.

Increasing devolution of land ownership away from the monarchy and the feudal lords in favour of the citizens that took place after the so-called Glorious Revolution in England in 1688 created the institutional foundations for the industrial revolution which started in the 1780s.

{Acemoglu and Robinson (2012)}

In Nigeria, we are moving in the reverse direction. The cocoa, groundnuts and palm oil industries that energized the development of Nigeria during our golden era, were all built on the basis of private ownership of land. It was the Land Use Decree number 6 of 1978 by the military which was created to take over the oil and gas resources of the minorities of the Niger Delta which solidified the process of the development of systemic corruption in our country.

We do not desire at all that the great masses shall become well off and independent.... How could we otherwise rule over them.

{Friedrich Von Gentze, see Acemoglu and Robinson (2012) P. 225}

Friedrich Von Gentze was the assistant to Prince Von Metternich, Foreign Minister of Austria-Hungary, appointed by Francis the 1st, the last emperor of the Holy Roman Empire (1792-1806) and subsequently the Emperor of the Austria-Hungary Empire. Indeed Emperor Francis was opposed to the development of industry for fear it would mass people in urban centres who may oppose his absolutist rule. He was opposed to railway construction. “No, no I will have nothing to do with it, lest the revolution might come into the country”, Acemoglu and Robinson (2012) page 226.

In 1445, Johannes Gutenberg invented a printing press based on moveable type. The new innovation quickly spread in Western Europe but Sultan Bayezid II of the Ottoman Empire in 1485 issued an edict that forbade Muslims from the use of this new innovation. Sultan Selim I re-enforced this edict in 1515. It was not until 1717 that this new invention that resulted in the mass production of books was allowed in the Ottoman Empire {Acemoglu and Robinson (2012)}. The Sultan stopped the introduction of this mass production technology for fear that a literate and educated population will challenge their absolutist rule, i.e will be a danger to their absolute power. The peoples of the Ottoman Empire paid a terrible price for this.

This opposition to the printing press had the obvious consequences for literacy, education and economic success. In 1800

probably only 2 to 3 percent of the citizens of the Ottoman Empire were literate, compared with 60 percent of adult males and 40 percent of adult females in England. In the Netherlands and Germany, literacy rates were even higher.
{Acemoglu and Robinson (2012) p. 215}

From the foregoing, it is obvious that feudalism obstructs the development process. Ake (1985) has highlighted the issue of the limited autonomization of the Nigerian state which has been captured by hegemonic feudal forces, Okowa (1994). These feudal forces successfully used the Nigerian state to capture the oil resources of the Niger Delta. The sharing of this oil money by elites is central to the problems of the Nigerian political economy.

The concentration of feudal power is located in the far North and this is why the far North is the least developed in the country. The feudal system will not allow the masses to be literate and educated for fear of losing their unearned feudal privileges. These unearned privileges which have enabled them to be millionaires and billionaires with little or no efforts have created in these people extreme greed with the associated idiotic behavior. They have become greedidiots. When politicians deprive their own people of good education in order to loot public resources for the purchase of all kinds of modern gadgets and properties for their families and forget in the process that the uneducated masses will turn their society into a hell on earth, then it is the height of idiocy.

6.5 The Religious/Pharisee Burden/Curse

The Religious/Pharisee curses are three in number viz:

- The Matthew Curse
- The Samuelian Curse
- The Timothian Curse

6.5.1 The Matthew Curse

Our Lord Jesus Christ preached that we should not judge so that we are not judged (Matthew 7:1-5). Christ however had an exception to his rule and this relates to hypocrisy. In Matthew chapter 23, from verse 1 to 29, he laid down seven woes on hypocrites.

The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses's seat. So you must obey them and do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach.... Woe to you teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites!....

The only thing worse than a liar is a liar that's also a hypocrite
Tennessee Williams

Hypocrisy is the mother of all evil
Don King

It is difficult if not impossible to find one Nigerian who is not guilty of the “mother of all evil”, hypocrisy. We steal in private and publicly condemn stealing. We tell lies all the times but condemn lying all the time. We practice tribalism all the time but publicly condemn tribalism all the time. We practice nepotism all the time but condemn nepotism all the time. We practice injustice but condemn injustice. Indeed, we

practice all manner of corruption all the time while condemning corruption all the time. We are hypocrites.

The Matthew curse is beyond normal academics. Is it not possible that the seven woes placed on mankind by Christ is what has turned our country Nigeria into a hell on earth. What I have to say here is that when next you want to publicly condemn an activity which you do in private, remember the seven **WOES**. You may be attracting the Matthew curse on yourself.

Mr. Vice-Chancellor Sir, at this point, let me advise that we need to reconsider our practice of asking some “Pastor” or “man of God” to offer opening prayers before important meetings in the University. If the fellow is laboring under the seven woes in Matthew’s curse, then his or her prayer may attract woes rather than blessings to the University. It is better to create a few minutes and allow people to pray privately and silently according to their creed. Indeed, this is more in line with the tenets of a University which is supposed to be a universal institution.

6.5.2 The Samuelian Curse

China is officially an atheist state and Communist Party members are banned from believing in or practicing any faith. (See for example www.hrw.org>religion) The vast majority of Chinese don’t believe in God. Yet the Chinese were able to build the fastest growing economy in modern history, growing at 10 percent or more from the 1980s to 2005 and beyond. In 1981, 90 percent of the Chinese population of about one billion people lived in poverty, which is about 900 million people in poverty. By 2018, the poverty rate in China had declined to about 1.7 percent or 24 million people out of about 1.4 billion inhabitants. In essence, in a little over 3 decades the atheist

Chinese state was able to move more than 800 million people out of poverty and practically more or less eliminated poverty in its land.

Let us contrast the foregoing with the Nigerian scenario. In 1980, the poverty rate in Nigeria was 27.2 percent which was about 39 million people in absolute terms. By 2018, the Nigerian population had grown to about 196 million with about 76 million living in poverty, that is, a poverty incidence of about 39 percent. Today, Nigeria has become the poverty capital of the world with the largest number of people living in extreme poverty. Meanwhile Nigeria is a society where religion is the in-thing.

The question then arises as to how an atheist society could have made so much human progress while a society that believes in God and is extremely religious could have made so much human retrogression. We shall attempt to make an explanation on the basis of the Christian Bible.

Let us start with Genesis.

***So God created man in his own image,....
Male and female he created them. God
blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful
and increase in number; fill the earth and
subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and
the birds of the air and over every living
creature that moves on the ground.***

{Genesis 1: 27-28}

God spent six days working to create the universe and rested on the seventh day.

***By the seventh day God had finished the
work he had been doing; so on the seventh***

day he rested from all his work. And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.

{Genesis 2:2-3}

Now we come to the story of King Saul and the Amalekites found in 1st Samuel chapter 15. God had asked Saul through Prophet Samuel to go and utterly destroy the Amalekites. However, Saul after destroying the Amalekites, spared their King Agag and the best of the sheep and cattle, the fat calves of the Amalekites and brought them to Israel. God was angry with Saul for disobeying his command to utterly destroy everything of the Amalekites. When Samuel confronted Saul for not destroying the fine sheep and cows of the Amalekites, Saul responded “The soldiers brought them from the Amalekites; they spared the best of the sheep and cattle to sacrifice to the Lord your God,(1st Samuel chapter 15 verse 15). It was at this point that Samuel pronounced his famous “Samuelian” curse on King Saul.

Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the Lord? To obey is better than sacrifice,... Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, he has rejected you as king.

{1st Samuel 15:22-23}

The upshot of the forgoing is that the Chinese obey God and are extremely hard working even though they don't believe in him and are prosperous, while we in Nigeria disobey him by refusing to work hard rather preferring to sacrifice to him and suffer God's rejection through the Samuelian curse.

6.5.3 The Timothian Curse

For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. {1st Timothy 6:10}

Is there a Timothian Curse? I could not convince myself that there is a Timothian Curse as such. The reason is that the love of money may drive us to be industrious, entrepreneurial and hard working in order to be millionaires and billionaires. This will enhance economic growth and development and enable society to eliminate poverty or at least reduce it to the barest minimum. In itself therefore, the love of money could be something positive in line with Adam Smith's invisible hand doctrine. However, this requires the appropriate institutional framework of law and order to ensure that those who attempt to fulfill their love for money in ways other than those allowed by society through its laws are quickly apprehended and removed from society. If we have the appropriate institutions to ensure the foregoing, then the love of money is not necessarily a curse for it promotes hard work, industry and entrepreneurship.

However, when the legal and institutional framework is weak, then people are encouraged to do all kinds of criminalities to satisfy their love for money. In this scenario, the love of money clearly becomes "a root for all kinds of evils" a Timothian Curse.

7 Saving Nigeria

Can Nigerian be saved? What can we do to save Nigeria? We may now examine the above issues.

7.1 Reviewing What Happened to Nigeria

Until the oil boom of the 1970s, our economy was based on agriculture. Cocoa and rubber in the then Western Region,

palm products in the Eastern Region, groundnuts, cotton and hides and skins in the North.

If the West had developed her cocoa into chocolates, she would today be a participant in the billions of dollars of the global chocolate market, the East would today be a participant in the billions of dollars global market for oil palm produce and its derivatives while the North would today be a participant in the trillions of dollars global market for textiles, apparels and dairy. Nigeria would today be exporting processed agricultural products, textiles and apparels in hundreds of billions of dollars. This would have involved the education and training of millions of our young men and women. Boko haram, banditry, terrorism and separatist movements would not have found a fertile territory to germinate, grow and mature.

Unfortunately the military intervened and imposed a unitary system in replacement of our negotiated federal arrangement. The military decreed away the property rights of the minority owners of the oil and gas of the Niger Delta. They now unleashed the sharing syndrome which displaced production as the fundamental driving force of the country's political economy. Political power became the critical factor in determining one's income and wealth. The dignity of labour was severely damaged. The county's capitalism degenerated to what Okowa (1994) labeled "Abdulistic Capitalism" in which the elites institutionalize the value infrastructure where people internalized a new norm of making money without doing any productive work.

The 1999 militarily imposed constitution legitimized the unitary formation of the military which concentrated power to manage the various resource endowments of the various

nationalities in the hands of the Federal Government. You only need to “capture” the centre and “all other things shall be added unto you”. It is formula for inevitable conflict and pervasive violence, particularly in a multi-national, multi-cultural and multi-religious country. This is where we are.

7.2 The Way Forward

Back in 1994, in my “Abdulistic Capitalism”, I argued that Nigeria would end up in either the Somalian or Yugoslavian tragedy unless the restructuring of the country’s political economy was quickly done. All the facts indicate that we are almost there. Can Nigeria still be saved? Quite frankly, this is a difficult question to answer. Should Nigeria be saved? This is also a difficult question to answer if the Nigeria we want to save is the inequitable and unjust one governed on the basis of the 1999 military imposed “fraudulent” constitution

However, Nigeria, properly governed, remains the greatest gift to the black man. Restructured to ensure equity and fair play for all nationalities, it is in my view worth saving.

For those of us who believe in saving a restructured Nigeria, find below my model of a new Nigeria.

Nigeria will be made up of five Republics, namely: Arewa, Ndigbo, Niger Delta, Oduduwa and Savannah.

Arewa Republic (Northwest and Northeast/ less those who may wish to join Savannah Republic).

Ndigbo Republic (Southeast and those from the South South and North Central who may wish to join).

Niger Delta Republic (South South less those who may wish to join Ndigbo or Oduduwa Republic, soon to be defined).

Oduduwa Republic (Southwest plus those who may wish to join from South South and North Central).

Savannah Republic (North Central plus those who may wish to join from the Northeast and Northwest; less those who may wish to join Ndigbo or Oduduwa)

Since the military intervention in our politics, political formations have always been arranged and decreed into being by the centre. This is antithetical to the federalist principle. In normal federations, it is the federating units that define the powers of the centre, not the other way round. It is the five federating Republics that should define the powers of the Federal Government as was the case before independence.

There is a second critical issue that we have been getting wrong. Oduduwa for example is made up of Yoruba people who have a common language and a common culture. The kind of internal political arrangement that is proper and sound in Oduduwa is not likely to be the same as that in for example the Niger Delta with a multitude of ethnic nationalities. So each Republic should design its internal governance structure. There cannot be uniformity. Some Republics may create states while others may operate without states.

Now we come to the issue of distribution of powers between the centre and the federating units.

The Federal Government should be exclusively in charge of the following items.

- ❖ Foreign Affairs
- ❖ Foreign Trade
- ❖ Monetary Matters

- ❖ Immigration
- ❖ External Defence

The various Republics should be in charge of all other matters in their respective domains. In terms of the judiciary, the Republics should run their courts up to the Supreme Court. Federal Courts should adjudicate in matters involving disputes between Republics and between Republics and the Federal Government. The Federal courts should also run up to the Supreme Court.

There should be one legislative house say a Senate with equal representation from the Republics, say 20 per Republic and a total of 100 for the country.

We now come to fiscal federalism. First and most importantly, sharing in whatever form should be abolished. All tiers of government should be funded through taxation. For example, if a particular mineral is mined in a given Republic, a federal royalty tax may be imposed, income taxes on the employees of the firm mining the mineral may be imposed by the relevant Republic, while an environmental tax may be imposed by the relevant local government. No sharing.

In terms of the economy, since we have chosen a capitalist system of organizing production, factors of production (land, labour, capital and entrepreneurship) should be privately owned.

To ensure justice and fair play in the running of the federation, we should allow any Republic wishing to secede to do so on the basis of a plebiscite to be conducted by the United Nations. However, actionability on this provision should only be available after 15 years with the new Federation.

We need to change our country's name to one that evokes a sense of oneness and unity in our consciousness. The new name hereby suggested is **Black African Republics of Nigeria**.

We should also return our national anthem to the original one as recommended first by Okowa in his inaugural lecture, Okowa (2005), and then by President Goodluck Jonathan's 2014 National Conference.

Let me note at this point that it amounts to suicide for a sitting President and a sitting legislative house to restructure the country. We are telling Mr. President to drastically reduce his powers and therewith his capacity to provide patronage. The legislators are also being asked to reduce avenues for their oversight functions and all that go with such activities. Only a super patriotic President and super patriotic legislators will do what amounts to class suicide. In my view, we don't have such super patriots running our country. This is the fundamental challenge to the restructuring of the country.

After a very detailed political economy study of our country, I came to the conclusion that without restructuring, Nigeria was doomed to go the way of Somalian or Yugoslavia. That study was published back in 1994, almost 30 years ago. I have no reasons today to change my major conclusions. Without restructuring, nobody will be able to save Nigeria from the forecasted doom. Nobody! I just hope it is not too late.

Let us restructure or Nigeria will die.

8. Conclusion

The question we have to ask is what happened? Our economy increasingly moved from a production one to a sharing one. Social values and attitudes followed in tandem. I once told a very powerful state governor and his team of commissioners and assembly members that the proceeds from sharing oil money could not develop his oil producing state. That five named crops if properly developed would do the job. This was a public event covered by the press. After my lecture, “His Excellency” told us point blank that I was more or less talking rubbish; a Professor and at that time Dean of my Faculty. All the industries in all parts of the country were dead, he told us.

There was only one viable industry in Nigeria, Politics. Unless we restructure and force/compel everybody to go back to work, nothing will work. Niger state with over 70,000 square kilometers of fertile land can export agricultural products quite in excess of 100 billion dollars a year, creating jobs for millions in the process. The Northwest can create a textile and apparel industry worth hundreds of billions in dollars and in the process create tens of millions of good jobs. There would not have been Boko Haram and co if the leaders had educated the people to provide the work force required to service the industries. The above could not happen because the leaders unleashed their energies to capture Abuja and therewith control the sharing of the meager 30 billion dollars or so from crude oil. That is why I have for the last 30 years or so been advocating for restructuring of our political economy. Nobody can save Nigeria unless we restructure. I just hope it is not too late now.

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CITATION



PROFESSOR WILLIE J. OKOWA
B.Sc (Lagos), PhD (Uppsala)
Professor of Economics

Professor Willie J. OKowa was born on the 15th of February, 1953, at Okolomade-Odual community in the present day Abua/Odual Local Government Area of Rivers State. His parents were Chief J.E. Okowa and Madam E.L. Okowa, both of blessed memory. They were honest, hardworking peasant farmers.

Prof. Okowa finished his primary school in 1965 at Adibom Central School, Emelego-Odual. Prof. Okowa did his secondary schooling at Nyemoni Grammar School, Abonnema from 1966 to 1971. He lost a year due to the Nigerian Civil War. He obtained his West African School Certificate (WASC) in 1971, graduating in Division One.

Prof. Okowa entered the University of Lagos in 1972 and graduated in 1976 with a First Class Honours Degree in Economics. He did his national service between 1976 and 1977 at Ado Ekiti in the then Ondo State. After his national service, Okowa joined the services of the University of Port Harcourt as a Graduate Assistant in September 1977.

In May 1978 Okowa moved to Uppsala University, Sweden, for his graduate work. He completed his PhD work in Economics in October 1982 and received a Departmental Award as “the fastest PhD in living memory”.

Okowa returned to the University of Port Harcourt at the end of October 1982 and assumed duties as Lecturer II. He rose through the ranks and was promoted Professor of Economics on the 15th of December 1995. He thus became the first Nigerian Professor of Economics in the University of Port Harcourt and also the first Professor of Economics in the Old Rivers State (Rivers and Bayelsa). This means that Okowa has served the University of Port Harcourt for about 46 years, about 27 years as a Professor.

Apart from part time political appointments and the usual sabbatical leave, Prof. Okowa has not serve any other organization in his whole working life. He is clearly a Mr. Uniport. No wonder his complete and whole hearted devotion to the service of Uniport.

Professor Okowa has held quite a number of positions in the University. Acting HOD Economics; Member, Board of College of Continuing Education; Chairman, University Demonstration Secondary School; Dean, Student Affairs; two times Dean, Faculty of Social Sciences; three times Senate Representative in the University Governing Council; Member,

Development Committee; Member, Central Appointment and Promotions Committee; Member, Capital Works Committee; Innumerable Ad Hoc University Committees; Faculty and Departmental Committees; etc.

As Chairman, University Demonstration Secondary School, Prof. Okowa met a situation where staff who were supposed to be promoted every three years had not been promoted for seven years due to lack of funds. In one year, Okowa's Board promoted the staff two times and paid their arrears in full. Indeed, the school had so much money and the teachers performed so well that Chairman Okowa promised to pay 13th month salary but did not stay long enough to implement the promise as he had to move to Student Affairs to tame the ravaging cult activities in the University.

When Professor Okowa took over Student Affairs in January 1997, cult activities in the University were so deadly that for about five years, student union elections could not hold. He inherited a care-taker Students Government headed by the then Mr. Sylvester Udeorah (now Dr. Udeorah). Student Union week activities were also cancelled during that period. In less than two years Dean Okowa restored both student union elections and the student union week, having successfully gotten the leaders of the various cult groups to renounce cultism; thereby dismantling the cult infrastructure in the University. Okowa did put his life and the lives of members of his family on the line for the University of Port Harcourt, in order to dismantle the deadly phenomenon of cultism in the University.

Prof. Okowa also rendered services outside the University of Port Harcourt. He was a member of a six-man advisory panel for the then Military Governor of Rivers State (then Col. A.S.I

Ukpo, now late), he was a consultant (pro bono) to Rivers State Ministries of Finance and Economic Planning and Social Welfare. He was a member of Rivers State Economic Advisory Council under Governor Rotimi C. Amaechi. He was a member, representing the South South Geopolitical Zone of President Goodluck Jonathan's First Class Scholarship Committee. He was Chairman, Rivbank Insurance Company 1987 – 1992 and during his Chairmanship, the company won a national award as the best run state owned insurance company in 1991. Okowa has also consulted for other organizations like NNPC, UNDP etc.

Professor Okowa has published widely locally and internationally.

Professor Okowa is married to Dr. (Mrs.) Ezaal Okowa. They have four children and six grandchildren.

Professor Owunari A. Georgewill
Vice-Chancellor