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by*

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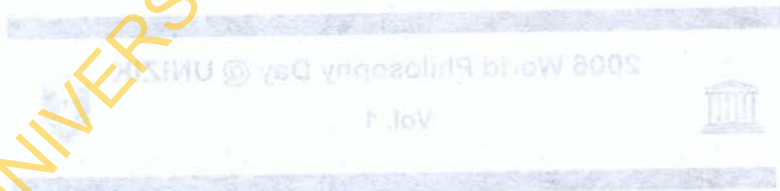


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**POLITICAL PARANOIA AND DECEPTION AMONG PRESENT DAY AFRICAN
LEADERS: A PSYCHOLOGIST'S POINT OF VIEW**

BY

ALEXANDER NYITOR SHENGE, *Ph.D*

ABSTRACT

In Africa, the need for pragmatic, sincere and purposeful leadership has been discussed at many gatherings, both within and outside the continent. Quite sadly, however, most African nations are still not faring well politically, socially and economically. Poverty, ignorance, fear and intimidation, disease and deprivations of all kinds exist in higher proportions than years gone past. It is no longer news that most of Africa's problems stem from the continent's leaders who have found nothing wrong with squandering the wealth of their nations, sometimes, in collaboration with their western partners in corruption. In their characteristic bad governance and indulgence in official corruption, African leaders create for themselves real and imaginary enemies whom they use public funds and other machinery of government to fight. As a way of justifying their acts also, not a few African leaders indulge in acts of deception that are face-saving in nature. While employing different means to perpetuate themselves in office, many of the leaders today stop at nothing to see their dreams come true. Known and designated as psychopathology, paranoia in political context refers to pervasive distrust and suspiciousness of others such that their motives are interpreted as malevolent. An important aspect of political paranoia is a pattern of disowning uncomfortable personal feelings and attributing them to others, the psychological defence mechanism known as projection. Political deception, on the other hand, refers to an inducement of false beliefs by political leaders in their followers or the people they lead. This is principally done using propaganda and sometimes intimidation among

other methods. Deception includes forgery, imposture, conjuring, military, civil and strategic deceptions and much more. This paper used Nigeria as a case study because the Nigerian socio-economic and political environment captures the African experience in not a few ways. The paper utilizes a psychological perspective to critically examine the emergence, use, trend and consequences of political paranoia and deception as weapons by the present political leadership in Nigeria where the citizenry appears to be generally not satisfied with the performance of the entire present administration. The aim is to understand the multi-faceted thought and behavioural patterns of African leaders, which are necessary for any meaningful mass political mobilization of the citizenry.

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Introduction

Africa is a continent of contrast and irony where deprivation and abundance co-exist with each other. Whereas majority of citizens of most African states wallow in abject poverty and pitiable diseased states amidst abundant wealth, a negligible proportion of privileged others corner the bulk of the continent's wealth in a lamentable style that typifies primitive acquisition and insensitivity to human suffering. Thus, Sub-Saharan Africa continues to be at the bottom of the poverty ladder on virtually all the applicable indices for deep and rising poverty in the midst of plenty.

Democracy, or properly put, a semblance of democracy, is still co-existing with military dictatorship just as Africans in their millions are caught at the crossroads of residual traditional African values and western ideals which are, more than ever before, propagated through globalization and calculated brainwashing by the west.

It is no longer a controversy that African nations are generally not faring well politically, socially, and economically. What looks like a controversy is whether African leaders are genuinely committed to bringing their nations and, indeed, continent out of the woods. Judging by the way citizens of some African nations easily give in to political manipulations by their leaders, it is also doubtful if the former are genuinely interested in political, social, economic, and psychological, emancipation.

Some critics of poor African leadership have at various times suggested different ways of bringing Africa out of her myriads of problems. For example, in his 1995 article titled "A new colonialism? Europe Must go back into Africa", published in volume 74 of *Foreign Affairs*, William Pfaff, articulated a position in which he argued that Africans were incapable of running themselves and needed to be tutored in the art of governance.

While supporting this view of Tarhule (2003) submitted that beyond the natural sentimental instincts, it is hard to argue against Tarhule's position because Africa as a whole has declined - relative to the days of colonialism - on every political, economic or human index. Today, Africa's contribution to global economic production is less than 1%. The 54 countries in Africa consume only slightly more electricity than Switzerland but this statistic is misleading because in absolute terms, South Africa alone contributes more than 52% of total electricity production in Africa. So, excluding South Africa, Switzerland generates more electricity than the remaining 53 African countries combined! Similar statistics can be quoted in the area of

healthcare, education, agriculture and indeed every other field of human endeavor, except criminality and corruption. How did we get here and how might the situation be ameliorated?

In the judgment of Tarhule, the solutions to African problems lie in the numerous reports and recommendations made and submitted over the years by international and regional agencies (such as the WHO, UNDP, World Bank, IMF, and ADB), which have studied the African problems. According to him, it is difficult to match either the level of expertise, the diversity of perspectives, the depth of insight, or the micro/macro economic fundamentals contained in these reports. The major impediment to the implementation or realization of these suggested strategies appears to be visionary and committed leadership. Simply put, African countries do not lack ideas; they lack the political will and commitment to implement the ideas necessary for changing their societies. Somehow, Africans like what is in “overseas” but Africans do not wish to do what it takes to create what is in “overseas”. Our leaders like to go to hospitals overseas, but they do not wish to create a single hospital on the continent to parallel what is available overseas. In the end, therefore, no plans can succeed, as African governments are not willing to create the necessary enabling environment.

It is the opinion of Tarhule, therefore, that Africans and African leaders expend more energy on trying to nurture a new politically savvy and committed class than on developing a never-ending list of recommendations to their problems.

More than any other continent or region of the world, Africa has for long been associated with any thing negative – poverty, disease, illiteracy, corruption, underdevelopment, criminality, and a host of other indices of underdevelopment. Not so long a time ago, Asia was close to being in the category of Africa in terms of underdevelopment, but present developmental ratings have seen Asia soaring high up well above Africa. Many reasons, including leadership quality, have been adduced for the marked differences that have existed between Asia and Africa on the one hand and Africa and the other more and earlier developed continents on the other, but these do not in themselves constitute the subject matter for this paper. As such, these will not be separately discussed in this paper.

Definition of Political Paranoia and Deception

Paranoia is not an obscure mental state afflicting some individuals but a widespread condition of modern societies, say Robert S. Robins and Jerrold M. Post, M.D., experts in political psychology. Indeed, Robins and Post (1997) show that the paranoid dynamic has been aggressively present in every social disaster of this century. Indeed, paranoia is, according to the authors, part of human evolutionary history.

According to Robins (1997), every major example of destruction in our society includes an element of paranoia, and it is this element, which causes the turmoil over past events to permeate into present populace. Simply put, paranoia is a mental disorder marked by irrational suspicion, yet political paranoia remains a somewhat more difficult concept to understand. Political paranoia manifests itself on a much larger scale than the individual. It begins as a destruction of an appropriate political response but then far overshoots the mark, Robins said.

In the view of Robins, paranoia (including political paranoia) is not entirely bad. As a matter of fact a certain amount of suspicion in politics is necessary. After all, many leaders operate on the Machiavellian principle of “the end justifies the means”. Emanating from this principle are all kinds of tricks, deceptions, suspicions, killings, and scheming that leaders, most notably, African leaders indulge in. Robins’ thesis is that paranoia has become too evident in the political realm. According to him, there is not a cure for political paranoia, because it is a corruption of a healthy response, so it can't be ridded. To this author, perhaps, it can only be curtailed.

Most people occasionally have suspicious thoughts, but not to a degree that clashes sharply with social norms, undermines adaptation, or causes severe distress. Once in a while, we have cause to be suspicious of our co-worker, neighbour, stranger, or, in certain cases, even our spouse. When people talk about abnormality or psychopathology, they are implicitly talking about degree, time or frequency of occurrence, context (in which the said behaviour takes place and is observed) as well as extent of deviation from the norm. On the basis of the above, a not-so-frequent and not-so-serious suspicion is generally assumed to be normal. As such, it does not call for serious concern. On the contrary, the case of a paranoid person, being much more serious and habitual, calls for serious concern.

A person is said to be paranoid when he is suffering from a mental disorder that is characterized by systematized delusions and the projection of personal conflicts, which are ascribed to the supposed hostility of others. Apart from its well-known qualities of heated exaggeration, suspiciousness, and conspiratorial fantasy, the paranoid personality disorder is characterized by a pervasive distrust and suspiciousness of others such that their motives are interpreted as malevolent. Individuals with the paranoid personality disorder

- suspect, without sufficient basis, that others are exploiting, harming, or deceiving them;
- are preoccupied with unjustified doubts about the loyalty, or untrustworthiness, of friends or associates;
- are reluctant to confide in others because of unwarranted fear that the information will be used maliciously against them;
- read hidden demeaning or threatening meanings into benign remarks or events;
- persistently bear grudges, i.e. are unforgiving of insults, injuries, or slights;
- perceive attacks on their character or reputation that are not apparent to others and are quick to react angrily, or to counterattack;
- have recurrent suspicions, without justification, regarding fidelity of spouse or sexual partner.

It should be realized that a person does not necessarily need to manifest all of the above before he or she could be said to be politically or clinically paranoid. All it takes to qualify as suffering from paranoia, in this case, is for one to score reasonably high on a number of the above indices.

It is only when paranoid thinking involves an extreme, well-organized delusional system, with emotions and behavior that are logically appropriate to the delusion and behavior that a diagnosis of paranoia is given.

Origins of Paranoia

According to Cameron (1967), paranoia originates from the following:

1. lifelong patterns of finding fault with everyone but oneself.
2. lack of trust which leads to social and emotional withdrawal.

Indulgence in corruption and other vices makes a person to be suspicious of others. Some researchers (e.g. Colby, 1981) view delusional thinking not as a sign of psychological disorder but as a style of information processing – a style developed by people especially sensitive to blame and shame. To such researchers, paranoia should be viewed only as an extreme self-protective style of thinking, not as a “true” psychological disorder.

Paranoia in political context refers to pervasive distrust and suspiciousness of others such that their motives are interpreted as malevolent. An important aspect of political paranoia is a pattern of disowning uncomfortable personal feelings and attributing them to others, the psychological defence mechanism known as projection. Although the paranoid outlook affects many areas of human affairs, it is most evident in the adversarial world of politics where it is a constant feature. At its extreme, the paranoid style is more destructive than any other political style.

Paranoids do not have adversaries or rivals or opponents; they have enemies, and enemies are not to be simply defeated and certainly not to be compromised with or won over. Enemies are to be destroyed. As Huey Long, governor of Louisiana, USA, would say to those who opposed him: "I'm not just going to beat you. I'm going to ruin you!". What makes paranoia so difficult to define and to understand is that it begins as a distortion of a healthy political response—suspicion.

On its own part, deception, which is used here as an aspect of cheating, refers to acting or speaking with the aim of inducing a false belief in a target or victim. Deception includes jokes, forgery, imposture, conjuring, consumer and health fraud, military and strategic deception, white lies, pretence, ploys in games or sports, malingering, gambling scams, and psychic tricks or deception. Although Psychologists generally talk about deception, there has so far not been a single, coherent framework that can meaningfully account for the psychological issues involved in the various types of deception. All the same, there is a general, not tested, view that deception provides power, wealth, and self-importance. The question of whether such power, wealth and self-importance are morally acceptable is a different thing entirely.

Over the years, deception, given its universality, has generated a wide research. For example, Stein's (1967) classical experiment exposed the interplay of personal and circumstantial factors in cheating behaviour of which deception is a part. He reported that the ability to resist

temptation is paramount in enthroneing honesty as behaviour in an individual provided there is no strong influence, which stimulates the individual into dishonesty. Aside from that, the person surveys and interpretes the situation; looks at the possibility of being caught; and weighs the punishment with the gain and the sense of fulfilment that comes with successful deception or cheating (Haan, Herts and Cooper, 1995).

In politics, deception can take the form of twisting facts to have an edge over political opponent, making campaign promises and deliberately refusing to fulfill them, cornering of public funds and putting them to personal use, faking of election or referendum results (rigging), concealing truth to one's advantage, renting of crowds to make believe, secretly causing acrimony (generating bad blood) and pretending not to be involved, and using government machinery to do propaganda and cause people to believe that all is well, faking of documents or one's credentials for the purpose of securing a position or a job, under-declaration of age or assets, using government's apparatus and machinery to run one's businesses under disguised companies (mostly with the assistance of fronts), over-inflating of contract values, among many others.

Political paranoia and deception go hand in hand. Klitgaard (1998) blames political deception and corruption on flawed systems. For example, a system with a highly regulated economy, political instability, bureaucratic red tape, weak legislative and judicial systems, which lacks prudential banking regulations, and auditing and accounting standards will record a high incidence of deception and cheating (Gray and Kaufman, 1998).

People indulge in deceptive practices for various reasons. All the reasons can be divided into three broad categories: political, economic, and socio-psychological. Although the focus of this paper is political paranoia and deception, a brief discussion will be made of the three main categories of deception due to their interrelated nature.

Political Reason: People often deceive to gain political advantage over the political opponent. The deception comes in form of certificate forgery, falsification of birth certificate, falsification or manipulation of election results and census figure, diversion of public funds into private purses (sometimes for election purposes). Deception or deceptive behaviour is often triggered by off by a need, which must be satisfied. If the individual lacks the psychological ability and economic as well as political power to satisfy the need through morally acceptable ways, a psychological tension is created in him or her. In order to reduce or eliminate the tension

the individual looks beyond morally acceptable solutions.

Socio-Psychological Reason: This can also be referred to as ego reason. The individual deceives to boost his ego. People with certain academic attainment, economic breakthrough and political achievement are often respected. Consequently, the individual's action (deceptive behaviour) is a short cut to glory. It is an abnormal way of defending the ego. Despite all the glory, the individual does not experience inner tranquility. Suspiciousness, insecurity and a diffuse feeling of personal inadequacy characterize his behaviour. Invariably, he/she is scared of disgrace, guilt and punishment on his /her if exposed. A lot of energy is, therefore, spent trying to cover up the track.

Economic Reason: Economic reason relates to the motivation to deceive in order to earn income. Various conditions such as poverty, low wages, and general lack of risk-spreading mechanisms (e.g. insurance policy) can heighten the already strong motivation to earn income (Gray and Kaufmann, 1998).

Humans have almost limitless capacity for self-deception. According to Bandura (1980b), people have several rationalizations, which they make to escape feeling guilty during and after indulging in a deceptive act. These includes:

1. **Moral Justification:** believing our actions are for a just cause, e.g. "I stole to provide for my family".
2. **Euphemistic Labelling:** using a mild term to hide the actual harmfulness, e.g. "I took it" or "sort of borrowed it" instead of stole.
3. **Looking good by Comparison:** "I didn't cheat as much as Tolu/Obi".
4. **They told me to do it:** "They talked me into going with them".
5. **Denial of Responsibility:** "One person like me can't fight corruption in Nigeria".
6. **Denial of Consequences:** "I only put the poison in his food as I was told and went my way".
7. **Dehumanisation:** "There is nothing wrong with harming them, after all we know them to be wicked people".
8. **You (the victim) caused me to do it:** "If you hadn't insulted me, I wouldn't have slapped you".

According to Begley (2001), people generally have a desire to feel good about them. This desire to feel good about oneself can come into conflict with other desires. Begley (2001) also

argues that the techniques of deception usually involve distorting one's beliefs by magnifying the bad aspects of someone's actions or generalizing. The mind in order to deceive itself has more trouble changing facts than it has distorting or omitting them.

In an explanation that connects paranoia with deception, Begley (2001) further argues that paranoid rationalizations may help one get what one wants in the short term but it is likely to lead to reprisal by the person being taken advantage of. In addition, it creates paranoia and paranoia leads to unhappiness and attacks on the object of the paranoia who is likely to strike back. Rationalizations create vicious cycles. For example, rationalizations create paranoia. The paranoia often leads to hostile acts on one's part toward the object of one's paranoia. The object of one's paranoia naturally develops paranoia towards oneself and is likely to act in a hostile way. This then leads oneself to become more paranoid and a vicious cycle is created.

Leadership Problems in Nigeria as a Reflection of the African Leadership Problems

In varying proportions and in different ways, human beings are political, social, economic, and psychological animals. As political animals, human beings seek to have power and authority while also participating in the sharing of other valuable resources. As social beings, humans seek to depend on one another in the sharing and expression of cultural values, for socialization in various ways as well as for provision of social security. As economic beings, rationality in the allocation and use of scarce resources is what typifies the behavior of men and women. As psychological beings, however, the forces behind human behavior are the motivation or desire to satisfy one's needs (such as physiological needs, love and esteem needs, security needs, and actualization needs), perceive and master one's environment while avoiding the very unpleasant events and circumstances that are injurious to one's physical and psychological wellbeing.

As it is the case with many African nations today, the problems with Nigeria are many and varied. Different people have at various times observed that the nation's problems, among others, include loss of values (largely as a result of colonization and westernization) and poor leadership as well as followership. For more than half of her post-independence years, the Nigerian nation had been under military rule up till May 1999. Probably resulting from the prolonged military rule, Nigerian leaders have seriously suffered from lack of sound and articulated political ideology. This is evident in the way the nation's politicians in their

thousands and within weeks decamp from one political party to another and back even in the present political dispensation.

In his book, “The trouble with Nigeria”, Professor Chinua Achebe (Nigeria’s literary giant of international repute) identified the nation’s problems to include, nepotism, tribalism, religious bigotry, lack of patriotism among the citizens and official corruption. Work ethics in the nation are nothing to write home about.

In a country of very religious people, it is very surprising to note that our religion and faith appear to have no positive effect on our work. We have no problem getting paid for jobs not done. From the fraudulent mechanic, to the manipulative tailor, to absentee civil servant; from the undedicated teacher to the greedy priest, to the callous contractor, there is a problem of poor work ethics.

People in leadership positions in the country have also not helped matters at all. In fact, because of the high positions they occupy, many of the leaders are several times guiltier of wrongdoings than the ordinary man or woman on the street. In Nigeria, the corrupt person is the one who has been caught and found guilty by the court of law. The person, who is not caught and found guilty, even though he or she is known to indulge in sharp practices, is not corrupt. We hear of people who are given Chieftaincy titles and honorary Doctorate degrees simply because they stole government money and joined the league of the high and mighty. Our present democratic experience could be said to be military-reincarnated because there are more ex-generals in the race than there are civilians without ex. The reason is simple: the cost of politicking here is high, and only those who amassed immense wealth can have a smooth sail.

Consequences of Poor Leadership in Nigeria: A Reflection of the African Picture

The African continent and her peoples have experienced various difficulties and problems as a result of the generally poor quality of leaders most of the African nations have been having. There are wars and conflicts of disturbing magnitudes here and there. In Nigeria, as it is in many other countries in Africa, disease and poor quality of life have become characteristic features. Even though the wind of democracy appears to be blowing across the African continent, many of the African leaders still seek to perpetuate themselves in office using undemocratic means.

There have been political, ethnic and religious killings and assassinations in Nigeria

amidst social and other struggles. Political differences have pitched some politicians against one another, thereby leading to the identification or recognition of enemies, who must be eliminated. Even as critics from within and outside accuse the Nigerian leadership of insensitivity to the masses, government is won't to accept that it has some shortcomings.

During the many years of military dictatorship in Nigeria, the nation's economy was seriously battered. The civilian administration of President Olusegun Obasanjo came on board in 1999 with zeal to bring the economy out of the wood. More than three years have passed since the Obasanjo administration came to power, but the economy is yet to recover from its poor state. The debt burden has continued to weigh the nation down. This has given the various international financial and monetary institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank the audacity to want to meddle into the fiscal and economic affairs of Nigeria. This is a threat to the political and economic independence of the nation.

Since the era of military dictatorship up to this day, the Nigerian industrial sector has not witnessed any noticeable vibrancy. Quite a high number of industries have closed shop as a result of fierce foreign competition and high operational costs. This has led to high rate of unemployment, high crime rate and mass exodus of educated and skilled Nigerians to Europe, America and other parts of the world.

It appears that misplaced priorities and lack of proper planning on the part of leaders are part of the problems of Africa nations. African leaders delight in embarking on white elephant projects (many of which end up being abandoned or executed haphazardly), thereby encouraging and sustaining the "commissioning syndrome". In doing these, they think less about welfare and development programmes and projects such as education, health, rural infrastructure, and housing.

Poor leadership in Nigeria has over the years brought about much suffering to the citizenry and heightened indiscipline, bribery and corruption, nepotism, ethnicity, and religious intolerance.

Political Paranoia and Deception in Nigeria

Politics, regardless of definition, entails the quest for and use of power and other valuable resources, ideally, for common good. Because human beings are political animals, politics is a preoccupation of many people.

The present government of President Olusegun Obasanjo came into power on May 29, 1999 after an election which saw the president having majority votes in all the six geo-political zones of the country except his home zone, the South-west. The 1999 Nigerian presidential elections were preceded by a tension-packed period, which resulted from ex-President Ibrahim Babangida's annulment of the June 12, 2003 presidential elections purportedly won by Late Chief M.K.O. Abiola.

At the time of his second coming as Nigerian leader, and given the prevailing political environment then, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo was seen (and still continues to be seen by some Nigerians) as the most suitable person to occupy the Presidential Villa in Aso Rock, Abuja. First and foremost, the man Obasanjo was seen as an experienced nationalist and ex-soldier who played a leading role in bringing the Nigerian civil war of 1967-1970 to an end. Apart from having the clout and experience to keep the Nigerian "Military Boys" at bay, he was and is still said to command the respect of many Nigerians as well as members of the international community. Secondly, the man Obasanjo enjoys the favour of not a few Nigerians, having been described as a detribalized Nigerian.

By the end of May, 2003, the administration would have completed its four-year term. Chief Obasanjo is seeking to be re-elected for another four-year term in the national elections that are just around the corner. Although past regimes and leaders in Nigeria have implemented policies and behaved in ways that bear semblance to political paranoia and deception, this paper has restricted its analysis of political paranoia to the present administration of President Olusegun Obasanjo because:

1. It is the first democratic rule following the prolonged military dictatorship in Nigeria.
2. The administration is the most current in the country and as such more in touch with contemporary African and world events.
3. The Nigerian socio-economic and political experience of today, more than any other in the past, represents the African experience a great deal.

The mention of political paranoia and deception here concerns the individual and collective

official behavior and activities of President Obasanjo, his cabinet members, party officials and aides that have impacted on the socio-economic and political life of Nigeria since May 29, 1999, when the administration came to power.

Not long after coming to power, the Obasanjo-led government has received the knocks of critics on various grounds and in different magnitudes. On account of the army invasion of Odi community in Rivers state in 1999, the genocidal killings by the army in Zaki-Biam, Benue state, the heightened and more frequent ethno-religious conflicts across the nation, the unabated wave of assassinations, the rising wave of graduate unemployment, and the incessant labour unrests, the Obasanjo administration has received various criticisms from different quarters. On various occasions also, the administration has been accused of using the machinery of government to settle political scores and as well deceive the citizenry.

Nearly four years into the first term of his second coming as President, does the leadership of President Obasanjo still enjoy the goodwill of Nigerians on such counts as doing away with tribalism, being fair to all as well as being able to weather the economic and socio-political storm of the country?

Reuben Abati, a notable Nigeria columnist and critic in his classic article titled "Obasanjo: A psychoanalysis" published in the Guardian Newspaper of Friday, June 8, 2001, observed that "If there is any character in Nigeria at the moment, requiring urgent psychoanalysis, it is President Olusegun Obasanjo." "He", according to him (Mr. Abati), "is the name on everyone's lips. Many of the persons who voted for him, who still consider him the best possible choice for the office are not sure whether they understand him anymore. It is not enough to say that the man is enigmatic; rather in his relationship with the public he unwittingly compels his audience to wonder and exclaim. Why for example, does he behave the way he does?" "Why does he seem to consider himself more intelligent than every other Nigerian alive? Why is he not listening to us? Does it not matter to him that he is no longer as popular as he was two years ago? Does he even care about what the people are saying? The only way to answer one or all of these questions, according to Mr. Abati, is "to attempt to deconstruct the Obasanjo persona, to remove, that is, the mask on his face, and by so doing confront him with the conflict between his id and ego or the Appollonian-Dionysian strain in his personality".

Apart from his other descriptions of President Obasanjo's personality, Rebeun Abati described Mr. President in a way that largely captures this discourse (political paranoia and

deception) and that is, “ In a way, the President thinks his compatriots are fools, and his advisers are persons who are just looking for something to eat. They talk about Conference, power supply, marginalization, food scarcity - so he checks his special international dictionary, and he finds that these phrases are not there. In frustration, he leaves it all to Atiku Abubakar (his Vice) to sort out, and incidentally, Atiku too, is more interested in other things like spending seven hours at a *yeye* PDP meeting”.

What gains have President Obasanjo’s numerous foreign trips and international contacts brought to Nigerians? According to Mr. Abati, “it is perhaps nice to have a President like this who can open any door anywhere in the world, and who is on a first name terms with every important human being on the surface of the earth. It is good for him because it is a unique personal achievement – the best Nigerian alive. But it is not good for the average Nigerian because it has not changed anything about the way our President’s international friends look at us. They treat us with pity. They think we are animals who are just lucky to have one of their own as their President. But the truth is, the ordinary Nigerian wants His Excellency President Obasanjo, to carry him along too – to lift him up so that he too can raise his head as a member of the international community of human beings”.

Wantaregh Paul Unongo, Nigeria’s notable social critic and former Minister of mines, power and steel development in the second republic, in a press conference on the state of the nation held in Abuja on Wednesday 22nd May, 2002, spoke on some activities of the Obasanjo administration which portrayed it (the administration) as being vindictive, paranoid, and deceptive. Wantaregh Unongo in the text of his press conference titled “The Emergence Of Abachanjo And Abachanjoism: An All Pervasive Debilitating Phenomenon Of Self Succession And Self Perpetuation On The Nigerian Political Spectrum, Is Now The Bane Of Our Nascent Democracy” pointed out to the gentlemen of the press why he had to talk to them, saying “...having painfully watched events in our dear country move from bad to worse, through a combination of self inflicted wounds, brought about by the arrogance and incredible insensitivity of our current know-all leadership, which has no ear for anyone, except its paid praise singers, at its court, on the one hand, and the pernicious natural disasters which have dogged, stubbornly, the lackluster democratic administration, we unloaded on the people of Nigeria, some three years ago, I submit humbly that it is now our patriotic duty as enlightened citizens, to look deeply, examine carefully, and expose ALL what happened, and what is, for the purpose of

informing all concerned citizenry, before we are again drafted to hand over our lives, once again for another four years to the crop and style of leadership, which brought so much suffering and commotion to our country, to our people and to the body politic of our dear country, Nigeria”.

In the words of Wantaregh Unongo, **ABACHANJO/ABACHANJOISM** (a term which he Unongo, after observing the nation’s events, coined) is a phenomenon with unique qualities. Said he: “this phenomenon because of its unique qualities, which flow from the congruence in the Thought Form, in the Perception and in the Style of the two most critical tyrannical dictators, who impacted, intimately, on the cause of the history of our dear country Nigeria, we have chosen to call it ABACHANJO. ABACHANJO, as a tendency, or an emergent discipline, which it has become, or a philosophy, is better referred to as ABACHANJOISM.”

“This is a phenomenon of crass opportunism and extreme brutality, overt and covert, practical and spiritual, employing the tactics of programmed deception, subtle and crudely, to razzmatazz an impoverished already cheated, comatosed, exploited and bamboozled citizenry, into a false psychedelic euphoric condition (disposition) of great expectations of A SOON-TO-COME-BETTER-TOMORROW, through the instrumentality of ‘compassionate’ generous actions of the “very caring,” “god-fearing,” “god-sent,” “anointed” Leader, who knows exactly what the hapless masses want and need!

The recruited collaborating commentators and presenters of the Abachanjo communications imploring us to hold on to the soon to come better tomorrow, while we continue to wallow in multiple afflictions visited upon us, by the objective failings of the “god-sent” Leaders, are so professional and so efficient, that even our most critical and objective citizenry are sometimes, genuinely fooled by their programmed salesmanship of Abachanjoism.”

Some of the salient features of Abachanjo and Abachanjoism (which bear semblance to this paper’s definition of political paranoia and deception) as enunciated by Wantaregh Unongo are:

- ❖ Disdain for people and public opinion.
- ❖ Junketing around the globe, not minding whose ox is gored.
- ❖ Creation of disharmony, unnecessary enmities and quarrels, which inevitably enhance instability in the polity through self-action and crudity.
- ❖ Politicization of resource control.
- ❖ Removal of subsidies on everything, which impacts the common man.
- ❖ Labor avoidance and quarrels

- ❖ Insensitivity
 - ❖ Language at serious/critical situations, such as natural disasters, e.g. the Ikeja bombs; Odi; Tiv massacres, etc., etc.
 - ❖ No concern for the common man, for indigenous manufacturers and the middle class, they were terribly hit by the removal of subsidies and the abolition of PTF.
 - ❖ Anti-Democratic Disposition
 - ❖ Pursuit of the Leadership of the National Assembly and membership of the National Assembly to toe his line and support his ambition for self- succession
 - ❖ Rent-a-Crowd Syndrome and the purchase of beggars to oil self-perpetuation in governance
 - ❖ Vindictiveness comes into the practice of Abachanjoism, significantly. Abachanjoism demands practitioners show elements of self-delusion, pretence to disinterest in power, while programming and routing to capture power at all costs.
 - ❖ Another central feature of Abachanjoism is measured deception, using God as accomplice: the politics of selective hearing from God as perfected under Obasanjo's Presidency
- Another standard feature is cliquism. Abachanjoism simply produces a Government of Clique, by the clique, for the clique.
- ❖ Disdain for Federal Legislature arising from the National Assembly posture on Separation of Powers and Protective Attitude to Democracy in Nigeria
 - ❖ Vindictiveness and grand design to get enemies and blackmail opposition to self-succession plans.
 - ❖ Emergence of extreme corruption and corrupt practices amidst loudest protestations of fighting unending wars against corruption and corrupt practices.
 - ❖ Intimidation and blackmail of opponents.

Writing from Abuja in the same manner and summarizing the current status of Nigeria in the Vanguard of Monday, May 6, 2002, Page 14, Mr. Effik concluded as follows:

“The past three years of Obasanjo’s presidency has (have) been characterized by the following catastrophic events: the massacres in Odi and in Tivland where the blood of innocent Nigerians is probably still crying for vengeance, the incessant bloody ethnic and religious clashes in the country; the bomb explosions at the Ikeja Military Cantonment, massive unemployment,

inflation, failed promises over NEPA, the Police strike, prolonged strike by University and Polytechnic teachers, massive corruption in government in spite of anti-corruption crusade, emergence of militant ethnic nationalism, the manipulations of the discredited Electoral Act 2001, the attempt to cover the murder of Chief Bola Ige the nation's slain Justice Minister, the rise in crimes and ritual murders, unchecked favouritism and godfatherism in the employment of Nigerians into government agencies perpetuated by ministers and other top officials, despite newspaper advertisements and fraudulent aptitude tests. The list is endless".

Over the years in the life of the present administration in Nigeria, three popular and related terms, specially designed by the nation's Information and National Orientation Minister, Professor Jerry Gana, in collaboration with the local media, have been added to the Nigerian Political lexicon. These terms are "nascent democracy", "dividends of democracy", and "enemies of democracy".

Whereas nascent democracy refers to the tender-care-deserving young Nigerian democracy, which has just, been born (or regained) after so many years of military dictatorship, dividends of democracy refer to the good things that Nigerians are purportedly getting from their young democracy. On its part, enemies of democracy refer to forces (Nigerians and non Nigerians alike, identifiable or unidentifiable, real as well as imagined), which are hell bent on preventing the Obasanjo government from delivering its much cherished democracy dividends. In the media, on the lips of government officials and some other Nigerians, the use of these terms has become so common. Indeed, they form the basis on which some individuals and groups are pathologically suspected and branded as enemies, Nigerians constantly deceived, rationalizations perpetually made by government and unpopular government policies and decisions justified.

In the life of President Obasanjo's present administration, political paranoia and deception seem to have been implicated in the following past or ongoing events, happenings, or scenarios:

Political Paranoia

1. The suspicions which characterized Mr. President's non-cordial relations with the National Assembly (Senate and House of Representatives and the eventual sacking of two of the National Assembly leaderships.
2. The Presidential suspicion of the former Chief of Army Staff, General Victor Malu

following General Malu's refusal to allow the US Army take charge of the training of the Nigerian Army personnel. This led to the sacking of general Malu and the eventual poor handling of the Zaki-Biam crisis, which consumed General Malu's relations and house among other people and property lost.

3. The perpetual presidential attribution of workers strikes, disasters, air crashes, fuel scarcity, assassinations and other happenings to acts of sabotage.
4. The constant accusations which Mr. President, his Ministers, and aides make against oppositions, other political parties, and groups.
5. The vehemence and doggedness with which government singled out and tried the Abacha family (out of several other known corrupt families and individuals in Nigeria) on charges of corruption.

Political Deception

1. Renting of crowds to demonstrate support for government activities.
2. Using government media and machinery to showcase government's achievements that are not really there (for example, the National Media Tour organized by the Honourable Minister of Information and National Orientation.
3. Gross misrepresentations being made by government on the problems in the education (including the ASUU strike and other issues) and other sectors (e.g. the petroleum industry with regard to fuel scarcity).
4. Getting and asking sponsored Nigerians to spearhead second-term campaigns for Mr. President and other serving government officials.
5. Recycling government funds among politicians in the name of fund-raising for elections.
6. Government's public declaration that allocations and payments to Ministries/workers have been made when in actual fact those have not been the case.

The Negative Effects of Political Paranoia and Deception

The negative effects of political paranoia and deception are many and varied. These include:

1. Accentuation or heightening of conflicts because there is mutual mistrust and truth is not told.
2. As a result of the above, leaders and citizens who are opposed to one another and do not trust one another indulge in chasing of shadows and fighting of imaginary enemies. For this reason, there is serious dissipation of energy.
3. Political paranoia and deception lead to intimidation, unmanageable conflicts, and political killings.
4. They also becloud leaders' reasoning and lead to lack of corporate vision.
5. They lead to increased exile population, disclosure of national secrets to outsiders who are seen as trusted friends. This result in serious security lapses.
6. Political paranoids and people who deceive in politics are more likely to collude with foreigners to loot their nation's treasury and to rationalize their corrupt acts.
7. As a way of defending their positions and actions, political paranoids indulge so much in unwholesome propaganda using government resources and machinery.

The way forward and conclusion

There is no doubt that political paranoia and deception are not a healthy condition for the emerging African democracy. Even as African leaders employ the Machievellian principle to govern their people, there is need to exercise restraints. In agreement with the views of Tarhule (2003), this paper would want to suggest that for African leadership and condition to improve, the following ideas and actions should be put in place by African leaders in their respective countries:

1. **There should be investment in institutions, not people.** It is far better to develop institutions on which all people can or have a fair chance of benefiting because while those institutions last peoples allegiances do not. Today, we may remember the individuals that a leader helped, but we remember more the things that he did.
2. **Do not create industries; create the conditions that allow industries to thrive or which attract entrepreneurs to invest.** African governments have been unable to resist the temptation to establish industries to provide jobs for the people. Whereas

some of these governments are well intentioned, this policy favors short-term expediency over long-term fundamentals. The result is predictable. To date, no government on the African continent operates a single successful company. Yet, the current class of politicians is busy with plans for the next group of industries. We need a transparent and fair judiciary system, we need a trimmed and incorrigible bureaucracy and we need a functional security system.

3. **Do not build more hospitals; reduce the number of people who need hospitals.** Because of rampant illnesses and ubiquitous deaths, the pledge to build more hospitals always sounds like the right thing to say and do. Nobody asks, “ why do we need so many hospitals?” Even successful treatments means a cost in productivity not to mention money that few people can afford. And because so many people are being sick all the time, the hospitals are soon overwhelmed and become inefficient so that all who can avoid them do so like the plague.
4. **Encourage entrepreneurship among the elites rather than dependency on government contracts.** For example, we have a problem with waste management in all Nigerian cities. Why are there no private companies for waste management? Government needs to create the conditions that allow private waste management companies to function and be successful, thereby reducing the number of people that require governments contracts for survival.
5. **Opposing ideas are not necessarily the work of misguided elements.** African leaders have proved astonishingly incapable of listening to dissenting opinions. Any position that does not agree with that advocated by the government in power is immediately seen as the work of ones political enemies. These leaders forget that whilst they were out of power they themselves held views on some issues that were at variance with that advocated by the governments at the time and many of them can testify that they were not tele-guided by anyone. The view also presupposes that the citizenry is incapable of independent thought and initiative unless prompted by one’s political opponents.
6. **The rich will be safe only when the living conditions of most people improve.** Crime exists in all societies and will continue to do so in the foreseeable future.

The fact is that most people engage in crime because they have no hopes for making it the honest way or they see an opportunity to get away with it. It is erroneous to assume that everybody longs for a million dollar home. Most people require little more than a roof over their heads and such people will be content once there is hope for achieving their modest ambitions. As a result, the political class only needs to give that hope to the people and they themselves will be free to build their mansions without molestation. In the absence of this hope, a few among the disgruntled constitute themselves into killer bands, terrorizing the rich so they the rich are forced to take expensive and monstrous security measures.

7. **Embrace science and technology.** Our governments need to set up a science acceleration board to explore technologies and recommend ways for using it to solve our problems. In the end, science is the engine that powers development.

The author would use the former American Presidential aspirant, Al Gore's words to end this paper with a suggestion to African leaders thus: "political leadership is all about how do we make sure that political power is used for the benefit of the many, rather than the few". African leaders and citizens must begin to learn to sanitize their political systems. This entails, among other things, active and fair participation in politics as well as proper and effective ways of screening out political candidates, who do not only have high integrity, but are also psychologically and emotionally sound enough to be entrusted with leadership responsibilities. To this end, setting up centres for analysis of personality and political behavior as it is done in most developed democracies of the world will be a wise thing for African nations to do. Only then will the hope of seeing the Africa of our dream come to reality.

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