

# LEADERSHIP QUAGMIRE

HOW TO UNDO WHAT PARALYSES  
PEOPLE IN LEADERSHIP

KAYODE OGUTA

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Harmony Publishing

Plot 1 Emmanuel Anabor Street, Off Mopo Road, United Estate, Sangotedo, Ajah, Lagos

Website: <https://harmonypublishing.com.ng>

Email: [publish@harmonypublishing.com.ng](mailto:publish@harmonypublishing.com.ng)

Mobile: +234-703-2212-481

ISBN: 978-1-00519-315-7

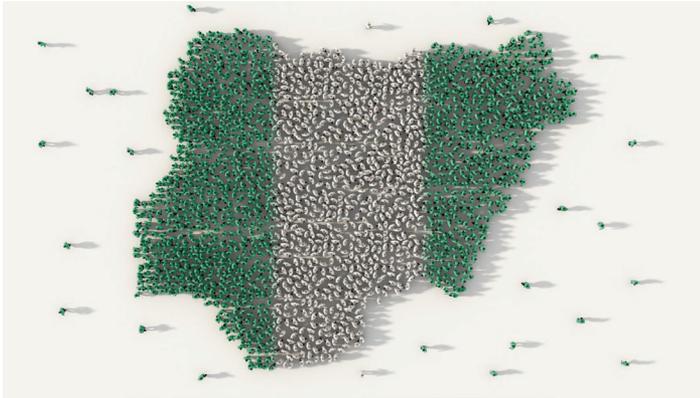
Printed In Nigeria

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# ABSTRACT



Kayode Oguta



# DEDICATION

*This book is dedicated to the Author of life, knowledge and Glory.*



## PREFACE

**F***acing the challenges of leading people* has greatly enriched me. When I began my leadership journey at the University of Ilorin, the reality of leadership dawned on me. Things take a different meaning, challenges become more complex than simple, results become more difficult to achieve. No wonder a former American President said only the very difficult and improbable cases get to his table.

This becomes more pertinent when I think about Nigeria, a country full of great contradictions, in a way so blessed, yet majority of her citizens languish in want, a land so fertile yet hardly producing anything, a vast majority of people with religious adherents yet morally lacking in public space, a country with the richest people in Africa and home to world's poorest people. Nigeria we hail thee!

As the elections are approaching, I thought it fit that some of the challenges that have hindered our growth as a people might be leadership quagmires. People who have been entrusted with power never seemed prepared for it so they become incapacitated and unable to resolve our numerous challenges and contradictions and hence continuing the inability of the country to solve her problems.

This book is about highlighting the quagmires and not necessarily resolving them, because a problem once defined is a problem half solved, so we can then begin the discussions on resolving them. Has anybody ever asked the role of geography in our national issues? This and others are the things we proffer in this book and we hope that you are blessed by reading it.

# LEADERSHIP QUAGMIRE

**T**he word ‘quagmire’ can be defined in at least two ways. In one breath, it can mean ‘a soft boggy area of land that gives way underfoot’. In another sense, it can mean ‘an awkward, complex or hazardous situation’. This second definition fits more into the focus of this book.

One of the greatest quagmires in recorded history concerns a grand uncle to Prince Charles, the heir to the British throne. In 1936, Prince Edward, then known as the Prince of Wales, proposed to marry American socialite Wallis Simpson. After King George V's death, the prince became King Edward VIII. At that time, the King chose to marry Simpson, she was in the process of divorcing her second husband. The government of the United Kingdom and the Dominions of the British Commonwealth did not support the marriage. Objections bothering on moral, religious, and legal angles were raised.

The religious grounds concern the fact that Edward was not just going to be King; he was also the nominal head of the Church of England, which frowned at divorced people remarrying in church. Morally, Simpson was considered lowly for her inability to keep two marriages. She was also written off as being after Edward's money and influence and not really love.

Despite the opposition, Edward stood his ground. He chose her over the throne, which he left less than one year after being enthroned. He was given the title, His Royal Highness, the Duke of Windsor after the abdication. He married his love the following year and they remained married until his death 35 years later.

The British monarchy, perhaps eager to prevent a repeat of history, prepared Prince Charles from day one to become King. Nevertheless, there is a quagmire in the sense that the thing he loves most and has been prepared for all his life cannot be got until the person he loves most – his mother Queen Elizabeth – dies.

Nigeria is in a different kind of quagmire. It is about leadership quagmire here. We have a leadership quagmire because Nigeria is a complex, awkward, and hazardous terrain. These positions are precarious and entrapping. We cannot solve the problems with quick fixes, but at least we should start.

The clamor for change has been huge. There are calls for a political restructuring of the polity and there are claims that once the polity is restructured, people can drive their God-given goals. It really is not that simple.

As an unrepentant believer in Nigeria, I did not take the path many in my generation took when they saw the direction the country was sailing. Andrew, the fictional character that checked out instead of staying behind, played a major role in my generation. Today, many achievers in the international space who are of Nigerian origin are children of parents who walked out on Nigeria. One of them is the Austrian footballer David Olatokunbo Alaba, whose father, George Alaba, left Nigeria for Austria.

In fact, the economy of Nigeria can be said to be a “Remittance Economy” for the large amount of diaspora remittances that flows into the country. Nigeria cannot just be called an Oil economy; it can also be called a Remittance Economy”because Nigeria has a lot of people in the diaspora doing well.

The situation of things in Nigeria raises a concern, how come it seems that people in Nigeria cannot achieve and sustain excellent performances whereas if they are abroad they seem to thrive and prosper? Is it the environment? The reason seems not in our stars but in something that we need to properly situate.

Should we give up? Certainly not. There are people who went to school in Nigeria and are major players globally. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is a Nigerian, an excellent writer, who schooled here. She is a pride to our land but how can we replicate her achievements such that many of her kind will not flow out of our lands?

How do we solve the jigsaw puzzle that our country has become? The current clamor is for a restructuring of the six geographical zones to accommodate its diverse cultural, ethnic, and religious entities. The likes of ex-Vice President Atiku Abubakar are in the forefront. President Muhammadu Buhari believes the National Assembly should work out the modalities for restructuring the country. Essentially, the President passed the bulk.

The challenge with Nigeria is that if we do not get it right, people will begin to think that secession is the answer. In the absence of a level playing space, I have seen well-meaning people say let the Igbo go. The Niger Delta will be better off. The

Yoruba seem willing to go, but it seems only the Hausa-Fulani are not ready to leave Nigeria. Though Nigeria has not helped a vast majority of people to actualize their God-given potentials, it has been a blessing to the 250 nationalities and tribes.

Are the Igbo so united? Ask the Anambra and Enugu man to live together. Are the North united? Ask the Kanuri, the Bachama, and the Hausa-Fulani. Is the South-South united? Ask the Ogoni and Ijaw, or the Ijaw and Itsekiri or even the Unemes and the Bini.

After Independence, the country was believed to be practicing true federalism. Still, there were issues, which led to the 1966 coup and eventually to the civil war. Every succeeding government had always made the anti-corruption fight a mantra. This made me wonder whether we have been looking at the wrong issues and proffering solutions to synthetic problems.

Restructuring may not solve our problems. Back in the days, many campaigned against the parliamentary system. It was abandoned for the presidential system and many thought Heaven would soon arrive on earth. However, it has failed and is so expensive to maintain. Little value has been delivered by the presidential system. Should we go back to the parliamentary system? Sometimes people make mention of it. The jury is still out.

One of the first things we need to do is to bring clarity to the situation. We have abandoned the systems and structures that should make the polity work better. Great minds become paralyzed when they get to Aso Rock. We accuse them of doing nothing, being slow and archaic; but I believe the fact is that we keep addressing the wrong issues and we will not get the answer.

Pastor Tunde Bakare recently gave antidotes to the challenges of the country. He also joined the restructuring campaign. Some of the conclusions he drew are that the North-Central zone can optimize its mechanized agricultural potential and harness the rivers Niger and Benue not for just irrigation but also for hydroponic farming. It can also become a centre of world-class cattle rearing, quell the menace of herdsmen attacks, and incubate allied opportunities such as meat, milk, and leather processing. The zone can then transit into heavy industries, including steel manufacturing and auto manufacturing while also harnessing the rivers as an inland waterway and tourist attractions.

He added that the North-West could harness its arable land by deploying land-enhancing technologies for mechanized agriculture and cattle ranching, while also becoming Africa's Defense Hub.

The North-East, Bakare said, can transit from a hotbed of insurgency to becoming a hub for cattle ranching, pharmaceutical, and construction industries and the unique mineral resources, such as clay, limestone, and gypsum.

In his opinion, the South-West can become a vast industrial and agro-allied manufacturing hub and become a global centre for warehousing and world-class sea and airports. He sees Lagos becoming Africa's hub for global finance.

The South-East, in his thinking, has the potential of becoming globally competitive in agro-allied and energy industries as well as a hub for building world-class entrepreneurs.

The South-South, to Pastor Bakare, can become an oil and gas cluster of refineries and petrochemical industries.

Based on the reverse causality model, many think that if

we change the political system, economic growth will take effect. However, what if the challenge has not been political institutions but the economic institutions that have stymied the growth of the political institutions?

Has anyone thought about geography as a possible reason why economic growth is stifled and hence plays a part in ensuring that political systems are compromised?

The strange reality is that most people who are into power never wished or desired and never understood what to do with power. With this kind of situation, it is almost impossible to make a significant impact in government. Our reluctant leaders have made political institutions unable to serve the interest of the society.

Our weak institutions, whose incentive structures, favour a poor work ethic in which people become wealthy not by economic performance but access to political patronage. You make institutions strong when realities determine otherwise.

The situation is so bad that we lack understanding of internal and external dynamics that could aid economic integration and hence have a causality effect on political institutions.

Regrettably, we also have a pattern where followership is driven by 'stomach infrastructure' and not mental and political infrastructure. For instance, in Anambra State, ex-Governor Peter Obi gave a good account of himself while in office. Four years after leaving power and falling out with his chosen successor, he tried pulling the rug off his feet. But the successor, Willie Obiano, had access to the money and was able to defeat the idealism of Peter Obi. Students of politics will then ask the questions: which one is better between idealism and having access to funds?

While we are thinking of industrialization, have we thought about the effect of technology and globalization? My best answer here will be the opening of the space to the poor man who was once told the telephone was not meant for. Due to the auction of the GSM license, almost everyone now has access. The challenge now becomes how you feed the people. Is it by pursuing industrialization?

One of the things that we must do is conceptualize and avoid focusing on narrow narrative as the causative agents of the social malaise. I can be accused of being oversimplified but I believe I know who my audience is. The leadership must rise up if the prosperity, performance and positive developments of a country must be realized.

