

CLASS STRUGGLE AND COLLAPSE OF POLITICAL IDEOLOGY IN NIGERIAN PLAYS

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ABSTRACT

The rate of political decadence in Nigeria is an aggravating situation that have plundered and pillaged the fundamental human rights of citizens. Over the years there has been a monumental impunitive looting and consistent outcry of marginalization and exploitation of the masses. These have impeded and hampered human capital development, thereby restricting people to live within the framework of constitutional provision in Nigeria. The drift in political ideology precipitated class revolt and agitation, thus, creeping into every nook and cranny of the society. The essence of this study is to galvanized the effect of a failed ideology in Nigerian political terrain and how its collapse has affected the swift flow of activities in contemporary time. Modern Nigerian playwrights have played significant role in bringing to fore the political anomalies, campaigning for radical social transformation that promulgated a society that has an absolute reflection of justice and equity without the fear of insecurity. Hence, the study used selected Nigerian plays such as Bode Sowande's *Farewell to Babylon* and Esiaba Irobi's *Nwokedi* as paradigms which explicated the rapid fall from glory of Nigeria in the discourse. Furthermore, the study made use of content analysis approach of qualitative research method for data collection and analysis. Finally, the researchers recommended that Nigerians should stand collectively, regardless tribes, culture and traditional background in Nigeria to fight the common enemy, in order to inject social transformation, new political ideations and have a society where fairness, equity, justice and rule of law abound, in order to solidify the foundation of a Fedral system of government where devolution of power is paramount for an inclusive government system.

INTRODUCTION

One of the most obvious implications of modern state is a gradual but steady polarization of the society into two main classes; one miserably poor and the other massively rich. Though this scenario is not limited only to Nigeria, but what perhaps makes her case particularly worse is the growing amount of resentment and hatred that the overwhelming majority poor feels towards the microscopic minority rich in the society and the political elites. Indubitably, this is as a result of the collapse in political ideology in Nigeria. When ideology is removed from politics, what is left is a hollow ritual of ascension to power by contending forces in the polity. Hence, it is expedient to explore the essence of ideology and how salient and pertinent it is to every leadership structure in human society.

The concept of political ideology is a set of principles, tenets or orientation that characterizes the thinking of a group of people whom the mantle of leadership has fallen upon to ensure that the will of the state is formulated and implemented. Ideology is a primordial phenomenon in politics which however has become a prevalent political philosophy that has transcended from one phase of human development to another. For an efficient leadership to take precedence, when one aspires for leadership, one should also think of an ideology that would serve as a major maxim which will be presented to the people. According to Ozodi Osuji Thomas;

Why should a person aspire to be a leader of men? A person should aspire after leadership because he believes his objectives will benefit the entire group and if he

feels that the only way to implement these objectives is through the collective efforts of the entire group. (179)

Ideally, a country should be driven by a strong political ideology orchestrated by people who have the proclivity and propensity to lead and serve humanity for the greater good of all, having a well-articulated precepts, mechanism or machinery through which the will of the state is formulated and implemented to meet the needs of the masses, regardless of the socio-economic class diversification or stratification. Nigeria had a strong political ideology during its infant years. During that period, every sector was functioning, because the ideology in vogue then was presented by men of charismatic disposition or could be the influence of British administrative policies, whereby men like Herbert Macauley, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Obafemi wolowo, Earnest Ikoli, Tafawa Belewa, John Payne Jackson etc. orchestrated to imbue in the people a sense of belonging. According to Olav Stoke:

At independence Nigeria had all the trappings of a democratic state and was indeed regarded as a beacon of hope for democracy. It had a federal constitution that guaranteed a large measure of autonomy to three (later four) regions; it operated a parliamentary democracy modeled along British lines that emphasized majority rule; the constitution included an elaborate bill of rights; and, unlike other African states that adopted one-party systems immediately after independence, the country had a functional, albeit regionally based, multiparty system (4).

The ideology they projected, stimulated and facilitated the call for decolorization and vehement repulsion of imperialism which came to pass on October 1, 1960, and subsequently, a Republic on October 1963. But the ideology began to drift gradually, when the political leaders began to derail and drift from the precepts that galvanized their activities to gain the people's trust.

Contemporaneously, there is a drift in political ideology which apparently retards the country's growth in all ramifications. Misplacement of priority has become ubiquitous within the political elites, because every single philosophy and ideology they dish out are politicized in order to galvanize their interests. The drift in political ideology has resulted in a situation whereby incompetence and high level of nepotism and impunity are promoted. What plays out daily in the Nigerian political terrain is typically, politics of ethnic, individual interests and/or the interest of a few at the expense of the majority. This has left the country in a very fragile state. The drift in political ideology ushered in political elites that are blindfolded with the cloak of bigotry and ethnic factionalism, including ethnic sentiments, class struggle and daily increase of insecurity, banditry and all sorts of social vices. The ineptitude, callous and unfledged tendency of the leaders have given the youth a leverage to explore by delving into crimes, leaving the country vulnerable with a bad reputation in diaspora and without a future.

Indubitably, the Nigerian Political milieu evolves in a high level of ineptitude, nepotism, bigotry, allocation rivalry and varying sorts of socio-economic and political vice that permeate every stratum of human environment. Thus, corruption pervades the daily lives of Nigerians, being propagated and nurtured by the political elites to downplay an egalitarian and just society, where justice and fairness suffuse every nook and cranny of the society, thereby stirring the restiveness and fidgety among the youths. This restiveness usually causes upheaval, revolution. When this happens, it is however termed class struggle emanating as a result of inconsequential policies by the government, that neglect economic growth and human development. According to Alex Asigbo and Tracie Utoh-Ezeajugh cited in Okeke, Tochukwu.

Not just flung class struggle but along moral and ethical lines. This resent form of radicalism seeks to engender not only political change but also moral and ethical revolution... (122).

When class struggle betides, it propels a move that tilts towards rapid change that have the capacity to transmogrify, transform and transport the society from where it is to where it ought to be, permeating

every aspect of human activities to achieving greatness and projecting a society where equity, justice and fairness are prevalent factors.

CLASS STRUGGLES IN NIGERIA

Nigeria is a class society. It is made up of the extremely rich and the extremely impoverished, with a few stragglers in between. According to Ossie Enekwe: The class structure in Nigeria was the creation of colonialism where British commerce in Nigeria played prominent roles in the formation. It was at this stage also that its present class formation evolved (12). There are two interconnected strands of analysis of class struggle in Nigeria. The first is located around prevailing economic conditions and the struggle for better economic conditions by the masses. The second one is politically linked. In this power play, the interest of the business, political and bureaucratic classes are intertwined in ways that undermine whatever interest the masses of Nigerians may have. This inevitably leads to the use of state power and positions for prebendal purposes. The real democratic objective of the state, which is the transformation of the quality of life of the people is subordinated to the selfish whims of the few political elites who are more than willing to substitute their interest for the development of the society.

However, in the Nigerian case scenario, the country is like a cash cow milked progressively by class interest. No one will doubt therefore the level of inequality, in terms of wealth and income, that the Nigerian situation has generated. We have a situation in which less than 5% of the population owns more than 80% of Nigeria's wealth in per capita terms. To use a contemporary political science terminology, we can say that to all intents and purposes, the elites have captured the Nigerian state. The division between the two classes the political elites and the working class has widened and the condition of the exploited proletariat has deteriorated so badly. However, the violent drive towards individual capital tendency is responsible for the continuous tension between the two classes. On this note, Francis Buah explicates that:

Although in the minority, the people who owned everything needed men for their livelihood. They play the role of masters. The other class of people, who formed the bulk of the world's population, had nothing which they could call their own. Their lot had always been to work for their masters, and to remain poor, earning just enough to keep bone and flesh together. In ancient times, they were slaves, in the middle ages, they were serfs, and in the modern capitalist countries, they were the wage earners, often called the working class. In advance books, they are often referred to as the proletariat which come from proles, a Latin word meaning children (125).

Basically, the continual conflict between the two classes lie in the interest whereby the bourgeois consistently and perpetually emasculate the proletariat and reduce them to ordinary slaves who do not have any say to matters to concern the social welfare of all and sundry. It is the incessant exploitation and emasculation of the poor masses that results in class struggle, this is the exact replica of the Nigerian situation. In Nigeria, the political class in cahoots with their bureaucratic collaborators are arrayed against the helpless masses. And in this conflict, power becomes a very fundamental component. For Claude Ake, "Power is everything, and those who control the coercive resources use it freely to promote their interests" (4).

In Nigeria, the basis of the struggle between the two classes is the control of the state so as to determine social policies especially, the authoritative allocation of values and scarce resources. While the oppressed class agitates for a new social order that ensure fairly equitable distribution of resources, the bourgeois class preoccupies itself with maintaining their class advantage, by extension the structural inequality. Class struggle in Nigeria has lingered from the pre-colonial to colonial and the present neo-colonial capitalist modes of production. For instance, the resistance against the imposition of capitalist relations of production, the independence struggles, the Anglo- Nigeria defence pact imbroglio, the Ali-must episode, the Anti-Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) riot, the struggle for the democratization of the state in Nigeria, the face-off between the Nigeria Labour Congress(NLC) cum

the people of Nigeria and the Nigeria ruling class over the pump price of petroleum and other aspects of bad governance are some of the conflicts occasioned by the exploitation and subordination of one class by another.

The conflicts and struggles generated by the various contradictory class relations over the control of state power have led to structural transformation or changes in Nigeria's social system thus propelling one form of development on another. The development of Nigeria from pre-colonial to the present non-colonial period is a product of class struggle for the authoritative allocations of values and the control of state power. The various struggles such as the resistance against the occupation and takeover of Nigeria by the imperialists, the decolonization struggle, the opposition against the fascist regimes, the worker's insurrection against their brutalizing condition and the democratization struggle are some of the evidence of class conflicts and struggles in Nigeria. The development of Nigeria has considerably been influenced by class antagonisms, the emergence and consequence of which is what is reflected in the level and nature of the socio-political development of the Nigerian social formation so far.

However, for the oppressed classes to achieve victory in the on-going struggle against exploitation, it is required that the politics of primordialism which has been a basis of their impoverishment and underdevelopment as well as, a divisive factor amongst them has to be rejected. According to Chuma Adilieje, Igwiro Nnedinma and Adagonye Osoku: The working class needs organization strength and network of solidarity if they must extricate themselves from socio-economic and political marginalization (1). They need a high level of consciousness and mobilizational capacity to seize power from the ruling class and make it responsive to the yearnings and aspirations of the people. Since the ruling class does not willingly surrender power (in other words not prepared to commit class suicide), it has to be compelled to do so through intense struggle or violence. Such agitations and struggles results in class conflicts. According to Bangura Yusuf:

This class struggle may lead to the overthrow of the ruling class or compel it to embark on reforms such as increase in wages, welfare, bonuses, political liberties, democratic participation in industrial affairs etc. (39).

The Nigerian current socioeconomic situation is more than ripe for the ignition of a social uprising. The factors that trigger class conflict and revolutionaries pressures are already there. These factors are exploitation, oppression/repression, domination/authoritarianism, inequality, injustice and illegality. These are the factors that create tension, heat up the polity and create revolutionary pressures and class struggle/tussle in Nigeria. These are also the factors that necessitated the EndSars protest in the year 2020 that almost set the country ablaze.

IDEOLOGICAL DRIFT AND LEADERSHIP PROBLEM

Ideas are squarely in the realm of ideology. And the centrality of ideology to politics is indisputable. If ideology is removed from politics what is left is a hollow ritual of ascension to power by contending forces in the polity. Nigeria kicked off with a good political ideology but the drift occasioned by tide has changed things drastically over the years. In the 1950's and 1960's, the political ideology prevalent in Nigeria was presented by men of charismatic disposition like Herbert Macauley, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Obafemi wolowo, Earnest Ikoli, Tafawa Belewa, John Payne Jackson etc. orchestrated to imbue in the people a sense of belonging. During this period, political parties strived to winning the people minds through their political ideologies. According to Alapiki Henry:

Political parties emerged in the nineteenth century in response to political developments, liberalism political participation, competitive electoral polices and eventual universal adult suffrage. (92)

The foregoing makes it evidently clear that political ideologies projected by political parties tenaciously geared towards a transformative agenda for the benefit of all and sundry, contrary to the dearth of ideologies prevalent in contemporary Nigerian society. At this juncture, it is imperative to exposit emphatically that Nigerian politics currently suffers from the dearth of the political resources provided by ideology. This dearth of ideas is manifested in the non-organic nature of Nigerian political parties. To this end Kayode Komolafe in an online publication, asserts that:

Nigerian politicians portray the poverty of ideology by the manner in which they move in and out of political parties. They have no queasiness about the unprincipled political behaviour at all. The movement across political parties is so easy because of the patent absence of ideological boundaries. That is why a convinced conservative politician such as Senator Abdulahi Adamu could become the chairman of a progressive party and no one sees any contradiction in it. As a former secretary of the Board of Trustees of the PDP, Adamu could become the APC chairman without any ideological question whatsoever. In this game of partisan migration, a politician could gleefully announce his exit from his political party and then register as a member of two or more parties; thereafter the politician could return to the original party. And this happens without any expressed ideological differences with the party. The politician doesn't feel obliged to explain his position to his public.

This is the current situation in Nigeria. The paucity in political ideology in Nigeria is indubitable. In Nigeria, it has become a norm for Vice presidential candidates to be nominated on the regional and religious basis rather than on the basis of the party's ideology. Also, from the performance of the All Progressives Congress in the last 8 years one can confidently argue that they have no cogent political ideology.

In 2014, the All Progressives Congress (APC), was more or less hurriedly put together to wrestle power from the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) after 16 years of dominance in the polity. The fusion of parties and political forces into what is known today as the All Progressives Congress (APC) had no option than to sell concrete programmes as a negation of the policies the PDP was offering at the time. Thus the famous three-point agenda of Buhari emerged as security, economy and anti-corruption war. The ideas behind this agenda were enunciated by the APC partisans at various levels. However, with the turn out of events after 8 years, one can confidently argue that the hasty fusion of political parties into what is known today as the APC was driven by regional and religious sentiments. Some political forces argued that after eight years of President Olusegun Obasanjo, a southerner and a christian, that in 2015 a northerner should be elected to complete the "northern turn" begun by Yar'adua. This has always been the case in Nigerian political hemisphere, ideology has always been shortchanged for regionalism, religion and other personal interests. However, it is important to put ideology to the fore in Nigerian politics because workable ideas are sorely needed to tackle the various problems.

The paucity of political ideology and its implementation in is the reason Nigeria has not been able to surmount the Challenges of Leadership failure, Mismanagement, embezzlement of public funds, political crises, tribal tensions/conflict, nepotism, wanton killings and many other vices because of the paucity of political ideology and the will to implement it. Evidently the Nigerian highest political echelons seem to have been sieged by corruption, nepotism, ethnicism and bitterness. Political Scavengers and Profiteers who occupy the echelon of political powers in the country capitalize on their positions and exploit those in the middle and poor class. This is why, the poor get poorer and the rich get richer. Those in power keep enacting and coming up with government policies that exploit and stiffen the already harsh situations of the common Nigerian. There are no equitable distribution of offices among the various contending forces either at the national or state levels. A sitting Governor at the expiration of his tenure hand-picks his friend or relative to continue from where he stopped. That is class oppression. Regimes and Administrations have come and gone in Nigeria but yet, the people in the Bourgeois class still have their firm grip on power. They rotate power among themselves and their friends. Most times, after occupying different political positions, they retire as Godfathers and select their Godson's to continue looting from where they stopped. According to Udenta O. Udenta, since the flag off of Nigeria's independence in the early 60' s up to the present day, the country has witnessed: An intense social and political contradiction between the black comprador political and commercial leaders and the mass ordinary people, between the imperialist Nations and their neo-colonial dependency. (56)

This is the pitiable state of the Nigerian situation. The EndSars protests that shook the nation in 2020 wasn't only about police brutality, Bad governance and frustration on the part of the Youth was another cogent factor behind it. There seems to be another tension heating up already in Nigeria and pundits doubt if the country will survive another protest as weighty as the EndSars protest was. The Obidient movement that began in 2022 is as a result of the built up anger against the government in the people. The movement was like the average Nigerians last push for a better Nigeria. Nigerians pulled out in numbers to vote, as against the low voter turnout in previous elections. Nigerians rallied round the movement from different political parties because they believed in the political ideology of a single man, Mr Peter Gregory Obi.

Nigerians main intent have always been to have a transparent government that is characterized by Accountability, Openness, collective participation and principle of freedom. But pitifully, Regimes and Administration have come and gone, yet things are worsening/exacerbating rather than getting better. Indubitably, these are some of the apparent dynamic factors that inherently and fundamentally trigger revolutionary pressures in Nigeria. These factors together exact a dominant and bossy influence in inciting and sustaining these pressures. The decadence inherent in Nigeria today, that cuts across all spheres of human endeavour is the reason why there are agitations all over the country.

LEADERSHIP QUESTIONING IN NIGERIAN PLAYS

The theatre is notable for its ability to live up to socio-political happenings and its ability to mirror the society, xray it and depict its ills with the aim of correcting them. It portrays the realities of its time; a kind of court where the economic, social, religious and political issues of the society are listed, evaluated and judged for the aim of having a better society free of these ravaging ills. On this note, Ngugi Wa Thiong'O posits that:

Literature cannot escape from the class-power Structure that shapes our everyday life. Here a writer has no choice, whether or not he is aware of it, his Works reflect one or more aspects of the intense economic, political, Cultural and ideological struggle in a society. What he can choose is one or the other side of the battle field. The side of the people or the side of those social forces and bourgeoisie class that try to keep the people down. What he cannot do is to remain neutral. Every writer is a writer in Politics. The question is what and whose politics (204).

The theatre, it's practitioners, and in fact, all the fine artists, are all vanguards of social change in their respective capacities, keeping watchful eyes and attentive ears on the happenings in the society. A playwright should not be dogmatic in his writings but should fashion the thematic essence of his writing on the prevalent issues transpiring around him, as the relevance of any play is dependent upon how well it is able to address the pertinent pressing issues of the playwright's society. Hence, the playwright is merely a respondent to such issues of social essence. It will be reckoned as man's inhumanity to man, a sin against oneself and the nation, should a Nigerian playwright, writing for a Nigerian audience today, choose to ignore corruption, nepotism, tribalism, religious intolerance, insecurity, class operation and leadership failure and choose to talk about trivial issues other than these. It amounts to the playwright denying the sufferings and cries of help coming blaringly from his people. This is why Chinua Achebe posits that "any writer who tries to avoid the big social and political questions of his time will end up being completely, irrelevant to his society" (3). He likens such a writer to the absurdist man in the popular Igbo proverb, who leaves his burning house to pursue the rodents fleeing from the flames.

A careful analytic review of the metamorphosing trends in Nigerian theatre practice shows that from the post independent era to the present day, there has been a noticeable element of dynamism in the tone of Nigerian plays both in content and form. That is how it is supposed to be, as this satirical measure is one of the undisputable tenets of theatre practice. From the seventies, for instance, Nigerian playwrights no longer write to entertain alone, but also to express certain ideological stance or to criticize & condemn certain societal ills.

In Emeka Nwabueze's *Parliament of vulture*, the thematic preoccupation portrays despotic and decadent structure of leadership in Nigeria which concerns itself to looting and making self-gratifying policies at the expense of the poor messes madam, the newly elected member of the parliament, a roadside hotel owner, who does not know anything about leadership and politics defeats the most qualified candidate who has the interest of the people at health, but because of her amorous affiliation with politicians who apparently visit her hotel to patronize her business, she gets selected for the post, and they manipulated the election which brings her to power as member of the parliament, to play games of personal interests. This however is not far-fetched from Nigeria political platform, where politicians constantly congregate and devise means of embezzlement to continuously impoverish the masses in Nigeria, political leaders' motivation for contesting is not primarily to serve the people's but to gratify their own egocentric avarice and desires. Nwabueze presents Nigerian leaders as vultures they are greedy, avaricious and voraciously insatiable they are likened to vultures that callously prey on the people, scavenging them to death. It is not enough that the masses have been scavenged to death for it is the nature of vulture to ensure that even the carcasses of the people are consumed. Thus, it becomes evident that the terms like "avarice" and "cupidity" are the most suitable and appropriate term to use in describing the legislators or members of the parliament due to the way they have completely plundered the people. Apparently, Nigeria leaders have failed the Nigerian state in all ramifications, that is why Uwem Affiah postulates that:

These are the legislators who are supposed to act as watch dogs over the executive. However, they manifest all the negative values which they are supposed to core and reach public trust they lack the moral standing to perform their functions this can be demonstrated by a quick examination of legislative activities across Nigeria. Many societies that have made progress have done so by putting the right people, qualified people in the right places. It is not so in Nigeria. Nepotism and political patronage is the vogue in Nigeria sadly, even every high and sensitive positions for which we should not settle for any less than the best persons are not spared (381).

The above assertion is a typical replica of what is playing out today in every stratum of the society, where the inept and incompetent people are given the privilege to handle sensitive position which obviously does not augur well with the citizenry. For instance, Madam in the play in all ramifications is not qualify to be a member of the parliament, but due to politics of patronage, the election was manipulated in her favour.

Bode Sowande's *Farewell to Babylon* is another modern Nigerian play that chronicles the plight and gloomy situation of the common people; exposing how the ruling class have exploited them without recompense or due consideration of the hard situation they had to contend with daily. Sowande's *Farewell to Babylon* is hinged on the ineffectiveness and inadequacies that constitute the social and political setting in present day Nigeria state, which hinder human and societal development.

The people's quest for societal salvation and transformation is supreme in the play *Farewell to Babylon*. The play replicates the revolutionary ethos which portrays the people's desire for positive transformation of the society, the preparedness of the common man to resist unwanted socio-political system that does not promulgate absolute democracy that champions the yearnings of a common man in the society, due to its inclusive disposition. Sowande believes that the only factor that can trigger change in any society, where the plights of the people are society, where the plights of the people are not seen as priority by the leaders, then the people are left with the option of championing a campaign against such government as a way to express their dissatisfaction to that particular government. Judging from the play, it is obvious that the common man is deprived of every good thing that makes life comfortable and worthwhile for him. This precisely is what the people are agitating for, good life, but the government, out of sheer wickedness deprive the people of this simple request, then they have no other choice than to revolt or protest so their voice can be heard loud and clear.

In the play, Majidun is one of the politicians and business man who obviously had come to delude the people as usual, just like the Nigerian politicians who have concluded within themselves that Nigerians

are gullible, therefore, they say whatever they feel and the people accept. Majidun does not know that the people have been enlightened, which was the reason he asked 'Who taught you all these? (75)'. Same thing is applicable in the Nigeria state. The present Nigerian State abhors every form of protest and revolt. That is why whenever anyone revolts, he is put behind bars. In Farewell to Babylon same thing happens to Onita. He is arrested for enlightening the people. while Kaago and Moniran keep him busy in the cell, to review to them the secret about the "circle" controlled by Dansanki; there is no gain saying to this effect, because the Nigerians government uses the police, Army and DSS to quell every form of protest by any means, tracking down those championing the protest for social transformation; just like Nnamdi Kanu and Sunday Igboho, whom the government have arrested for speaking up for their people, although the latter has been now been released, the former is still in DSS custody despite not being found guilty by any court of competent jurisdiction.

Esiaba Irobi's *Nwokedi* is another modern play that exemplifies the Nigerian situation. The social setting of the play is the corrupt Nigeria; with its unemployed youths at the pitiable receiving end of it. He critically, relentlessly and meticulously analyzes the contending issues inherent a society ravaged by failed leadership and consequently, the revolution that follows it. As evident in the play, the agitations and struggles is championed by the restive, recalcitrant and unemployed youths, who are bent on kicking the bad eggs out of governance, whether violently or not.

In the Play, *Nwokedi* (Jnr) and *Nwokedi* are presented as unemployed youths, who are at the receiving end of failed leadership. Senator Arikpo laments about them: They have burnt my car and burnt my life. They have butchered me like a sacrificial animal. They have torn my flesh limb from limb. What you are looking at is a pillar of ashes (3). Senator Arikpo further describes them as The Devil's own brigade! A miserable mob of jobless young men and women. Forgetting that the policies of him and his likes in power is the brain behind their joblessness and frustration.

Esiaba Irobi, in his play *Nwokedi*, employs the revolutionary mindset. His milieu is the corrupt Nigeria; with its unemployed youths as the downtrodden. He aptly treats the issues of social restiveness in a corrupt society and the attendant bloody revolution. This social unrest is powered by a revolutionist, unemployed, and disenchanted youth bent on changing the status quo, albeit violently, in order to secure a better present and future for their seemingly hapless lot. Esiaba Irobi's *Nwokedi* poses as microcosm of the macrocosm of the Nigeria pitiable situation where all these issues are satirically presented. He created Characters that represent some political gladiators in the Nigerian situation. For instance, the characters of *Nwokedi* Senior and Senator Arikpo represents corrupt politicians in Nigeria who after gaining the votes of their people by rendering promises during their campaigns, see political offices as an avenue of oppressing and milking dry the same people who elected them. This is a direct replica of the Nigerian situation.

In "*Nwokedi*", Esiaba makes a conscious effort to portray leadership failure in Nigeria by x-raying the economic and administrative corruption of the lazy and greedy politicians who daily oppress the people. He sees leadership failure as the cause of the prevalent unemployment, suffering and underdevelopment that is ravaging Nigeria. He portrays political and economic corruption perpetrated by the Nigerian politicians as the major problem of Nigeria and he advocated that the sole solution to stopping it is by eliminating the corrupt politicians and their co-horts.

In conclusion, the class struggle in Nigeria is a deeply ingrained and multifaceted issue that requires comprehensive and sustained efforts to address. Achieving a more equitable society will necessitate systemic reforms, inclusive policies, and an active engagement of citizens to hold those in power accountable.

To effectively address the class struggle in Nigeria, it is crucial to tackle corruption, improve governance, and promote inclusive economic policies. This requires strengthening institutions, ensuring transparency and accountability, investing in education and skills training, and creating opportunities for small businesses and rural communities. Additionally, there is a need for political will

and genuine commitment from the ruling class to prioritize the interests of the majority and bridge the gap between the rich and the poor. Therefore, Nigerian playwrights in all their endeavour have remained in the frontline to question inappropriate leadership and tackle social maladies that bedevil the Nigerian citizens.

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