

The Challenge of Leadership and Governance in Nigeria

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Abstract

The paper examined the dichotomy of leadership and some selected regimes in Nigerian political system. It identifies the origin, challenges of leadership and the prospects of the search for a nationalist governing class towards building a viable country. The paper relied on secondary data and method of content analysis. Generally, it argued that poor leadership has stymied the nation's enormous, economics and political potentials. In other words, it contended that as a result of leadership failure in Nigerian political system which has caused acute poverty, political instability, insurgence, collapse of governmental institutions. The identified issues have erupted a call for resources control by those in the South-South, secession and state of Biafra by those in South-East, Oduduwa state by those in the South-West and; fiscal federalism premised on population and institutionalisation of Sharia law in Nigeria by those in the North in Nigeria. All these demands have been weaved and collapsed into one demand popularly known as 'restructuring'. Recently, the call for restructuring has intensified from Nigerians perhaps due to the economic hardship and the failure of the current ruling political parties especially the All Progress Congress (APC) in fulfilling their electoral promises and manifestos. However, it recommended and advance that genuine leadership will need an honest, courageous and credible followership, which is less vulnerable to the manipulation politics of the ruling elite. It should possess knowledge, sound judgment and committed to specific cause and ideas. The pursuit of people based economic programmes has the potential to foster democratic governance within the context of quality followership. This class should secure democratized access to economic resources and political objects to foster trust, confidence and commitment. The leadership discourse should include the private domain as a viable means of leadership recruitment and consolidation within the system.

Keywords: Leadership, Leadership failure, Challenges of Leadership, Governance

Introduction

The entity called Nigeria was formally a colony of the British government for many years. Between 1960 and 1963, the British government seized to govern the country and the thrust of leadership fell on the indigenous people that comprises of over 400 ethnic nationalities. Prior to independence, the indigenous people were highly thirsty of the government of their own. And in order to have a viable and strong country, conferences and seminars were held to orchestrate and push-out the British out of the soil of the entity called Nigeria. Federalism and a strong regional government were adopted in country. But the unity of the nationalists among themselves after the departure of the colonial masters was thwarted by their selfish desires and ethnic interests. Consequently, formation of political parties were premised and tied on ethnic dictates, institutions and allocation of public resources were informed and driven by primordial interests. This scenario created leadership tussle among the three major ethnic groups and it led to the collapsed of the First Republic, an invitation to the military in politics and which later instigated civil war in the country. Right from the first republic till date, the leadership question has become a recurring decimal in Nigerian political system. Issues such as fiscal federalism, true federalism and currently restructuring have occupied the mind of policy makers, academia, and research institutions (Obah-Akpowoghaha, 2013a).

However, the governing class has been target of pillory, vilification, condemnation and disdain in view of the pervasive and persistent socio-economic and political crisis. The economics domain has been characterized by huge external debt overhand, net capital flight, disinvestments, collapse of social infrastructures, food crisis and insecurity, over-devalued national currency, pervasive poverty, homelessness and underdevelopment, unpopular, repressive and alienating economic policies. The socio-political space is riddled with the collapse of social values, political corruption, and transition crisis, the manipulation of electoral process, unstable, weak and vulnerable political structures and institutions, as well as brigandage. The intrusion of the military class into the political terrain altered the context of power politics. It assumed the character of a fraction of the hegemonic class that determines policy outcomes. However, the prolonged military ruler-ship exposed it to its contradictions and politicization. It bastardized the officer corps and deepened the Nigeria political crisis in the context of transition politics that manipulated the nature and context of political recruitment. Military rule also led to the concentration of political power and resources in the central authority thereby undermining the leadership process in the units.

The Nigerian state had political independence without a concomitant economy autonomy needed to evolve an autonomous state. The emergent governing class contested the political terrain within the context of ethnic based parties and a fragile federal structure. The contradictions led to the collapse of the first republic and

subsequent, political discontinuities. The implications are frequent leadership change, lack of ideology, policy reversals and weak institutional patterns. The perception rating of the ruling elites is jaundiced by intense power struggle to access statist structure, private economic resources, ill-conceived projects and programmes, the repressive and malevolent nature of the state, preoccupation with political struggle to the neglect of critical development issues. Against these backdrops, the critical appraisals of the Nigerian crisis often identify the leadership as a major variable to correctly historicize the nature, character and dimensions of the Nigerian problem. The failure of policies, programmes and perceived national decay are usually linked to the leadership failure among the Nigerian elites. The country's inability to pursue a vibrant foreign policy is also tied to the absence of internally cohesive political leadership. The next sub-heading will offer the theoretical context of the leadership question (Obah-Akpowoghaha, 2013b).

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

The Leadership Question

The leadership question is hinged on the interface of structure and behaviours, dialectic of persons and institutions. Actors who create, implement or the laws that are binding on existing social institutions play the state roles. The behavioural concern is the impact of personality trait, attitude and values on political governance. The extant literature on leadership offers the theoretical context and philosophical departure to explain the motives and character of the governing elite. Since the idea of organized society, there have been debates on who governs, who should govern, what the basis of political authority in a community should be, when, why, and how political actors should obtain and appropriate influence Plato, Marx, Aristotle, Locke, Rousseau, had raised philosophical interventions on these issues (Cranston, 1964; Obah-Akpowoghaha, 2013b). However, these writers differ on methodology. For instance, Locke and Rousseau relied on the prescriptive method to set the criteria for generalized ideas on the nature of man, society and authority. The works of Karl Marx thrives on the historical materialist theory, there is a link among the concept of leadership, power and influence. The interface will be examined in the later part of this research. Leadership is the process through which one individual consistently exerts more influence than others in the pursuit of group behaviour. Political leadership is the decision on social policy and resources allocation, as exerted by pattern representatives (Okadigbo, 1987; Abbott, 1947; Cranston, 1964). These definitions suggest that the leadership process is hinged on the capacity to allocate scarce resources, which determines the locus of power. The concept of leadership is also appraised at the implications of the concept of power, legitimacy and hierarchy. Therefore, a detailed analysis should appraise the imports of identified variable for leadership inquiry. Do these factors strengthen or limit political authority and within what context.

The literature analyses leadership theories such as the trait, behavioral, attribution, charismatic, transformational and visionary. The trait theories identify the attributes of confidence, iron-willed, determined and decisive. It also identifies trait that differentiate the leaders and non-leaders. These are ambition and energy, the desire to lead, honesty and integrity self-confidence, intelligence and knowledge. However, this approach ignore the need of followers, fails to clarify the relative importance of various traits and the strength of situational factors (Robbins, 1998) the behavioral theory appraises the conduct that specific leaders exhibits. In this context the leader initiates structure; values experimentation seeks new ideas, generates and implements change. The attribution theory suggests that leadership is an allusion to how the followership characterizes the leaders. These include intelligence, outgoing personality, strong verbal skills, and aggressiveness. This theory emphasizes the perception approach as a basis to interrogate the leadership issue (Robbins, 1998), the charismatic theory is hinged on the features of self –confidence, vision, strong convictions about the vision, extra-ordinary behavior. When successful, these behaviours evoke surprise and admiration. The charismatic leader is viewed as an agent of radical change rather than the status quo. These leaders are able to make objective appraisals of environmental constraints, and resources needed to foster change. The transformational leader is imbued with charisma, inspiration, intellectual stimulation, vision and sense of mission, instill pride; attracts respect and trust. The visionary leadership is the capacity to create and articulate a realistic, credible, attractive vision of the future. This leadership is imbued with the ability to explain and strengthen the vision through definite oral and written communication and behavior. (Okadigbo, 1987; Conger, et al 1988; Bass, 1990; Robbins, 1998).

The preceding analysis on theories shall provide the framework to interrogate the interplay of structures, institutions and the governing elite. These theories will also constitute prescriptive measures. It is useful to interrogate the interface of leadership and ethics. The ethical question is linked to political end thus the leadership theories canvass ethical issues as guide to political behaviour. For instance, the charismatic theory identifies leaders with ethical consciousness as a basis of political governance as against mal-governance. The ethical issues include the abuse of power, trust, honesty and integrity. To this extent, the leadership process is not valued free. It involves the means of political ruler-ship, ethical context and the moral content of the goals. The next sub-heading will discuss the challenge of leadership in the Nigerian state.

The Structure of Nigerian State, Leadership and Governance

The Nigerian state emerged as a colonial state where the foreign bourgeois class dictated the economic and political content. It organized the socio-economy under the direct control of global capital. This state attained political sovereignty in 1960 thus expanding the basis of capitalist accumulation to include the local bourgeois class. Meanwhile, the economic structures were skewed to sustain the hegemony of global capital in a peripheral state. Thus, the emergent leadership secured political power within the context of dependency, peripheralization and neocolonialism. This political class pursued power within the framework of the British parliamentary system. It is based on the fusion of power among the organs, principle of collective responsibility, bi-cephalous executive system, strong party discipline and strong opposition. The polity was administered on the premise of a regional structure within the context of the federal system allowed the regions to pursue policies and programmes hinged on their historical specificities. Besides, the parliamentary system evolved leadership that had immense followership and legitimacy. These strengths were used to mobilize the people behind policies. The regions under Obafemi Awolowo, Ahmadu Bello and Nnamdi Azikwe respectively had visionary and charismatic leaders whose behavioural leanings and attitudes set the pace and context of politics and governance. The parties had ethnic origins and somewhat ideological contexts that constituted the fulcrum of political and economic governance. However, the situational factors like the 1962 and 1965 Western Regional crisis, 1962 and 1983 census crisis, and 1964 General Elections crisis accelerated the collapse of the First Republic (Obah-Akpowoghaha, 2013b).

The military ruler-ship has had far-reaching impacts on the Nigerian political economy. The military dominated various transitions that defined the nature and context of leadership transfer. The crescendo was the annulment of the June 12 elections that precipitated national crisis, secessionist agitation, social dislocation and economic crisis. The military sought to re-engineer the political domain, cultivate a new political culture, reduce the influence of money in the political process and evolve a new political class. However, these intents were undermined by the cancellation, personalization of political power, the re-emergence of ethnic irredentist groups and ethnic politics (Akinterinwa, 1997). Also, its economic agenda and social policies sought to instill social discipline, fiscal and budgeted discipline, self-reliance and sustained national economic growth. The Buhari's military regime pursued a strict economic policy, which sought to reduce the imperialist influence in the Nigerian political economy. The strict posture on external debt and negotiations with the Bretton woods ideologies on economic reforms incurred the wrath of Paris club and the G8. However, these populist measures were undermined by human rights abuse, detention without trial, muzzling of the media and selective application of laws.

The Babangida regime pursued the structural adjustment programme that sought to restructure and diversify the economy, private sector growth and capitalist based development hinged on the market logic. However, critics like Bangura, (1991); Olukosi,(1991), (1995) and Adejumobi, (1995) cohere on the adverse social implications of economic reforms in the adjusting states. The contradictions were heightened by the personalization of state power by the military president, general Babangida and the institutionalization of corruption. Pius Okigbo report indicted the Babangida regime on the inability to account for \$12.2b oil windfall. Furthermore, the mass mobilization for social and economic recovery policy of the Babangida government sought to correct the Nigerian attitudinal problems, which negatively affected the economy and politics. However, this policy was contradicted by the divide and rule tactics of the junta, unpopular economy programmes, repressive policies and human underdevelopment (Adejumobi, 1995; Olukoshi, 1995, 2000).

The Abacha regime was characterized by jaundiced transition programme, repressive policies, harassment and killing of critical opposition and declining economic fortunes. The military junta led by General Sanni Abacha, had a morbid dislike for the intellectual class and progressive political class. This disdain heightened with the mounting opposition against the authoritarian disposition of the government. The military ruler, Sanni Abacha, was a reticent person. Shunned public appearances harass and intimidate critics, shunned intellectual discourses, opted for brute force and brigandage as instruments of political governance.

The Obasanjo government emerged in the context of the hegemony of the military class over the political terrain. Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, won the 1999 and 2003 presidential elections, amidst critical opposition to pseudo-military ruler-ship. Overtime, the president had been pilloried by civil society groups, trade unions and other parties. He was perceived as intolerant, arrogant, combative, bellicose, cantankerous and pedantic. This leadership style is linked to his military background and orientation, personal attributes and demeanour. Furthermore, his ruler-ship is critically perceived for national insecurity, rising inflation, collapse of local businesses, growing human poverty, homelessness and despondency, epileptic, unreliable and insufficient social facilities, over bloated bureaucracy, half heart struggle against corruption.

Leadership Transformation Strategies

Ironically, military rule in Nigeria was justified on the ground that it antidote to the country's corrupt and inept leadership. This was best articulated by major Chukwuma Kaduna Nzeogwu, one of the architects of the first

military coup in 1966. Nzeogwu maintained that the military was compelled to oust the civilian regime in order to end corruption and mal-administration. It is instructive that when Nzeogwu and his co-coupists staged coup, they estimated corruption at ten percent of government transactions. By the time the military relinquished power in 1999, corruption had sky-rocketed. Virtually, it had become a hundred percent. Other strategies which have been attempted to revamped the country's leadership have included public investigations into corrupt practices, mass dismissals, and the imposition of a two party system, anti-corruption campaign, and creation of states.

The Jonathan/Sambo's Administration and Challenges of Leadership in Nigeria

A little over a year ago, Jonathan assured Nigerians that his administration was fully committed to make every Nigerians feel secured, where security implies freedom from fear, not just in terms of defending territory but more in protecting people and providing for their basic and essential needs. First, this must involve preventing deadly conflicts by promoting political and social arrangements in which all groups are fairly represented, combined with human rights, minority rights and broad-based economic program must be predicted on equity, accountability, and alleviation of poverty.

But the reality on ground speaks different tune, pointers are everywhere that contemporary Nigerians is a cauldron of violence, poverty, corruption and insecurity. The North is markedly in a permanent state of violence as amply manifested by incessant killings by Boko-Haram, kidnapping, inter-communal clashes and environmental degradation. Borno, Kano, Bauhi have become Boko Haram territories during Jonathan/Sambo's administration. Thousands of Nigerians in Kano, Borno, Bauchi, Kaduna, Jos and several other places have been senselessly slaughtered in the name of religion or ethnicity. 'peace-keeping' soldiers have turned their guns on the very people they were supposed to be protecting and in the process, have killed many people in barbaric fashion in Jos in the past.

The Jonathan/Sambo's administration seems befuddled in the face of Nigeria's socio-economic and political crises. It has not been able to articulate bold and imaginative options, instead, it has relied on old strategies that have singularly failed to stem the tied of rut, corruption and Mis-governance. The ineptness of the Jonathan/Sambo's administration can be explained on the basis of several factors. First, the system lacks strategic goal and political will on how to transform the country and this can see as a function of the cabals or godfathers that brought him to power.

Secondly, the defects of the 1999 constitution have been major albatrosses on the Jonathan's government. The constitution was hurriedly put together with little public input. An umbrella human rights and pro-democracy organization. Transition Monitored Group has argued that the constitution was foisted on Nigeria by a "tiny and unrepresentative clique of military rulers who constitute the Provisional Ruling Council (PRC)." This stood Nigeria in contra-distinction to several other African countries where full public participation, debates, dialogues accountability and transparency have become the hall-mark of the constitution-making process. Moreover, the over centralization of power inherent in the 1999 constitution runs counter to the trend elsewhere. Decentralization and de-concentration of power have become the hallmark of political transformation in other polities. Despite the clamor of Nigerians for greater local autonomy and for local control of resources. Nigerian's military rulers have clung to a constitutional device that allocates enormous power to the central government.

The Jonathan's administration was also plague by the serious structural deformities of the Nigerian federation. Power is highly concentrated at the federal level. This has accentuated an unjust revenue allocation system. Moreover, the federal government has repeatedly demonstrated its incapacity to deal with the nation's problem, yet, those who benefit from the lopsided distribution of power and resources insist on the status quo.

Some scholars have argued that the Jonathan's government has tried to grapple with some of Nigerians problems, notably corruption, military re-organization, civil-military relations, and the crisis in North. However, the management of these issues has been largely ineffectual. Giving the scope and scale of corrupt practices in Nigeria, the anti-corruption act at least represented a bold statement of intent on the part of the new government. However, there are already many anti-corruption laws. The bigger problem is the lack of serious enforcement of the existing legislation. Nonetheless, if the intent of the act is meant to signal the determination of the administration to uphold integrity, transparency and accountability, then this would be a welcome development.

The Challenge of Leadership in Nigeria

The previous analysis suggests there is a leadership crisis. To properly historicize the issue, we should link in to the nature of the Nigerian state and character of the ruling class. This state lacks autonomy and enmeshed in the struggle among fractions of the political class to control the political domain. The political elite is not a productive class, but rely on the control of state structures to access economic rewards. The over politicization of the Nigerian state is also understood in the context of the unmediated struggles for power, influence and patronage, the nature of political contest ensured, the emergence of a local governing class without ideological commitment. Rather than pursue political contests within ideological frameworks, politics became a contested terrain for shallow, self centered political gains.

The nature of the Nigerian state evolved a predatory class that was concerned with power struggle, consolidation, alignment and realignment in the context of hegemonic control (Obi, 2000; Seteolu, 2003). The challenge of leadership is to evolve a political class based on ideology. This shift to issues and ideology should refocus politics and governance to critical development imperatives. The liberalization of the political space and the subsequent emergence of moderate and leftist parties like the People Redemption Party (PRP), Justice Party (J.P); Democratic Alternative(D.A); National Conscience Party (NCP), had the potentials to energize the political process, expand the basis of political participation and canvass alternative policy agenda. However, these parties are less likely in the immediate future to control political power especially in the centre. This is linked to the lack of ideology in the political space, monetization of the political process, and the influence of primordial factors. For clarity, the Nigerian state is governed by a predatory political class hence personal rulership, political corruption and underdevelopment. To transcend the current economic morass and political lethargy, we should evolve a nationalist class that will alter the texture of politics, balance politics with economic imperatives, respond to the dynamics of globalization and consolidate democratic structures and programmes hinged on the people and autonomous development. To evolve a new political culture and leadership, we should moderate the intense struggle for political contestation, narrow the zero sum pursuit of political power, share power, influence and authority and foster political stability. This option is canvassed as against the simple majority system that encourages non-power sharing and alienating politics. The principle is more appropriate for multi-ethnic, multi-religious societies that aspire to national cohesion, integration and political development. True federalism and democratic governance should mediate this process (Obah-Apkowoghaha, 2013).

The Babangida regime created the center for democratic studies as a basis to evolve a new political culture and political class. Here, the political class or new breed political elite was exposed to leadership training, retraining and stimulations with a view to deepen their knowledge of the governance process and its complexities. However, this class did not justify its new experiences in the quality of governance, but reoccupied itself with private gains. The selfish, parochial nature of the governing class has increased overtime. The political terrain is perceived as the easiest means to wealth, relevance and influence. Face-off between the executive and legislative organs over privileges in the fourth republic underscores the mind-set of the governing elite. While there were occasional differences on the budget, the greater disputes bothered on political spoils or rewards. In view of the parochial nature of fractions of the political class, there is a prescription for tutelage politics. It is a feature of the British parliamentary system where the political elite are exposed to different levels of political responsibility. Here, the politician develops through the party hierarchy and subservient to party control and discipline.

The search for genuine, nationalist governing class should involve the civil society organizations. Overtime, the non-state actors had evolved as credible platforms of political socialization, leadership recruitment and policy options. The military dictatorship under General Babangida engendered the growth of human rights organizations, and the campaign for democracy as a rallying point for socio-political movements. It is useful to observe that the Democratic Alternative and the National Conscience Party had evolved through social movements, which canvassed alternative policy agenda. The leadership search should interrogate the option of independent candidature as a basis to attract professionals, intellectuals, business and industrial elite to contest political office without partisan platforms. This option will likely enhance the quality of politicking, promote issue-based politics and recruit new entrants into the political class with somewhat personal integrity and pedigree, and reduce the cost of political power. The independent candidate as a political type will more likely suit the local levels of governance where community attachment, honour and integrity as opposed to party influence or domination are the determinants of political choice.

Concluding Remarks

The paper examined the leadership question in the Nigerian state against the backdrop of contextual influences; the paper affirmed that there is a leadership crisis, which constitutes a core problem. However, the analysis should include the followership link. The genuine leadership will need an honest, courageous and credible followership, which is less vulnerable to the manipulation politics of the ruling elite. It should possess knowledge, sound judgment and committed to specific cause and ideas. The pursuit of people based economic programmes has the potential to foster democratic governance within the context of quality followership. This class should secure democratized access to economic resources and political objects foster trust, confidence and commitment. The leadership discourse should include the private domain as a viable means of leadership recruitment and consolidation. The industrial class may likely offer new insights into the governance process. This potential was shown in the June 12 elections debate when the business class organized interactive session's debate between the presidential candidates, Chief Moshood Abiola of the Social Democratic Party and Alhaji Bashir Tofa of the National Republican convention. The civil society groups, community-based organization and independent candidature may likely constitute blocs to evolve leadership that approximate the features of the charismatic, visionary, transformational types. This project should be tied to the democratization of the Nigerian

state to strengthen its autonomy in relation to the propertied class and the exploited class, and reduce accumulative politics. Where there are new structures and institutions, these should be linked to new attitudes and values as basis of a new political culture. The institutions should reflect the historical backdrop of the people and include enforceable checks to achieve transparent, responsive and responsible political elite.

The leadership discourse is not restricted to macro politics; it includes the local institutions and local governance. Hitherto, the discourse on governance and leadership had emphasized national politics; the local politics trajectories and governance are less studied. The local level constitutes the margin of society whose politics and social evolutions are least interrogated. Yet, this governance level constitutes the fulcrum of social and economic expansion and the leverage to national politics (Obah-Akpowoghaha, 2013b). The Nigerian 1999 constitution specify its functions to include provision and maintenance of primary, adult and vocational education, the expansion of rural agriculture, sewage and waste disposal, birth and marriages, registration of deaths, assessment and collection of tenement rates, control and regulation of outdoor advertising, license and control of the sale of alcohol. However, the local government is weak in the management of finances and accountability. The uncertainty on the supervisory agent for the local council has made the issue of probity and responsible leadership difficult (Jega, 2003). Meanwhile, two critical issues are pertinent. First, there is poor and inefficient running of government business. The 774 local governments had shown dismal performance amidst growing apathy and disdain to local governance. Secondly, the local government is replete with corrupt practices.

The elected chairman and councilors privatized public finances through huge personal emoluments, impress accounts, inflated contracts and connived with contractors and party clients to defraud the local councils. Consequently, the institutional of informal governance such as community-based organizations assure local service delivery and local development, thus raising their relevance, legitimacy and loyalty. These bodies are alternative centre's of power as against the perception of the local government as an aspect of the alien state (Osaghae, 2003; Yaqub, 2003).

The foregoing analysis has problematized the governance crisis at the local level. The dilemma is that the local government is assumed to reflect, aggregate, canvass and pursue local interest, but these assumptions are contradicted by the predatory nature of the local governing elite. The political attitude of the local political elite derives from the character of the national bourgeois class. These contradictions pose the challenge of alternative governance structures and leadership. The community-based organizations seem to respond to this imperative thus expanding the political space. The implications are the fact that the local government is receding as a viable unit of political recruitment and the growing relevance of informal structures as vehicles of social reform and participatory governance. The leadership challenges are immense, complex and multi-dimensional, thus necessitating conscious, deliberate, systematized responses, action and interventions.

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