

## LEADERSHIP AND GOOD GOVERNANCE FOR SUSTAINABLE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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### **Abstract**

*The success or failure of governance in any regime in power is basically determined by the quality of leadership of such administration. Nigeria, a nation endowed with abundant national and human resources still battles with leadership debacle and governance after fifty six years of independence. This paper examined the failure of governance and the challenges of leadership for sustainable national development in Nigeria. It also x-rayed the concept of leadership, good governance, corruption, and sustainable national development. The method of data collection for this work was secondary method. The paper concluded and made some recommendations that leadership failure has remained pathetic in Nigeria. A common observable trend is the militarization of the polity by the military class. This not only intensified economic crises and resources mismanagement, it equally reinforced the existing challenges in the polity.*

**Keywords:** Leadership, good governance, corruption and sustainable national development.

### **Introduction**

Nigeria is one of the world's largest oil producing country. She also has other large mineral resources. The diversity of its vegetation and climate holds great potential for producing rich combination of agricultural products and raw materials for our industries. Indeed, the country is endowed with natural resources that are capable of improving socio-economic status and living standards of the citizenry.

The socio-economic and political development of any country depends largely on the ability of its leadership to harness its resources and be able to facilitate, entrench and sustain good governance. Very importantly, good governance is a product of dedicated, committed, patriotic and disciplined leadership. Nigeria has existed for over fifty three years without commensurate record of socio-economic development to show. For instance, there is rising of foreign debt, poor communication network, poor transportation facilities, low standard of living, among others. This negative trend is as a result of poor leadership. It is very disgusting and appalling that Nigeria still battles with the problem of good governance. Nigeria is characterized by leadership problems which stem from corruption, political instability, economic sabotage, social injustice, rising level of poverty and unemployment.

Accordingly Hamza (2011) citing Obasanjo (1994) described Nigeria as a nation too rich to be poor and too poor to be rich. He further stated, “once Nigeria was considered the anchor and bellwether of a huge continent, blessed with clever and energetic people, favoured with ample material resources (especially oil), and is Africa’s most populous country. But despite size and wealth, Nigeria lingers in the doldrums, perpetually a country of the future. Why?”

The severity of bad governance and leadership in Nigeria informs Ojudu’s assertion (1992), that “Corruption has become the major export apart from oil”. Successive governments both civilian and military have attempted stemming this ugly tide. The setting up of specialized anti-crime agencies such as the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), the Independent Corrupt Practices and other related offences Commission (ICPC) and the Code of Conduct Bureau (CCB) is basically a step in the right direction.

Nigeria has seen a number of ineffective governments with various leaders disappointing the people. The people have no say over how they are governed and/how accountable their government is to them. For instance the military rule relegated democratic institutions, culture of accountability and transparency and was characterized by the absence of citizen participation. Unfortunately, again, under the democratic government, the imperatives of good governance have been scuttled; the imperative of politics and administration of representation, using the ballot box, is being compromised. Onogu (2013) maintained that the chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) Prof. Attahiru Jega, went apologetic over the stalemated governorship election in Anambra State on the 16<sup>th</sup> November 2013. He further maintained that Jega regretted that the commission ended up ‘shattering the expectations of Nigerians’ in its conduct of the poll and failed to meet the expectation of Nigerians in its performance. Hence people’s wishes and desires with regard to electing their representatives and consequently revealing their preferences for the character of government, was denied. These, representatives therefore become more engaged in patronage and self serving activities. They are neither responsible to their oath of office nor responsible to the yearnings of people. Thus, the lack of people’s participation in the political process incapacitates them from holding the political leaders accountable for their actions and inactions. Hence people are subjected to arbitrary rule. In this condition, good governance becomes a rare commodity. The result has been diminished economic development, reduced social cohesion, heightened level of corruption and high state of insecurity, all of which undermine political stability.

The past has become nostalgia because of the prevailing circumstances of today where robbery, corruption, kidnapping, bomb blasting, Boko Haram insurgency, indiscipline, greed and a glaring lack of accountability are endemic. Why is Nigerian nation characterized by these obnoxious trends? Why are the socio-cultural, economic, and political legacies of the past decaying as a result of neglect and carelessness? Answers to these points to one direction: The quality of leadership in Nigeria. According to Buhari (1998),

There is a general dearth of leadership everywhere in the world; not just political leadership but also spiritual, social, organizational, national and international. The situation has deteriorated so much that the world has to tolerate and accept poor substitutes, overseeing the affairs of nations. The global social, economic and political crises were derived from lack of capable and visionary leadership that leads by precepts and with commitment to sacrifice and self-denial.

Besides, good leadership eludes Nigeria for other such reasons as the differences or peculiarities of our political history, socio-cultural differences as informed by tribalism, sectionalism and more recently the sentimental use of religious bigotry. All these have imprisoned our psych and stigmatized us from recognizing excellence and competence.

### **Conceptual Clarification**

#### **Leadership:**

A leader can be described as any body that can influence others to perform beyond their formal authority. Leadership emerges because the masses cannot lead. There is a need to have a few people who will lead (Ujo, 2001). Leadership is both the adhesive that binds a work group together and the catalyst that triggers employee motivation, thereby having major influence on organizational performance.

Osuntokun (1987), defined leadership in terms of direction and example provided by any person or group of persons who are chosen or who by an accident of history find themselves at the helm of affairs. In this case, it can be in a country, state, department, or institution desired for governance for the purpose of overall development and good governance of the said establishment. Leadership therefore, embraces not only political direction but direction in economic, administrative, military and educational sphere of life.

Omolayo (2005) describes leadership as an essential oil that keeps the wheel of government working without any difficulty. According to him, leadership makes the difference between success and failure in a country. It involves giving direction to citizens who are the critical assets of the country.

Leaders can influence their followers or subordinates, in addition to being able to give their followers legitimate directions. Leaders not only can tell their subordinates what to do but also can influence how or in what manner the subordinates carry out the leadership instructions (Richardson, 2010).

Leadership is a reflection of characters, which include but not limited to knowledge, vision, courage, openness accountability, determination, transparency, uprightness, motivation and patriotism put in place by office holders to lead their people and/ followers as to achieve reasonable and positive societal development. Profound changes need committed leadership exemplified in transformational polices

and actions (Ukaegbu, 2010).

In simplest term, leadership implies the quality of being good at leading a team, organization and a country, etc. Okadigbo (1995), views leadership as the process through which one individual consistently exerts more influence than others in the pursuit of group behaviour.

Therefore, leadership involves the process of influencing and supporting others to follow you and to do willingly the things that need to be done.

The above definition shows that leadership involves a social influence process whereby intentional influence is exerted by one person or group over other people or groups to structure the activities and relationship in a group, organisation or society. It is a process by which a person influences others to accomplish an objective and directs the organisation or society in a way that makes it more cohesive and coherent.

Moreso, leadership is those directed behavior in which a group is to influence to act, relative to some shared goals, in a manner that results in lower cost and have effective attainment of desired objectives.

### **Good Governance**

The World Bank (2004) identified three distinct aspects of governance:

- a. The form of the political regime
- b. The process by which authority is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources for development and
- c. The capacity of governments to design, formulate and implement policies and discharge functions.

Governance is the exercise of power or authority-political, economic, administrative or otherwise-to manage a country's resources and affairs. It comprises the mechanisms, process and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligation and mediate their differences. Good governance means competent management of a country's resources and affairs in a manner that is open, transparent, accountable, equitable and responsive to people's needs. Good governance according to Ebiringa (2013) is founded under political and economic principles.

Ebiringa (2013) and Ukaogo (2000) see governance as essentially tinged on transparency, planning and budgeting. They maintain that the process of budgeting in any country determines the level of transparency and accountability. Moreso, that governance can be viewed as the totality of the process of constituting a government as well as administering a political community.

Ninalowo (2005) identifies the major difference between government and governance. He identifies the salient features of governance such as socio-political empowerment, socio-economic empowerment, legal-rational empowerment, cultural empowerment, gender empowerment, civil society organizations etc. He notes that governance is the totality of executive or administrative functions of the state with a view to fulfilling terms of social contract or constitutional obligations to the citizenry,

while government refers to position or office of authority to administer the affairs of the state. Good governance has such attributes as participation, rule of law, transparency, responsiveness, consensus orientation, equity, effectiveness and efficiency, accountability and strategic vision (UNDP, 2007).

### **Sustainable National Development**

Sustainable development according to Olayode (2006) applies to the development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their needs.

Sustainability consensually means capacity to continue into the future. It is however noted that this concept applies not only to environmental issues, but also incorporated into economic and social policies. Sustainable development has some tenets.

- a. Precautionary principle and the recognition that each government is responsible for creating condition for sustainable development within its own boarder.
- b. Sustainable development encompasses a number of basic political challenges; democratization, equitable distribution of wealth, respect for human rights, combating corruption and sound resource management etc; these are issues that transcend boarders, says Olayode (2006).

### **Challenges of Leadership and Good Governance for Sustainable National Development in Nigeria**

Nigeria, a nation endowed with abundant national and human resources has good democratic institutions, plural society, vibrant civil society organizations and critical mass media among others. These ingredients have the structure and capacity to make leadership and good governance thrive well in Nigeria. However it is important to note that, Nigeria's leadership and governance have remained incapable in the improvement of the socio-economic and political development of the country since independence in 1960, particularly after the first republic. The political terrain has been unstable with lots of challenges militating against the genuine realization of the system. These challenges are:

**Ethno-Religious Factor:** This is one of the forces that have contributed greatly to socio-political instability in Nigeria. The latest sectarian turbulence in the country and the clamour for the presidency by the varied ethnic groups indicate that the society is still balkanized by tribal and religious sentiments (Victor, 2013). For instance, one of the powerful politicians in the North was quoted as saying that the Northern States will make the polity very ungovernable for Jonathan if he did not relinquish power to the North. Each ethnic nationality in Nigeria has its own faith, interest, culture, language and level of aspiration and these forces seem to affect the economic fate of each group. In addition, they make the creation of a common identity difficult thereby exacerbating the difficulty in attaining a true democracy in the society. Indeed, this is a serious challenge to the leadership of this society.

**Absence of True Federalism or Defined Governmental System:** Lack of true federal structure in Nigeria is a stumbling block to the nation's socio-economic and political development. The federal government is overbearing as it controls about 80% of the country's resources leaving state and local government at its mercy. Where states have the power to control their resources and to have access to the necessary funds for development programs, development is achieved. In fact it is only true federation that can guarantee fairness and justice in the society. More importantly, it enables each locality to progress according to the aspirations of the people. A durable and enforceable people's constitution protects the people and determines socio-political activities in the society.

**Object Poverty:** Continued poverty through mass unemployment is a barrier to Nigeria's economic development. A society of beggars, prostitutes, parasites and bandits cannot develop. A hungry man can never rational. He cannot know peace or stability (Ake, 1996). This shows that any individual deprived of the basic necessities of life cannot participate effectively in the democratic process. A poor person is therefore not full fledged social individual as he or she lacks the basic freedom to engage in the life activities. One can safely argue that poverty is a hindrance to development. In order to eradicate poverty, the leadership of this country has formulated one policy or another such as National Economic Empowerment Development Strategy (NEEDS), is aimed at poverty alleviation.

**Negative Approach to Leadership:** Nigeria's fundamental approach to leadership is troublesome. According to Adeyemi (2012), in Nigeria the primary goal of assuming leadership position is self enrichment. Whereas Nigerian leaders have the power to educate, inspire and provide the people with the resources to advocate for the causes they believe in, they have failed in their responsibilities to lead by good examples. According to Achebe (1998) in his work the problem with Nigeria, concludes that Nigeria's problem is bad leadership and evidence on ground has consistently shown that he is correct. Certainly, it is leaders and not the poor rural dwellers that are responsible for Nigeria's underdevelopment. In every country, it is the responsibility of the leadership to protect the political, social and economic interest of the citizens.

**Lack of Vision and Mission:** Leading a country involves making policies and finding solutions to problems, ensuring stability of the polity, and guiding the society to prosperity. But a large number of the political leaders of Nigeria lack the vision, mission, the passion and the character to effectively govern the state and deal with the crumbling economy. They do not have a clear understanding of their responsibilities, as some of them are insensitive to the people's sufferings. Nigerians are tired of complaining to those who are leading without listening to them. As Bell and Smith, (2002), opined "leaders can point to many reasons why they are not good listeners, but none of these reasons excuses them from the obligation to listen". Leaders who listen are however, known to respond well to criticisms and crisis, build more loyalty, and increase the morale of the followers. Listening is a way of showing that a leader

cares about others. Due to the fact that “power belongs to the people”, no political leader in the advanced countries would function effectively without the support of the people. Thus they constantly have their ears on ground for information that often guides them in policy formulations and implementations. The world’s leading democracies are what they are today because their leaders are innovative and always searching for solutions to their social, political and economic problems. This is not the case with Nigeria, where evidence of bad leadership is all over the landscape as the leaders have not gone beyond a promise for change. They are only good at drumming the country’s problems without finding the solutions. The institutions and infrastructure that are the bed rock of the economy are allowed to rot away leading to weak economy, rising unemployment, inflation, poverty and crimes.

**Electoral Malpractice:** This problem has become a popular phenomenon in Nigerian politics. As a matter of fact, an average Nigerian believes that election cannot be won except it is rigged. Yes, this is the extent to which our electoral system has deteriorated. The Anambra November 16, 2013 Gubernatorial election is a fresh case where the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC)’s chairman Attahiru Jega publicly regrets shoddy conduct of the election as stated earlier. Electoral malpractice is not a recent phenomenon. In fact it has existed for long. Our leaders are the architects of electoral fraud. For instance, in the first republic, the leadership of various political parties were accused of election rigging. The same happened in the second republic. The fourth republic was also, not different. If by now, our leaders, the so called politicians are not ready to face free and fair election, it is doubtful if good governance can be entrenched by these same set of people who are so desperate in their bid to clinch to power by all means.

**Corruption:** According to John Campbell, U.S.A. Ambassador to Nigeria, corruption is a clog in the wheel of any nation struggling for the enthronement and consolidation of democracy and good governance (Punch July 7<sup>th</sup> 2005). This shows that development in Nigeria cannot be predicted on a fragile and unstable political base. Corruption is a devastator that has greatly eroded the fundamental values of democracy and its essential principles.

In his view, he maintained that corruption is a practical problem involving the outright theft, embezzlement of funds or other appropriation of state property, nepotism and granting of favours to personal acquaintance. It has been argued that corruption involves behaviours which deviate from the morale and constitutional requirements.

Corruption in its popular concept is defined as the exploitation of public position, resources and power for private or selfish gain. For instance, Muhammad (2013) defined corruption as “the betrayal of public trust for individual or group gain”. In the same vein, Obayelu (2007) identifies it as “efforts to secure wealth or power through illegal means for private gain at public expense or a misuse of public power for private benefits”.

According to Ogundiya (2010), events in Nigeria since 1999 have shown that

the waves of reversal have been contending with Nigeria's democratic project. Consequently, democracy remains grossly unstable and the future seems to be very bleak because of rampant bureaucratic and political difficulties. Corruption has reached a level such that an average Nigerian now possibly associates democracy with it. The consequences of political corruption are potently manifest: cyclical crisis of legitimacy, fragile party structure, institutional decay, chronic economic problem and unemployment, and above all general democratic volatility.

Corruption in this country is generally characterized by looting of funds and wealth which are kept secretly, i.e capital flight, misappropriation and mismanagement of public funds. Others are money laundering, drug and child trafficking, illegal arms deal; gratification which involves monetary, material or physical favor as a condition or reward for performing official duty. It further includes official abuse of office in which an official suppresses and violates an oath of office and nepotism which is granting underserved favors to one's relations. The corruption scandal in the oil sector totaling ₦1.7 trillion from 1999-2011, police pension fund of N18 billion as well as the James Ibori ₦450 billion case of money laundering in London and most recently the ₦255 million two BMW bullet proof cars are some of the celebrated corruption cases in Nigeria.

**Security Question:** From 1999-date, the country has been home to lots of ethno-religious crises, sectarian Mayham, electoral violence e.t.c. questioning and shaking the survival of our democracy. Notable among them are, the Yoruba and Hausa/Fulani disturbance in Shagamu, Lagos State (1999-2000), the Urhobo/Itsekiri, Ife/Modakeke crisis (2000-2001) the Jukun/TV conflict (2000), incessant turbulence in Jos, the erstwhile home of peace and tourism, the post election violence in the Northern parts of Nigeria (2011) and constant sectarian turmoil exemplified by the activities of Boko Haram. The high level of kidnapping in the Niger Delta zone, particularly in Aba, the commercial centre of the East. The x-ray of the above upheavals will indicate that, our country is surely under great challenge making Dauda and Avidime (2007) to argue that the security situation in the country is a major obstacle to our socio-economic and political development. According to them, "the tense security situation in all parts of the country makes nonsense of whatever effort that has been made to justify the sustenance of human and economic development.

Other areas of challenge to the leadership and good governance of this country include, the incumbency factor, the politics of god fatherism, disjointed information, lack of rule of law and absence of accountability and transparency, (Muhammad, 2013).

### **Conclusion**

This paper has critically analyzed the challenges of leadership and good governance for sustainable development in Nigeria. The importance of leadership cannot be overemphasized. Leadership failure has remained pathetic in Nigeria. A common observable trend is the militarization of the polity by the military class.

This not only intensified economic crises and resources mismanagement, it equally reinforced the existing challenges in the polity.

The introduction of anti-crime agencies is a good point in the right direction. Nigeria has the potential both human and material resources that if properly harnessed and utilized, socio-economic and political development will be achieved.

**Recommendations:**

Corruption leads to poor governance and low growth and hampers development. The government should therefore improve on their efforts toward tackling corruption by straightening the anti-crime agencies it has established. The war against corruption should be made clear. Such rules must not be personalized and selectively applied against opposition, but rather should be applicable to all and sundry, irrespective of position, ethnic nationalities or religious affiliation.

The two anti-corruption commissions set up i.e Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) and Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC), must be totally independent of the executive and must be given the necessary powers devoid of any external influence.

Poverty and hunger are national problems. The government should focus on providing good economic environment and invest in human development, including health care, education, skill training and acquisition of advanced technology. Skills acquisition would enable the poor to learn both various skills with which to find employment and improve their lives. An effective government is therefore the root of achieving economic growth and development in any society.

There is need for nation-building. Nigeria could become an economic powerhouse and command the attention of the international community only if it can give proper attention to education and technology.

Again, the government at all levels should evolve policies of inclusion rather than exclusion, that is, policies that will carry everybody along rather than policies that will protect the interest of a few. These will enable people to have a sense of belonging and by extension, enable them to participate actively in the political process.

Moreso, a true federalism should be entrenched and sustained in our constitution. This is to give the federating units and the minority groups equal opportunities in the sharing of the nation's resources. More importantly, the government should downsize their control and allow the private sector to come into play as to industrialize the country and create employment for our teeming population. The security apparatus of the state should be intensified. The security agencies of the state should be well equipped and their welfare should as well be improved.

Finally, our leaders should be good listeners and be able to re-orientate our moral values for the better participation of the citizenry.

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