

Problem of Leadership as Impediment to Achieving Democratic Dividends in Nigeria

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Abstract: This research examined the problem of leadership in Nigeria. It assessed how this problem has continued to make it difficult to achieve the dividends of democratic governance in the country. In attaining the above stated objectives, the Researcher adopted the descriptive method of analysis in conducting the research. Qualitative research methodology was used in this research. Secondary data sourced from journal articles, newspapers, magazines, bulletins, internet based information and library based documentation analysis like textbooks, lecture notes and relevant unpublished research thesis and dissertations were utilized in this research. Poor governance as the research discovered is part of the leadership problem Nigeria as a nation is suffering from. This shortcoming as the research also observed is translating in state failure in the area of improving the living conditions of the Nigerian people through the provision of democratic dividends like effective power supply, quality and standard education for the majority, medical and health care service delivery, pipe bone water supply, roads, housing and other infrastructural development as well poverty reduction and job creation. Non-corruptible political elites with public rather than individual centered ideology as the research recommended is urgently needed to free Nigeria from leadership problem and result in the achievement of democratic dividends in the country.

Keywords: Democratic, Dividends, Impediment, Leadership, Problem.

INTRODUCTION

In the constitutional conference held in London between May and June 1957, the British Colonial Secretary is reported to have said that he could not commit the British government to a definite date for Nigerian independence because it would like to see more unity among Nigerian leaders [1]. This statement not only reflects the state of affairs that exist Nigeria today. But it also indicates the problem that must be solved if the nation is to be able to achieve democratic dividends which it has long been yawning for since the establishment of civil rule in May 29, 1999. The statement to me also demonstrated how historical the problem of leadership has been truncating Nigeria as a nation. The founding fathers were principally concerned with the transfer of political power from the British to an indigenous and as such did not actually forecast into the future to be able to warned Nigerians of how necessary the problem must be solved from the onset if the nation is not only to exist as a divisible entity but also as one in which the dividends of democracy are likely to be achieved. Leadership problem in Nigeria is as old as the political birth of the nation in 1960. After the first generation leaders or the founding fathers of the nation, other leaders that came after them have failed to practically provide good conditions of living desire by the Nigerian people.

Regimes after that of the founding fathers all came and ended without fulfilling their promises to the Nigerian people. Although Oyediran [2] believed it is as a result of rampart military intervention in Nigerian government and politics from 1966 to 1979 and 1984-1999. The period from 1999 to date in the life of a nation is a time frame sufficient enough to provide the people with good things and dividends which democratic governance entails. Nigeria as Baba [3] posits have had four general elections between 1999 and 2015. And all these exercises were started with series of election promises by politicians before the actual voting days. In fact, the exercise of general elections of 2015 emerged not only as a surprise but also as a sort of political revolution in the political history of Nigeria. Incumbent party was for the first time in history defeated in elections and opposition party won serious victories in all elections conducted in most part of the country [4].

Nigerians suffers from deficit of civic pride [5] when it comes to exercising their rights of voting. But experience of the 2015 general elections are clear message that people have come to realize how effective their votes can be used as weapon of flushing out unwanted regime from government-reason why elites in

power must strive hard to ensure that campaign promises and dividends of democracy are quickly delivered to the Nigerian people as strategy against next elections. Civic sense to me is nothing but ethics that need to be followed also by people in public position. It is not only patriotic attitudes required from the citizens. Nigerian voters from what we all witnessed in 2015 elections have attained what can be considered as marvelous political maturity. The issue now to me does not lie in the Nigerian people. It lies in the political elites whose behaviors' seems to be going similar with what Leah [6] considered as forgetting to behave properly. But whether their conducts are products of deliberate acts or those of forgetters is what cannot actually be ascertained. Three democratic transition were witnessed since 1999 and the fourth later in 2015. But known as Baba [7] observed demonstrated the beauty of democracy in Nigeria and the African continent like the one of 2015. Expectations that escorted the elections were higher than what several Nigerians believe the post-voting period is now showing.

In today's Nigeria, corruption, unemployment, environmental degradation, gender inequality, poor infrastructural development, crime and terrorism to Uzochukwu [5] are the problems facing Nigeria. His observation is part of the nation's problems. But leadership flaws created through poor governance go a long way in making infrastructural development relatively difficult for politicians in power. Democracy is instrumental to human development. This is because it as Duncan [8] submits encourages people to take responsibility for their political lives. Political lives desire by the Nigerian people and which influenced their voting behaviors in 2015 general elections is a total change and transformation of the old system to a new one in which infrastructural development will flourish, employment opportunities would thrive, corruption will be wiped out of the system or reduce to single digit, poverty, hunger and destitution will become issues of the past in the country. And to crown it all, insecurity and terrorism would have no ground on the Nigerian soil.

An individual does not make a system to me. Though a leader, direct, coordinate, supervise and organize. But still an individual as head of government is just a sub-system of a whole body to which others working along with him or her are also members. Therefore, all sub-systems within a whole body must have similar ideology and attitudes or else, the system is bound to fail or experience problem. A leader whose ideology is different from those of the people that surround him or her or work with him or her will actually find it difficult to fulfill his or her promises to the electorates. Political parties in Nigeria are membered by few politicians based on ideological

perspectives. The ideology of some politicians do not conform to those of the party they belong. This has often lead to what Nwabueze [9] considered as politics of confrontation in Nigeria. Post-election periods are accompanied with efforts to deliver election promises, but in Nigeria, political witch-hunting and confrontations appears clearer than efforts to deliver election promises.

Nigerians as people to me have changed. What we all saw in the 2015 general elections are pictures of political maturity and adequate desire for positive transformations on the part of the people. The issue now does not lie greatly with the people anymore. What they have to do and can do to make a change, they have done it. Therefore, the political elites and their brand of leadership to me is now the problem. Political elites must not forget that Nigerians are very impatient towards gradual and sluggish transformations. Though change does not come easily but then the national leadership of the country need to adopt a somehow radical approach towards effecting change and fulfilling it promises or else socio-economic hardships will force the people to lose confidence in the regime and revisit their former self as means of survival. And should this happened, the leaders but not the people are to be blamed for Jody [10] asserts that:

“Well-being of individuals assist in providing quality of life community identity by boasting internal and external perception of a region, town or place. Wellbeing balances community purpose, respecting its traditions and perspective, whilst encouraging belongingness and empowerment” [10].

Leadership problem which Nigeria as a nation has been suffering from since independence till date has continued to serve as an impediment towards the achievement of democratic dividends in the country. This problem and how difficult it is making the achievement of democratic dividends possible to the Nigerian people provide the background upon which this research is necessitated. At this juncture, it is however pertinent to assert that it is in context of the above arguments that this research found it basis.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Problem of leadership in Nigeria inherited in Nigeria since independence in 1960 instead of coming to an end keep growing over time. The issue has escalated beyond the point that it is now making it difficult for the dividends of democracy to be achieved in the country despite the fact that the nation has been under civil rule since May 1999 till date. Since this date to till date, every regime that came made election promises that were fulfilled before they leave office-issue that seems to be making leadership one of the severe problem the country is suffering from today.

Inability to develop infrastructures that result in the improvement of the living conditions of the Nigerian people clearly manifest itself in the decaying nature of public facilities across the nation. Unemployment grew since 1999 till date instead of reducing, poverty is on the rise as purchasing power of domestic currency fall on daily basis while food production accompanied it in arithmetic progression. Destitution created by poor housing public policy grew with time and number of homeless citizens in the country rise instead of reducing. Public health and education sectors are in serious risk of total collapse due to poor funding and management. Public water supply system is still a mirage while electricity power supply is suffering from serious condemnations amidst huge state funding and increase in tariff. Urban and rural road systems are suffering from serious state neglects. Enabling environment which democracy not only provide but which is required for investments to thrive so as for economy to boast up is in jeopardy. Though insurgency in the north east region of the country has been contained to a reasonable extent compared to the periods before 2015. But the rise of other conflicts in the other regions of the country are messages of how unsafe the nation is for Direct Foreign Investments (DFI) to flow into the country. Several militant groups threatening oil exploration and national unity springs up in the Niger Delta Region on daily basis. Age-long farmers-herdsmen confrontations in the central region of the country has refused to come to a total end. Pockets of religion conflicts and cattle rustling still grew instead of reducing in the north western region of the country. Conflicts over land have not been completely resolved in the south western region of Nigeria and the south east is often painted with request for secession from the rest of Nigeria-development that continued to threaten national unity and creating unsafe environment for investments to flow into the country from abroad. Instead of rising positively above its initial stage, Nigerian economy systematically slipped through depression into recession and political elites have nothing to do so as to rescue it but rather to blame it on the falling price of crude oil at the international market. Other oil producing nations that depend largely on the commodity for foreign earnings still operate an economy far above depression level despite the fall in price of the commodity. Policy statements of the regime which frightens investors is an issue the Nigerian government has refused to look at till date. Instead it keeps blaming past regime for not saving and corruption as excuses for the current situation the country is going through. Majority of the Nigerian people as statistic of the latest population census conducted in 2006 revealed are illiterates. They do not know or care about what the national economy is all about. What matters most to them is their living conditions. And once this is not improve than it was initially, complains will certainly set into the polity and

the government will begin to come under attacks of incompetency and several accusations from the public. In order to avoid losing credit and recognition as incompetent of delivering election promises and democratic dividends to the people, the right time to act is now not later. And how such act can be initiated so as to ameliorate some of the problems stated above is part of the aim of this research.

OBJECTIVE OF THE RESEARCH

The objectives of this research includes:

1. To examine the problem of leadership in Nigeria.
2. Assess the extent to which the problem affects the achievement of democratic dividends in the country.
3. And to make recommendations that will result in effective leadership under which democratic dividends can be easily achieved.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This research raised and answered a number of questions basic among which include:

1. Is leadership a problem in Nigeria?
2. Does leadership problem affects the achievement of democratic dividends in Nigeria?
3. How can effective leadership be enhance so that democratic dividends can be easily achieved in Nigeria?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Nigeria as a nation faces numerous problems. Though before its economy slipped into recession in the year 2016, the country before this period was reported to be the fastest and largest growing economy in Africa. The country depend largely on crude oil exportation for its foreign earning. And with a drastic fall in the price of the commodity, common sense will understand it that the nation`s foreign earning has reduced. Against the background that prices of crude oil has fall at the international market, Niger Delta Region where 90% of the nation`s crude oil is produced is under serious militant activities targeting and destroying oil facilities-development that justify reduction in production amidst falling price of the commodity. Although oil price has fall at the international market. And production has decline as a result of militancy and attacks on facilities in the region where the commodity is produced. This has continued to be one of the basic excuses for economic recession and severe hardships faced by Nigerians today. During booms and high price of oil at the international market, though recession may not have been experienced but failure to fulfill election promises and deliver democratic dividends to the people of Nigeria is an age-long issue that has to do with the problem of leadership on the part of the political elites. Fall in oil price to me has nothing to do with this failure because inability to achieve democratic dividends since

May 1999 has nothing to do with the fall in price of crude commodity.

Corruption, poor governance, political instability, unemployment, population explosion, diseases, environmental degradation, religion and ethnic conflicts as Uzochukwu [5] pointed out are the major problems facing Nigeria as a nation. Poor governance is a sensitive issue among the list of problems stated. All others to me are incubated and hatched by the problem of poor governance. If public governance is effective, the possibility of ameliorating all other problems would have been high. Poor governance we should not forget, is a brain child of leadership problem. The story of Nigeria in recent years as Ehusani [11] submits is that of a land devoid of visionary leaders and a nation without integrity. These alone are enough reasons to make peace and stability among the initial stated problem difficult to achieve. This is however in addition to the inability to achieve democratic dividends and fulfill election promises by the political elites. In fact Buhari [12] clearly stated that "bad leadership is responsible for Nigeria's problems".

The failure of leadership in Nigeria is so all pervasive and endemic it begs for further analysis. Leadership in Nigeria is an insurmountable challenge. Nigerian leadership has a record of failure and the roots can be traced to Nigerian society, where echoes of slavery linger. Until the problem of leadership is unpacked, and trite formulations are discarded in favor of unflinchingly honest analysis, it's hard to see how highly efficient and productive value-enhancing organizations can flourish in Nigeria; it's also hard to imagine that Nigeria will get the political leadership it so badly needs. The way those who work for us are treated is the form that leadership takes [13]. The pervasiveness and endemic nature of leadership problem in the just concluded analysis are central in so many ways and aspects to this research. The notion that until the problem of leadership is unpacked is also an important issue in this research. This is because without solving the problem of leadership in Nigeria, believing that democratic dividends would be achieved for the people will continue to remain only an aspiration that can be hardly achieved. Before May 1999, Nigerians have reasons to blame military interruptions as major cause of lack of infrastructural development in the country. But since May 1999 till date, soldiers have left with signs of not coming back again already noted from their reactions to recent political issues in the country. But still with democracy in place since 1999, problem of leadership has continued to make it difficult to achieve the dividends that democratic regime offers. The reason why leadership problem has continued to serve as one of the major obstacles truncating the development of the nation and the achievement of democratic dividends is a serious issue that need to

resolved once and for all to give the nation and its people new face of relief and recognition among the comity of democratic nations of the world.

Leadership style play a key role in uplifting any human society or holding down the wheel of progress. It is the foundation that determines progress or the absence of it. In Nigeria today, leadership across the board from local to national level is all about the well-being of the leaders and their cronies and the entrenchment of their rules by crook means. The interests and well-being of the society is undermined or even ignored. This ought not to be so as the purpose of leadership is about the well-being of the society [14]. Leadership style to me means several things. First, it appears to explain the life style of the person in leadership position especially in relations to how he or she govern his people. In Khanna [15], a leader may choose to be democratic, autocratic or even laser-fair in style of administration. But as a democratic system of government, style is expected to be one, which is democratic in nature. Second analysis which seems to be affiliated to Olaoye's [14] analysis is the individual personal attitudes towards public leadership. In this regard, political elites in Nigeria since 1999 till date differs with the nation's founding fathers. During the first republic, societal interest supersede personal interest but from 1999 till date, what we see in Nigeria are leaders and political elites who cherish to protect and promote personal interest than societal interest. This affect the achievement of democratic dividends as well. A system where personal interest is place above societal interest can hardly experience peace and achieved national development.

Personal qualities and choices are important considerations and have proven to be quite decisive at critical junctures, they are only necessary but not sufficient factors for good leadership. The experience with the first generation of political leaders in Nigeria, who led the country to independence, laid the foundations of charismatic legitimation and are generally regarded as the best leaders the country has had so far in terms of their patriotic zeal, discipline and morality. In spite of their outstanding credentials, they constituted the bulk of those denounced by the coup plotters of January 1966, with the concurrence of the vast majority of disappointed citizens, as corrupt enemies of progress [16]. If this caliber of political elites can be castigated on ground of poor leadership and corruption, then the nomenclature for the current political elites in Nigeria is yet to be described in the global dictionary of politics to me.

The face of leadership in Nigeria is that of fear and impunity. The people fear their leaders and leaders despise their people. This is so whether it is in the secular, traditional and even religious spheres of the

Nigerian state. There is an unhealthy deference to leaders by the Nigerian people and this is what Nigerian leaders have taken advantage of to rule their people with impunity and in fact unto despoliation [17]. Divide and rule is by far the dominant strategy in Nigeria's contemporary politics. It thrives on zoning and rotation of political offices with aspiring candidates for leadership at all levels of government and society cheaply brandishing their religious and ethnic credentials over any other qualification. At all levels of Nigerian society, standards have crashed and leadership requirements have been reduced to purely material wellbeing. Ethnic and religious factors have therefore emerged today as perhaps the most defining factors for contest for leadership positions in the country. At the root of our leadership problems are so many issues that require urgent attention. It is beyond simply focusing on the individual. Government as oriented today is the source of our leadership problem. Unfortunately, at best, almost every Nigerian only lament about it and conclude that nothing can be done to change it. This has given rise to a situation whereby all our governments are simply on auto pilot just facilitating importation and consumption with virtually the only production taking place being crude oil extraction [18].

It is not a new revelation that the problem of Nigeria is that of leadership. The problem/issue has been discussed, argued, lamented, talked and talked about again. As a necessity rather than a norm, in order to propose ways of solving the problem, the extent of the problem must be understood [19]. The problem of leadership in Nigeria is not a recent phenomenon. It is an age-long problem. Every regime that came after the independence of the country in 1960 came with its own kind of leadership problem. Therefore, it cannot be conceived at this juncture that the extent of leadership problem in the country has yet been understood. The problem has been known. But the issue at stake is whether the political elites are seriously committed to change as they are portraying. The Nigerian people to me are already a change people and are committed towards the socio-economic and political transformations of the nation. One reason to believe that Nigerians are now changed people is how they shun money politics and voted for change massively in the 2015 general elections despite the poverty they wallow in during the period. The manner in which they jealously guide against interruption and manipulation of their votes is another a new attitudes they were not known with before. And first in the political history of the country, an opposition party was able to successfully defeat the party in government in all elections conducted in most part of the country. Based on this development, I strongly subscribe to the view that the leaders but not the people is Nigeria problem for now. And the recommendations of this research are meant for Nigerian political elites to learn and correct

their mistakes so that we all like our colleagues from other part of the globe can enjoy the dividends of democracy consolidated in our country since May 1999.

METHODOLOGY

This research was conducted with the used of qualitative research methodology. Library based documentation analysis were utilized in the research. Secondary sources of data like textbooks, lecture notes, bulletins, magazines, newspapers, journal articles, unpublished research thesis and dissertations as well as internet based information were all used in sourcing data for this research.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The problem of leadership in Nigeria as this research discovered from the literatures reviewed in the work is one of the serious and current problem the country is suffering from. Leadership problem which has continued to manifest in poor public governance in the country is resulting in severe hardships been witnessed by the Nigerian people. Poverty, unemployment, diseases, destitution promoted by lack of effective housing policy as well as rise in internal conflicts with ethnic and religious affiliations threatens Nigeria as a nation today. And all these are products of poor governance caused by problem of leadership in the country. Education and health sectors are in serious agonies due to poor funding and management. Electricity supply has refused to improve despite the increase in tariff. For the first time in the political history of Nigeria, people accepted subsidy withdrawal but still this has not translated in improve living conditions of the ordinary citizens. Since May 1999, Nigeria have had four general elections and in all election promises were made by politicians. None of these promises have been fulfilled till today. And every new day in the lives of ordinary Nigerian citizens bear features of how better the past was compare to the present. Several roads in the country still remain death traps waiting to be reconstructed till now. And instead of improvement or stability, Nigeria's economy slipped into recession-meaning there is actually no specific time for the people to expect improve living conditions.

Owing to the fact that election campaign promises are yet to be fulfilled, some of those politicians who made them have completed their tenures and left office while others are still in office. Corruption among the political elites has continued to make it difficult for the ordinary Nigerian who bear the bulk of voting during elections to benefit the dividends of democracy in the country till now. Governments that attempted to ameliorate corruption among the political elites were frustrated as a result of the clipping of the wings of anti-corruption agencies by the judiciary. And today anti-corruption agencies operates in frustration of no power to deal independently as they wish with

corrupt politicians and public officials –development that itself is making it easier for corrupt politicians to escape away with their loots successfully at the expense of the ordinary citizens who are yet to achieve the dividends and good things which democratic governance offers.

In addition to the fact that some politicians in Nigeria lack focus, several others do not even have political ideology. They belong to any party that is willing to give them the ticket to contest for public position without even understanding what the ideology of the party is. This however because they see public office as a means of acquiring fortunes but not of serving the people. Under this kind of derailed political ethic which has often result in confrontations among politicians, nothing good can be deliver to the people. This is because personal interest here is placed at higher priority than societal interest. Under such system, dividends of democracy can hardly be achieved.

MAJOR FINDINGS

Based on the literatures reviewed and results discussed above, the Researcher was able to make the following major findings:

1. There is problem of leadership in Nigeria. In fact, it is one of the current major problems the country is suffering from.
2. The problem of leadership is an impediment to the achievement of democratic dividends in Nigeria. Since May 1999 till date, Nigerians are yet to actually benefit the good things which democratic governance offers e.g. employment opportunities, good roads, poverty reduction or eradication, stable and effective power supply, effective education and health care delivery services among others.
3. Some political elites in the country lack focus and do not have ideology. Personal interest which always supersede societal interest and corruption along with poor governance result in leadership problem and make democratic dividends difficult to achieve in Nigeria.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As a result of the literatures reviewed in this research, results discussed and major findings made, the Researcher hereby recommends that:

1. Non-corruptible politicians or elites with no allegation of corruption charges should be the ones who political parties in Nigeria will give their party tickets to for contesting public office. This should be made a national law so as to equip the political arena with political elites who are likely to deliver election campaign promises and dividends of democracy to the Nigerian people. President Obasanjo`s regime adopted something similar to this in 2007 general elections but did not get support of the National Assembly. The time is now

ripe for this system to be adopted as a law if the elites are truly committed to the change slogan they have been spreading and preaching.

2. Any time attempts towards fighting corruption is adopted, the judiciary is often accused of frustrating the efforts. A true independent and honest judicial system free from political interference is required to fight corruption to a reasonable extent in Nigeria. Anti-corruption agencies like EFCC and ICPC have often accused the judiciary of frustrating their efforts in fighting corruption in the country. These judiciary and these agencies are not rival. But rather they are supposed to be partners in the war against corruption so as to free Nigeria from the problem of leadership incubated and hatched on the other hand by corruption.
3. Nigeria also need a well-motivated police force ever willing to act in the interest of the Nigerian people and state than protecting the interest of the political elites. This should be accompanied with a discipline anti-corruption agencies also willing to act in the best interest of the Nigerian people but not as a tool for political witch-hunting and confrontations. This will instill fear of mismanagement and lootings on the minds of public office holders as a result of which poor leadership problem will be ameliorated in the country.
4. Finally, the constitution of the federal republic of Nigeria itself to me need to be revisited. Most of the laws in the document were made by the elites to safeguard their personal interests but not those of the ordinary Nigerian citizens who are the majority. There is every reason to revisit the act which call for the prosecution of a citizen who steal a ball of orange worth 20NGN in the open market while one who steal billions of money cannot be prosecuted because he or she is a serving Governor, President, etc. Constitution is not a fix document. It is subjected to review and amendment be it rigid or flexible in nature. There is actually to me a reason to review and amend Nigeria`s constitution so as to check the issue of public leadership immunities seriously. All Nigerian citizens being equal before the ordinary law of the land should be liable to prosecution if found wanting in the violation of public act and law of the federal republic of Nigeria. Public leadership immunities to me is a contradiction of the very principle of equality as stated by the concept of the rule of law. If this is done accountability, prudence and good leadership will be instill in Nigeria as against the poor leadership complains the country is suffering from today.

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