

Leadership Failure and Socio-Political Ferment in Nigeria's Fourth Republic

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Abstract

Nigerians were enthusiastic that their future would be glamorous and dream-fulfilling when the Fourth Republic was born in 1999. It was hoped that the new political entrants into the nation's political terrain would be accommodating, approachable and push-ful as they occupied leadership positions across the federation. However, the citizens have become disillusioned and despondent due to poor leadership qualities and avarice being displayed by those who have been parading themselves as leaders. This article therefore addresses the leadership failure as exhibited by the leaders, the state of anomie in the country and how to overcome the development.

Keywords: Nigeria, Fourth Republic, Leadership, Leadership Failure, Ferment.

Introduction

Qualitative leadership is a *sine-qua-non* for the growth and development of any given human society, particularly, a nation. Metaphorically leaders serve as the pilots or drivers of a moving aircraft or vehicles (country, organization or family). They are the ones leading other members of the entity they guide or control towards the fulfillment of their collective yearnings, goals and aspirations. Thus, Ajayi says that "a leader is a member of a group who has the ability to influence and making them do what else, they would not have done...whose activities cover the utilization of both human and material resources". He further posits that a leader as "an individual or a member of an organization, who attempts to wisely utilize both the human and material resources at his/her disposal in the most prudent way to achieve the group or organizational goals". For Cowley, a leader is the one who succeeds in getting others to follow him. There arises the need to define the concept of leadership. According to Morphet et al, quoted by Okusanya and Odunlami, leadership implies influencing of the actions, behavior, beliefs and feelings of one actor in a social system by another actor with the willing co-operation of the actor being influenced. Stogdill, conceptualizes leadership as those activities engaged in by an individual or members of a group, which contribute significantly to the development and maintenance of role structure and goal direction necessary for effective group performances. The above connotations of leaders and leadership help us to understand that there exist leaders and followers as well as organizations or groups which are aspiring to achieve certain goals or dreams for which they exist. In relation to this study, the leaders here refer to the elected and appointed politicians and officers who anchor the executive, legislative and judicial organs of government while the organization is Nigeria. Thus, the lawmakers, the President, governors, ministers, commissioners, and other top government functionaries like permanent secretaries and director generals are expected to lead those under them, judiciously allocate and utilize the nation's resources (both human material) in order to promote the development of the country and better the lots of the citizenry.

It is imperative to state the Nigerians were weary and embittered by the draconian rule of the successive military oligarchies that called the shots at the nation's presidency and state government houses before the rebirth of democratic rule in 1999, which coincided with the Fourth Republic. The general belief of the electorate was that with the new civilian dispensation, there would be overhauling in the economic, social, political and other spheres of the people's life. The military officers who had ruled the country were neither technocrats nor professional economic managers. They were not more than political hijackers who derailed the country's socio-economic and political moving train. Consequently, they were unable to provide the kind of leadership needful for the advancement of the nation. The advent of the Fourth Republic was therefore a welcomed development in the nation's political terrain. It was envisaged that the new political leaders, as civilians, elected to their respective political offices would be cautious in their actions, decisions and how they relate with the general public, especially, the electorate+. They were expected to bring a new lease of

life to the followership and launch the good image of the country in the comity of nations. However, the new leaders have demonstrated to be even worse than the military who took over the reins of government through the barrel of the gun. Their bizarre attitude has frustrated the masses who were looking expectantly to the greedy and self-centered leaders that preferred opulent lifestyle characterized by outrageous profligacy. Hence, the reactions of the oppressed form the main crux of this discourse.

The Leadership Insensitivity and Bad Governance

Leaders exist as coordinators of all the segments of life in the country. The most important area that needs to be handled with all seriousness is the economy, on whose pivot the compasses of the other sectors rotate. The new economic managers are thought to be well grounded in economic matters and are expected to turnaround the extractive, aviation, transport, railway, industrial, agricultural, financial, oil and gas sectors of the economy. When this is successfully done, there would be sound economic resources to finance other sectors of the nation's economy. The attitude of the new so-called leaders has shown that they are not prepared to revamp the economy in the interest of the electorate and generality of Nigerians. Indeed, most of the economic decisions being made are detrimental to the citizenry. An obvious example is the failure of privatization and commercialization of public enterprises. This poor policy started during the regime of General Ibrahim Babangida's by Decree (of 1988) which set up the Technical Committee on Privatization and Commercialization (TCPC). While the country's working class and patriots were opposed to the sale of "Nigeria"; the agitation in the ruling circles was how the cliques of the ruling class and their foreign masters would participate in the "Auction of Nigeria". This anti people agenda was vigorously pursued by the politicians who assumed power in 1999. The Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) was opposed to this development as it believed that: The Establishment of state-funded (and state controlled) enterprises (in a developing economy) is not an accident; it reflects the needs of a backward, "third" world, underdeveloped country to rise to the challenge of enhancing the well-being of its people" (ASUU, University of Benin National Executive Council (NEC) Meeting: Nov. 17 – 18, 2001). The forum of academic egg heads in the country bluntly rejected the reason (advanced by the government for embarking on privatization and commercialization of state-owned ventures. The Bureau of Public Enterprises (BPE) set up by former President Olusegun Obasanjo-led administration in 1999 had claimed that public enterprises were inefficient. While reacting to this claim, ASUU's sustained position that "The ostensible reason being brandished for privatization (is) that public enterprises are not efficient ... is false".

The ASUU 2001 Benin NEC Communiqué summed up what Privatization means as:

- Handing over out public wealth to interests that have exploited and deprived Nigerians over the years.
- Handing over Nigeria's independence to the same forces that colonized and plundered our people for centuries.
- Increasing mass poverty for our people.
- Making access to basic facilities and resources impossible and unaffordable for over ninety percent of our population.
- Rewarding some Nigerians including politicians, public office holders, some military generals and others in private business closeness to power.

It is unfortunate that while billions of naira funds realized from privatization of public enterprises were looted; thousands of workers lost their jobs, as the buyers of the formerly state-owned business firms were out to maximize their profits. In addition, most Nigerians could no longer pay the high prices charged on the commodities and services of the enterprises affected. The effects of the leadership failure in the country is similarly observed in other sectors of the economy, such as agricultural, which has not been able to provide food security for the millions of Nigerian citizens. It is worrisome that heavy annual budgets are provided on paper but they appear to h end up in private accounts of the political class and their cronies, i who parade themselves as business moguls. Consequently, the vast majority of Nigerians cannot afford two meals per day not to talk about three square meals. Even the indigenes of oil and gas producing communities, are

subjected to untold hardships due to environmental degradation and increasing prices of petroleum products and premium motor spirit or petrol. Even with the partial implementation of the new national minimum wage in late 2019, the pains being inflicted on the people are yet to be mitigated. It is disheartening that the government had to subsidize fuel prices before the emergence of President Muhammadu Buhari in 2015 whose administration suspended the subsidy. But his government later reverted to the payment of same in 2017 as a result of persistent scarcity of petrol. The bane of this sector of Nigeria's economy is the lack of political will to set up more refineries and repair the existing ones because only a few privileged generals and business moguls hold concession license to own oil wells whose crude oil is exported for refining, and re-imported, at the detriment of the suffering poor masses. The vandalism of pipelines, government's failure through the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) to sustain the average period a refinery should go down for turnaround maintenance (which is three years), corruption and official sabotage account for fuel scarcity as they are reason for the non-performance of the refining plants. In his own submission, Dr Ibe Kachikwu, a former Group Managing Director of the NNPC and Minister of State for Petroleum, while discussing with the federal lawmakers regarding the persistence of fuel scarcity in the country in 2015, listed the factors that "have been responsible for inability of the NNPC to keep retail outlets wet with petrol nationwide to include refusal by the major oil marketers to import, diversion of the product by marketers, pipeline vandalism, panic buying and non-computerisation of the distribution network to monitor trucks".

Nigeria leadership's lack of good economic management is well pronounced in poor industrialization of the nation. The extractive sector therefore remains largely undeveloped. Furthermore, the nation's currency has been grossly devalued leading to hyper-inflation since Nigerians rely practically on everything imported – food items, electronic gadgets, shoes, clothes, vehicles, aircraft etc. This similarly has affected the importation of independent oil marketers who could no longer game the financial muscle required to import petroleum products due to high exchange rate. The poor performance of the economy ushered in the recession that characterized the sector. Tony Manuaka of the *Tell Magazine* has this to say with regard to the economy sliding into recession:

Already, the danger signals are there. In the last one year, the nation's foreign reserve has declined from \$40 billion to \$30 billion in the face of dwindling oil revenue. Inflation rate, though still at single digit has risen to 9.4 percent, high interest rate of between 20 and percent, unemployment rate which rose from 7.5 percent in the first quarter of 2015 to 8.02 in the second quarter, and high misery index are dragging the economy down...

Lending credence to the above is Professor Nwabueze Achime of the Economics Department, University of Benin who avers:

One of the major signals of recession is unemployment. When people are unemployed, businesses are collapsing; many borrowed money from banks for businesses and they are unable to pay because of the high interest rates of 25 to 30 percent. These are some of the issues that can lead to the possible collapse of a nation's economy. These can lead to recession and later to depression.

The leaders parading the nation's political corridor have disappointed and failed the people, as they mostly involved in official corruption and maladministration. Nigerians expect their newly emergent leaders to be proactive in dealing with corruption. The politicians and other public office holders are to live above board by being transparent, honest and accountable to the electorate and the generality of the people. It is sad that the state governors, ministers, commissioners, local government chairmen, lawmakers at the state and federal levels, and even appointed public office holders in the ministries, commissions, agencies and institutions of higher learning were out to rob the masses through official corruption. They no longer regard themselves as servants but bosses to the masses who were their principals. The followers were being despicably looked down upon particularly during Dr Goodluck Ebele Jonathan presidency. While the poor masses became more oppressed and depressed, for lacking basic needs of life such as food, clothing and shelter, the few people in

power have turned rogues looting the treasury, using their exalted positions and offices as conduit pipe in perpetrating scandalous and brazen crime against humanity. Alison – Madueke stands out as the most corrupt office holder during her ministerial appointment to supervise the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation. The state governors stole the nation’s money in billions thereby depriving the masses their right to good quality life. Maladministration has been a bane in the country as the various regimes have kept over blotted cabinets. This unhappy trend in the nation’s political history began in 1999 when Olusesgun Obasanjo took over as the nation’s second executive president. According to Iseribhor Okhueigbe “Since 1999 when the government of Obasanjo came to power, a good number of Nigerians have called on the federal government to trim down its cabinet which, according to them, is rather unwieldy and as such a drain pipe on the state, which can really not boast of unlimited funds”. The disgusting thing about the scenario is that as at 2015, there were 42 ministries while the president also enjoyed the services of at least 24 special advisers, some of whom were simply duplicating roles. The Jonathan administration was said to have spent more than ₦1.3billion of taxpayers’ money annually on the maintenance of his 42 ministerial appointees. The nation’s treasury is being leaked wasted through avoidable huge expenses on the National Assembly (NASS), sharp practices that included inflation of contract costs, unnecessary large sizes of government agencies at all levels, the perks for offices, , which were rather duplication of what had been paid to occupying public officers. Nigerian Senators was believed to have been paid ₦29, 810,940 annually (₦ 2,484,245.50 per month) and ₦ 27million quarterly allowances, besides irregular allowances such as estacode and duty allowances. For members of the House of Representatives, the annual pay was ₦20.4 million, apart from other allowances.

When Muhammadu Buhari eventually won the 2015 presidential election, the popular expectation was that his administration would tackle this administrative wastage. But nothing has been done to either cut the bogus salaries and allowances or reduce the numbers of ministers, advisers, consultants and the so-called personal assistants (PAs). Till now, the politicians and appointed public office holders have been so insensitive to the plight of the masses who now live below poverty line. The Fourth Republic leaders have failed the followership due to their profligacy. While most Nigerians are wallowing in abject poverty, their governors live in sheer opulence, discarding old governors’ lodges to build new state-of-the-art mansions that cost the state billions of naira. For instance, Jonah Jang, a former governor of Plateau State embarked on ₦15billion Governor’s house project, which he did not complete before leaving office for Simon Lalong, his successor, who described such a white elephant project as amounting “to a misapplication of scarce fund”.¹ Furthermore, politicians like government officials have a penchant for acquiring fleets of exotic armoured –plated SUVs and private jets. For example, Godswill Akpabio, former governor of Akwa Ibom State elected in 2007, acquired a state-of-the-art jet that cost the state \$45million.

In the same vein, Chibuke Rotimi Amaechi, former Rivers State governor bought a Bombardier Global 5000 jet at the cost \$50million. The late Danbaba Suntai, former Taraba State governor, acquired a Cessna 208, 5N-BMJ jet which nearly took his life in 2012 while flying the aircraft personally to Yola, Adamawa State. Unfortunately, Suntai later died as a result of the fatal injuries he sustained in the air crash. He was also reported to have two other aircraft and a helicopter at the expense of the state. Rauf Aregbesola, the former Governor of the State of Osun, the avowed enemy of workers of the State, claimed to have bought a helicopter for security surveillance converted it to his “personal jet”. Still on the list is Gabriel Suswam, former governor of Benue State, who was said to have donated eight SUVs to Samuel Ortom, current governor, Benson Aboun, his deputy, and their wives f Suswam’s penchant for exotic vehicles made him acquired many SUVs for himself, friends, political associates and traditional rulers while his tenure lasted. The above-mentioned examples of wastage of scarce state resources is nothing but a display of impunity and executive recklessness. The governors and other political office holders’ misdemeanour have led to the depletion of the nation’s treasury, which arouses the negative sensibilities of the masses. The unsavoury aspect of the whole mess is the weak various State House of Assembly that have turned themselves into mere rubber stamps and further caused anguish for the electorates. The spending sprees attitudes of most State Governors have led to their inability to pay t workers’ salary. The Federal Government, under President Buhari had to provide bail out to

rescue many of these states in settling backlogs of unpaid salaries and allowances. While reporting in July 2015, Atokojo comments:

In Kano State, teachers have not been paid salaries for three months while Katsina State owes workers for one month. Also, Kwara and Ondo States have not paid their workers since May. Oyo State has not paid workers for three months just as Kebbi State has been paying workers a minimum wage of ₦7,000 per month. Ogun State has not paid since May, while it has not paid pension deductions made by the state government in the last 52 months to the Pension Fund Administrator, PFA. In Plateau State, civil servants have not been paid salaries for six months; Rivers State one month; Zamfara State, one month.

The fallout of this economic woe on the state workforce could be better imagined than experienced. Besides, the fact that salaries were not forthcoming, some of the governors failed to release cooperative deductions of workers to their appropriate cooperative bodies. The situation has been worsened by the refusal of some governors to stop such deduction. This arrant arrogance of power exacerbated the already poor living conditions of the affected workers, who find it extremely difficult to pay school fees of their children and wards, raise loans to purchase personal cars and developing their landed properties. They even find it so difficult to feed themselves and their dependants. In such a situation, many families had broken and the members facing social privations. The Fourth Republic leadership has failed the nation in regards to education. This important sector has been neglected at all levels – nursery, primary, secondary and tertiary. The successive state governors and presidents have devoted only paltry sums in the yearly nation's budgets to the education sector. In their frantic drive to privatize the education, the successive governments have turned deaf ears to the cries and appeals of the citizens. Indeed, ASUU at various times especially during its bimonthly NEC meetings devoted quality time to address the "State of the Nation" and communiqués of such discussions published and even sent to the federal government arms – presidency, federal ministry of education, National Universities Commission, the governors etc. But the general belief of the new crop of leaders is that everything including education which is an essential social service should be deregulated, privatized and commercialized.

Omotoye Olorode, an ASUU musketeer could not hide his disappointment and disdain about the nonchalant attitude of the government towards education. Omotoye posits with acerbity:

Regarding looting, privatisation and deregulation, the sector that had perhaps suffered the greatest assault especially in the last decade is the education sector. For, really, looting is 'forceful' take-over and ownership of resources created by agencies other than those that take them over. By underfunding and deliberate neglect of the public funded education sector in the last decade, the sector had been forced into the private-sector had been forced into the private-sector mode substantially. This is in spite of the generalized poor quality and inaccessibility (to most Nigerians) of the privatized sector of education: nursery, primary, secondary and tertiary.

The condition of the nation's educational institutions is nothing to write home about. Dilapidated structures, gross inadequate instructional materials, sub-standard science equipment, overcrowded classrooms, absence of public address system to teach large classes and absence of expatriate scholars in the university system characterize the nation's ivory towers. Most state-owned tertiary institutions are the worst hit by the visitors' apparent hatred and reluctance toward funding education. As a result, the number of lecturers is grossly inadequate while those on the ground operate under stress due to excessive workload. No wonder Professor Idowu Olayinka, a former Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic), University of Ibadan, now the Vice-Chancellor of the University comments in his response to funding of education in 2015:

Funding is critical to anything in life. Right now, we don't have up to 20 foreigners on our academic staff list. To bring somebody who is earning \$20,000 per month, from overseas to come to Ibadan, the question is, can we afford it? To buy the needed equipment requires a lot of money. You may see new buildings all over in

terms of facilities, we still have a long way to go. The 10 leading universities in the US are private universities and are funded massively. In terms of facilities, we are not able to compete with universities abroad. This is often the basis for agitation by the Academic Staff Union of Universities, ASUU and the Federal Government for improved funding of our universities.

The general outcome is that the few who have the financial ability send their children to neighbouring African countries, especially Ghana to acquire university education, while the super-rich send theirs in to world class universities the US, United Kingdom, Canada and others. The country educational system has therefore ended up producing poor graduates, most of unemployable. It is rather shameful that the lawmakers at both state and federal levels have failed dismally in their oversight functions which include calling the power-drunk executive officers – governors and president(s) – to order. This may be attributed to their greed for money and other exotic materials, which cause them to lose their conscience as the representatives of their own people. While they have amassed ill-gotten wealth to sponsor their own children abroad, the children of the poorly remunerated, unpaid workers and the downtrodden had to drop from schooling for lack of money and other things needed for good education as a result of abject poverty. Security matters form another dimension of the failure of Nigeria's Fourth Republic leadership. It is remarkable however that the Niger Delta militancy was handled successfully by the late President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua. He paid quality attention to the perennial bombings, pipe-line vandalization and kidnapping (and at times killing) of expatriates by holding talks with the stakeholders in the Niger Delta region, including the ring leaders of the angry militants. "Convinced that enduring peace in the Niger Delta remained crucial to any efforts towards the development of Nigeria's oil and gas sector, the president believed that whatever the cost for the post-amnesty process, the end would ultimately justify the means. For that reason, he put everything on the line for it to succeed". The Boko Haram onslaught was a major source of worry to the Goodluck Jonathan presidency. The carnage unleashed by the rampaging sect painted the nation black in the international community. Though huge amounts of money were purportedly expended, Jonathan could not repress the terrorist group as a result of massive corruption that permeated the allocation of fund among the military rank and highly connected politicians. The leaders failed dismally the masses as life and property were no longer secured. In fact, the lack of experience of Rtd.Colonel Sambo Dasuki, Jonathan's National Security Adviser, NSA, did not help the situation. As Godwin Onyeacholem has noted, "Some analysts had insisted that Sambo whose highest political position in the Army was the ADC to President Babangida and had never commanded a division or becoming a Chief of Defence Staff was not qualified to be appointed as Nigeria's NSA, a position that has been previously occupied by Generals."

Boko Haram insurgency therefore became a major security challenge to be tackled by Muhammadu Buhari, whose administration rolled out armoured tanks and engaged in aerial bombings of the hideouts of the blood thirsty murderers. This is in order to end their onslaught and also to secure the release of the Chibok girls abducted in April 2014. These goals were partially achieved through force and diplomatic negotiation. While efforts were on to totally halt the horrendous killings and get the remaining girls liberated, the Boko Haram henchmen assaulted Dapchi in Yobe State on February 19 and forcibly took away 110 secondary school girls. However, the subsequent "release" and the reactions that greeted it suggests that the Dapchi kidnap was a mere set up of the federal government, a script dramatized to record cheap political scores. There are also the Fulani herdsmen's threats, killings and destructions of farmlands across the federation. Benue and Taraba States have been the hardest hit by the Fulani *Bororoje* onslaught as many settlements have been sacked and thousands of innocent souls sent to their early graves. The sad note is that Buhari's presidency is in a fix as to how to rescue Nigerians from the general insecurity pervading the already politically fragile country. The generality of Nigerians-students, workers, retirees, the unemployed youth in their millions, businessmen and women, industrial magnates have become disillusioned and hopeless due to the leadership failure. The story is not different in the areas of social services like transportation, aviation, health, housing and so on. The masses ply bad roads that claim hundreds of human lives on daily basis while the nation's aviation carriers

had been sold off, leaving air travellers at the mercies of private airline operators who fly rickety and outdated aircraft.

The Nigerian Society and its State of Anomie in the Fourth Republic

The failure of Nigerian leaders in the so-called new democratic dispensation has aroused the anger of the citizenry. This has been demonstrated through sectarian killings as many people have been killed during senseless religious riots embarked upon by the Muslims against the Christians. This has been the situation in the Northern parts of the country where Islamic fundamentalism has led to heavy loss of lives and properties. The Boko-Haram insurgency has worsened the situation as its henchmen and suicide bombers attack and kill both Christians and Muslims due to the gross incompetence of government. In the same vein, industrial actions by workers have become a recurrent decimal. This situation results from poor conditions of service, which find expression in low wages, backlogs of unpaid salaries and allowances, dilapidated working environments, power outages among other factors. Consequently, teachers, ministry and health workers, academic and non-academic staff of tertiary institutions, judicial workers even the police have embarked on strike actions at one time or the other thereby grinding the socio-economic activities of the country. There have also been protests by senior or retired citizens as their former employers (mainly the government) have reneged on their promises to pay them their severance allowances or gratuities as well as their monthly pensions. It is rather sad that those who had served their country meritoriously for about three decades are suffering to collect their benefits while the politicians in power smiles to the banks to claim millions of naira for serving the nation for four or eight years; after all the financial atrocities they had committed while in office. The outcome of leaders' failure as aforementioned and their inability to create jobs have paved the way for social vices like, armed robbery, kidnapping, money rituals, internet fraudulence, prostitution, larceny, street fighting, and so on.

Furthermore, the greed that permeates the appointments of federal officers like ministers, permanent secretaries; director-generals; chairmen of various boards of parastatals, commissions, and agencies, as well as service chiefs of the nation's armed forces; Inspector-General of Police, Comptroller-General of the Customs and Immigration Services and so on has left much to be desired. Such appointments have often favoured the northerners while the southerners have always decried the imbalances that characterize allocation of sensitive political, administrative, strategic and security positions. The situation is exacerbated by the lop-sidedness that pervades the locations of federal projects, revenue allocation and other resources. The absence of equitable distribution of offices and resource has largely been responsible for the existence of ethnic militancy in the south-south and south-east geo-political zones and to some extent in the south-west. Examples in the South-South include: the Niger Delta militants like the Egbesu Boys, Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) and lately the Niger Delta Avengers. In the South-East, the Movement for the Actualization of the State of Biafra led by Ralph Nwazourike and the Independent People of Biafra (IPOB) championed by Nnamdi Kanu are giving the federal government serious headache while in the South-West, the Oodu'a People's Congress led by the newly installed *Aare Ona-Kakanfo* of Yorubaland Chief Gani Adams represents the Yoruba interests. The emergence of these ethnic movements was results of the marginalization and exploitation of the Southerners by their Northern counterparts regarding inequitable distribution of juicy political-administrative positions, siting of federal projects and resource allocation. Indeed, the Niger Delta restiveness is aggravated by the degradation of their environment arising from oil exploration and gas flaring. Unfortunately, the governors of South-South feel unconcerned and are only interested in the fabulous billions of Naira derivation funds from monthly federal allocation. The militants therefore engaged in frenetic bombings and vandalization of pipelines and oil installations, kidnapping, torture and at times murder of oil workers, especially expatriates as well as hostage taking before the amnesty programme initiated by the late President Yar'Adua, through which some level of peace returned to the beleaguered zone.

The truth is that the nation is full of a galaxy of rogues who parade themselves as leaders and politicians. The political parties and ruling class are made up of rapacious individuals and band wagons, lacking moral

rectitude, conscience, transparency and accountability. Credible politicians have become essential commodities and those who parade the corridors of power are there in order to achieve their selfish ends. They are rogues, highly insensitive to the ordeal of their followers. Little wonder, they engage in political prostitution, by moving from one party to another, in order not to jeopardize their selfish interests by remaining in a party that is not in power. The present nature of party configuration in the country is a testimony that the political vandals merely change political camps for achieving their selfish goals. Or what is the difference between the ruling All Progressives Congress and People's Democratic Party in terms of membership and their disposition toward the welfare of the masses? It is apposite to quote Emeritus Professor Akinjide Osuntokun who remarks with disdain:

...But we have never witnessed the kind of political prostitution going on now in current Nigerian politics where a former presidential flag bearer of one party would unashamedly cross over to get elected into office of governor on the platform of a party he ran against flippantly saying that there is not much difference between the two parties! What dishonesty! If politicians expect to be taken seriously, they must stay the course and show that they are not in politics for their bellies alone. There must be a higher calling than just making money and living well without work as most of our politicians tend to do.

Even when they lose elections, they spend the people's money at election tribunals, and unfortunately, the judiciary is not better than the executive and legislative organs. The land is badly infested with political raga muffins who are hell bent on staying in power at all cost. The so called Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) worsens the situation as it has been turned into a rigging machine.

Toward Overcoming the Malady

It is important to suggest how to overcome this leadership crisis confronting the country. The ruling political class should made to know that they are elected or appointed to hold office in trust for the electorate. Nigeria is a commonwealth of the citizenry and not to be squandered by prodigal elements that are blinded by outrageous life style and self-aggrandizement. Their profligacy and arrogance of power should be curtailed through downward review of their salaries and allowances. There is no doubt that Nigerian ministers, presidents, federal lawmakers and state governors earn highest salaries in the world. This financial wastage must be speedily addressed and the bogus salaries and fringe benefits drastically reduced. The financial attractiveness and inducements attached to elective and appointive political offices motivate the politicians to engage in do-or-die politicking and unleash mayhem on those perceived to be stumbling block on their way. Moreover, it is pertinent that the nation should discontinue with the current presidential system of government modelled after that of the United States of America. The bicameral system of legislature leads to a lot of waste of resources-human, financial and materials. The upper chamber or senate is composed of people who are fantastically remunerated. Their existence amounts to nothing but duplication of duties that the lower house or House of Representatives can handle even better. Furthermore, the lawmakers should have their salaries pro-rated, that is, they should be paid in accordance with the number of sessions they attend to state matters or affairs, either at the state or federal level. There are many among those parading themselves as lawmakers who are habitual absentees while many have never contributed intelligently to the process of law making nor sponsored a single bill. Many people even sleep and are fond of snoring in their so-called hallowed chambers. The situation is more complicated by the fact that a sizeable number among them are poorly educated who hardly grasp what is being discussed. The basic truth is that most of them see law-making as money spinning venture while some are semi-literate and lack good command of English. This therefore borders on the quality of the people being elected or rigged into office as law makers.

In addition, the leaders should reflect on their stewardship by allowing their conscience to prick their hearts. No matter the level of constitutional reform or reduction in their salaries, the most important thing is that they must know that they are in the office not because they are the best but by sheer providence. Hence, they

should take into cognizance the need to handle the welfare of their principals – the electorate – in all ramifications with all seriousness it requires. They are the ones who have to decide on turning a new leaf in their attitude to governance, towards ensuring that the masses get their fair share of the nation’s resources through their judicious allocation and utilization. The judiciary which ought to be the defender of the masses has failed as the lawyers and more unfortunate the judges have become so corrupt that dispensation of justice has been relegated to the background. Hence, the politically influential and money bags with their ill-gotten wealth are favoured even when there are evidences proving that they are guilty. Therefore, the leaders should allow conscience to guide them in the running of the nation’s affairs. This is necessary because the present leaders seem to be worse and merciless than those of the 20th century. Writing in 1983, the Nigeria’s late literary icon, Chinua Ache avers:

The trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership. There is nothing basically wrong with the Nigerian character. There is nothing wrong with the Nigerian land or climate or water or air or anything else. The Nigerian problem is the unwillingness or inability of its leaders to rise to the responsibility, to the challenge of personal example which are the hallmarks of true leadership.

The above quotation aptly sums up the leaders’ attitudes which has not reflected any positive change since thirty years when Achebe wrote.

Conclusions

This study describes leadership crisis as the major challenge of Nigeria. The leaders have performed woefully to the chagrin of the masses. Though, pummelled under the various military autocracies that occupied the country’s political stage prior to the birth of the Fourth Republic, the electorate and generality of the people hoped to have enhanced quality of life in the new democratic experiment. However, the reality soon dawned on them that they have got it wrong as the ruling class sooner than later subjected them (the electorate) to abject poverty and utter neglect of their welfare in every sector of the economy. The public enterprises were got rid of leading to heavy job losses, embezzlement of the financial proceeds and the masses’ inability to access quality health services, food, good accommodation, and qualitative infrastructural facilities. There exists also general insecurity that threatens the citizens on daily basis. The solutions projected above can bring about a good country controlled by selfless and committed leaders. The economy, is advised, should be industrialised and diversified while quality education, medical provision, job opportunities, reliable security agencies, among other things, would help the followers to have trust in their leaders. This will therefore reduce the tension and hostility in the country. This step should be included in policies and programmes that are people oriented which must be implemented with sound political will.

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