

## CHALLENGES OF POLITICAL LEADERSHIP IN AFRICA: NIGERIA'S FOURTH REPUBLIC IN FOCUS

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### ABSTRACT

Africa continues to be confronted with intense development crisis despite sluggish pace of growth. These crises of dependency, corruption, poor infrastructure, poverty, unemployment, leadership and governance challenges are some of the impediments to Africa's quest for sustainable and equitable development. To the radical leftist scholars, Africa's underdevelopment can adequately be explained by its forceful and uneven integration into the global economic system. However, with decades of independence, the debate has increasingly focused on Africa's leadership as good explanatory framework for understanding Africa's poverty and underdevelopment. This work attempts an intellectual discourse on bad leadership as responsible for the current poverty and underdevelopment crises in Africa using Nigeria's 4th Republic as a case in study. The work engaged the Marxist class theory of the state as the relevant framework of analysis and employed the descriptive methodology. The work was able to find out amongst others that most states in Africa including Nigeria inherited weak political structure from colonialism. That this weak political structure produced and shaped a political class that distances itself from its subjects and this accounts for the leadership crisis the continent is bedeviled with. Based on the fore going, the work recommends amongst others patriotic leadership that is based on Northouse leadership approach and active followership devoid of trepidation rooted in Africa and Nigeria in particular for responsive and accountable political leadership in the continent.

**KEYWORDS:** Leadership, Responsive Governance, Political Class, Democracy, Poverty.

### 1 INTRODUCTION

Africa is drawn in perplex paradox of its existence. Poverty and squalor are both hallmarks of a great continent that has been richly blessed by nature. In various states of the continent, there are myriads of natural endowment; oil, coal, gold, iron-ore precious stones and others too numerous to mention. Yet in the midst of all these, persistent mismanagement, self-interest and unimaginable forms of corruption have characterized the continent (Omale & Amana, 2014). In fact, some have argued that these resources have often become a curse rather than a blessing to the continent. This obvious gap between natural opportunities and their meaningful utilization in a purposive manner, calls to question the challenges of political leadership and its centrality to the discourse on development.

However, according to Omale & Amana (2014:2), one must acknowledge that the praxis of democracy and the fundamentals of rule of law is universally difficult considering the number of years it took developed nations to arrive at their current stage. To Mike (2012: 45), "the process of democracy building took between 27 and 256 years in Britain, between 78 and 168 years in France, between 30 – 80 years in Japan". Considering these number of years, we may perhaps appreciate the efforts of the different states in Africa. Be that as it may, we may still remark that the overall task and vision of democracy aimed at ensuring a prosperous and secured continent with her citizens being given opportunities for self-actualization is still a far cry in many African States. Democracy may not be achieving its full potentials in many nations of the world but African case is still, a more problematic one owing to the character of the leadership. It is within the plethora of yet to be achieved vision that the inevitability of leadership is thus projected.

The inevitability of the role of leadership in driving the process of development is seen from the perspective of agenda setting, resource mobilization and utilization as well as political action. History is often addressed as “for those that have positively influenced development. Names like Mahatma Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, Alexander the Great, Alfred Nobel, Josef Stalin, etc. The centrality of political leadership to development in Africa is a major key in the context and development patterned by policies and allocations of resources. Upon independence, African states anticipated a better and a prosperous continent. For the various nationalist leaders like, Kwame Nkrumah of the then Gold Coast (Ghana) to Nnamdi Azikiwe and Obafemi Awolow of Nigeria; Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia to Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, one vision held them as bond to development and economic recovery of their people. Their struggle was mainly liberation from a grossly limiting bondage of the colonial rule and to launch their respective states into a new era of development. This struggle for development was not to be compromised but was to be given ultimate attention. For instance Kwame Nkrumah upon the independence of Ghana said “we must achieve in a decade what it took others a century” (Nkrumah, 1973:401). Their urgency and haste for development of Africa has been described by Ayittey (2005:58) as “the need to catch-up”. He argued further that even though that need was understandable, but the impatience that underscored their action was worth it.

However, years after the attainment of independence, the continent is still bereft of the core necessities and it is gradually drifting into conglomeration of failed state situation with most of them faced with the challenges of survival. No doubt, there is obvious and noticeable abysmal failure of leadership style all over the continent. Hence, the multiplicity of crisis being experienced in most African states that is thus degenerating into a failed state crisis for the continent is first of all a crisis of leadership. It is against this backdrop, that the crux of this paper has become to make a frantic intellectual effort in x-raying the challenges of political leadership as impediment to political development in Nigeria and proffer solution based on the Northouse approach.

## **2 CONCEPTUAL REVIEW**

Understanding the fact that politics is a ubiquitous concept and quite understood by many political scientists, we may consider the conceptual and theoretical analysis of leadership in brief tandem of followership to broaden the understanding. There are quite a number of intellectual works in the area of leadership. There is no universally accepted definition on the concept of leadership. Attempts will be made here on few definitions for the purpose of this paper. Lord Montgomery in Appleby (1994:191) described a leader as “...one who can be looked up to, whose personal judgment is trusted, who can inspire and warm the hearts of those he leads, gaining their trust and confidence and explaining what is needed in language which can be understood”.

Laxmikanth (2006:175) construed leadership from the perspective of Dimock & Dimock (2013) as; “Leadership is not power, dominance, social superiority, or anything suggestive of snobbery. Leadership is influence on people not power over them”. To Robert (2013:66) “leadership is the interpersonal influence exercised in a situation and directed, through the communication process, towards the attainment of a specialized, goal or goals”. On their part Nigro & Nigro (1997), stated that the essence of leadership is influencing the actions of others; the essential quality of leaders is that they are convinced something must be done and they persuade others to help them get it done”. These definitions indicate that leadership entails one’s ability to unite people in pursuit of common objective/goal through persuasion, influence and cooperation rather than intimidation, power, dominance, social superiority, imposition or snobbery. Hence, definitions of leadership have influence, persuasion, personality, group process, enforcement of compliance and interaction dimensions. Hornby (1995) defined a leader as “a person or thing that leads” it could be a person or group of persons. In the same vein, a follower is a person who follows somebody or something; a supporter of a particular person, cause or belief (Hornby, 1995).

### **2.1 Theoretical Considerations**

The Evolution of leadership Theory indicates that there are three major schools of thought on leadership namely:

#### **2.1.1 Trait Theory**

Trait theorists such as Chester Bernard, Appleby, Ordway Tead, opined that “a person becomes a leader because of the traits possessed by him. It is concerned with identifying the personality traits of leaders” (Laxmikath, 2006:180). The theory believes that leaders are born and are not made. This is the “greatman theory” of leadership.

### **2.1.2 Behavioural Theory on Political Leadership**

The behavioural theorists such as Kurt Lewin, E.A Fleishman, Rensis Likert, Robert Blake and Anne Adams, McCanse, etc unlike the trait theorists who concentrated on what leaders ‘are’, concentrated on what leaders ‘do’. The behaviouralists sought to discover “what the leaders do, how they lead, how they behave, how they motivate subordinates, how they communicate, and so on”. They emphasized leadership functions and styles, which include authoritarian, democratic, laissez faire, etc. Their studies revealed that “leadership traits are not totally in-born but can also be acquired through learning and experience” (Laxmikanth, 2006 in Okafor, 2009).

### **2.1.3 Situational Theory on Political Leadership**

Situational theorists such as Robert Tannenbaum and Warren (continuum of Leadership style), Fred E. Fiedler (contingency model of leadership), Martin Evans and Robert House (path-goal theory of leadership Effectiveness), Victor Vroom and Philip Yetton (Leadership – participation model, Normative model and leadership – Decision theory), Paul Hersey and Kenneth Blanchard (Life Cycle Approach to leadership) focused on the situational factors that determine the effectiveness of leadership which the trait and behavioural theorists ignored. They opined that in addition to the traits and behavior of the leader, there are situational variables that determine the effectiveness of leadership, and these factors differ from situation to situation, hence leadership is multi-dimensional.

In addition to the above theoretical perspectives of leadership, Burns (1970) identified two types of leadership, namely; transactional and transforming leadership. According to him, the relations of most leaders and followers are transactional. Leaders approach followers with an eye to exchanging one thing for another: jobs for votes or subsidies for campaign contributions. Such transactions comprise the bulk of the relationship among leaders and followers transforming leadership, while more complex is more potent. The transforming leader recognizes and exploits an existing need or demand of potential motives in followers, seeks to satisfy higher needs and engages the full person of the follower. The result of transforming leadership is a relationship of mutual stimulation and elevation that converts followers into leaders and may convert leaders into moral agents (Burns, 1978:4). Transactional leaders give their followers something they want in exchange for something that they, the leaders want, a barter of sorts (Lee, 1989 in Okafor, 2009).

Pragmatically, leadership is the process of creating the subordinates’ identification with the group’s mission and creating their desires to achieve the group’s goal. According to Graig (2005), leadership is construed as a social influence process in which the leader seeks the voluntary participation of subordinates in an effort to reach organizational goals. While Robert et al (2004), affirms that leadership involves a complex interaction among the leader, the followers, and the situation. In the view of Aguda (1995), a person may attain the position of leadership in one of the several ways. The first method is self-imposition, which is totally devoid of constitutionality. Secondly, a group of persons may forcefully impose a leader on the generality of people. And this is the experience in Nigeria since 1966 and obtainable in most of African nations. A person may come to the position of leadership through a demonstration of leadership qualities over a long period of time. Examples of such are Nelson Mandela of South Africa, Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe, Sertse Khama of Botswana, Kamuzu Banda of Malawi, Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya and Julius Nyerere of Tanzania.

## **2.2 Situating the Leadership Crisis in Nigeria on Existing Marxian Class Theory**

The Marxian class theory asserts that an individual’s position within a class hierarchy is determined by their role in the production process, and argued that political and ideological consciousness is determined by class position. A class in this sense, are those who share common economic interests, conscious of those interests and engage in collective action which advances those interests. Within Marxian class theory, the structure of the production process forms the basis of class construction. To Marx, a class is a group with intrinsic tendencies and interests that differ from those of other groups within society, the basis of a fundamental antagonism between such groups. For instance, it is in the labourer’s best interest to maximize wages and benefits and in the capitalist’s best interest to maximize profit at the expense of such, leading to a contradiction within the capitalist system. Marx distinguishes one class from another on the basis of two criteria; ownership of the means of production and control of the labour power of others. From this, Marx states ‘society as a whole is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other.

1. Capitalists or bourgeoisie, own the means of production and purchase the labour power of others.
2. Workers or proletariat, do not own any means. Rather, they sell their own labour power.

Class is thus determined by property relations, not by income or status. These factors are determined by distribution and consumption, which mirror the production and power relations of classes. Karl Marx (1818 – 1883), being the Chief proponent of this theory contended that every society, at whatever stage of historical development rests on economic foundation. That at certain stage of its development, the material forces of production in the society comes into conflict with the property relations. He argued that the source of power in the society lays in the economic infrastructure, that the forces of production are owned and controlled by a minority, the ruling class. That the relationship to the forces of production, produces the bases of its domination and exploitation in the society, and the state plays a historic important role in maintaining this social structure.

Situating this in the context of the Nigeria political reality, it becomes obvious that the Nigerian state is a rentier state without a production base where the forces of production and social relations of production are embedded. The objective conditions to create social mechanisms for a productive economy that will usher a class struggle between the two classes professed by Marx become impossible. Class consciousness is weak in the Nigerian society because of the relative nature of the economy that is mostly peasantry in nature and depends on rents from mainly oil exploit to run the State. As such, the totality of the consciousness of the people in Nigeria is determined and geared towards the state for survival hence the emergence of a rentier economy without a production base to create class consciousness which is the basis within Marxian paradigm for societal transformation.

However, this structure of oil dependence had its root from the colonial era, which was a deliberate policy by the colonialists to debase their colonial states from productive capacities in order to export and entrenched capitalism, hence, the colonial installation of comprador bourgeois class referred today as the leadership class in Africa and Nigeria in particular. This leadership class (or ruling class) becomes the stooges of the colonialists without intellectual capacity and prowess to initiate policies that are people – oriented devoid of capitalist influence. Rather what we have becomes a class of leaders whom the capitalist institutions like the World Bank and IMF determine the contents of their country's domestic policies. These policies are framed and imported into Africa and Nigeria in particular as Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to presently Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These policies at no point in time have the objective of addressing the fundamental issues that have strangled the economy of Nigeria. Therefore, this theory captures the adverse effects of capitalism as strengthened by the imposition of weak political structure that colonialism has bequeathed to Africa with confused and selfish leadership class to perpetuate it.

### **2.3 The Challenges of Leadership and Governance in Africa**

The problem which troubles Africans most is the failure of political leadership. There are of course, failures in other domains, but these are traceable to the consciousness of political leadership deficiencies. Seteolu (2004:74), summarizes the challenge from Nigeria perspective thus;

The political elites are not a productive class, but rely on the control of the state structure to access economic rewards. The over politicization of the Nigerian state is also understood in the context of the immediate struggle for power, influence and patronage. The nature of political contest ensured the emergence of a local governing class without ideological commitment. Rather than pursue political contests within ideological frameworks, politics became a contested terrain for shallow, self-centered political gains.

The de-ideologization of African politics means that aspirant political leaders do not see a pressing need to state their macro-vision for the continent. There is no explicit formulation of any system values. Take for instance, the nature of Nigerian state evolved a predatory political class that was concerned with power struggle, consolidation, alignment and realignment in the context of hegemonic contr... This is linked to the lack of ideology in the political participation and canvass alternative policy agenda (Seteolu, 2004; Obi, 2000). Ake & Onoge (1995:53) also pointed out that;

Political leadership is parochial rather than national; and corruptly converts national resources into its project of primitive accumulation. Ethnic diversity is manipulated to stay afloat to the detriment of national cohesion. There is an embarrassing lack of national heroes. The failure was usually explained either by the easy manipulability of the cultural pluralist background, or by the “two publics” antagonism.

The personalize nature of rule in so many African countries means not only that public policy making lacks the logic and empirical content that typically characterizes such an activity in order contexts but also that governance structures are



largely informal and subject to arbitrary change (Hyden, 1992:23). Following the widespread abuses of civil and political rights by such rulers as Idi Amin, Emperor Bokassa, and Macias Nguema in the late 1970's, however, Africans gradually began to recognize their significance. One of the most important messages coming out in literatures is that African government can no longer at will, by invoking the demand for national unity; violate civil and political rights of their citizens.

Nigeria, which is the largest country in the continent of Africa has a dearth of genuine leaders. Also, equally relevant and important is the absence of political will. A political will is the compelling force for sound leadership quality, the ability to do what is right, what is relevant and what is attainable within the context of patriotic nationalism. Political will very often means personal or group sacrifices. It implies the ability to implement policies that have a nationalistic importance and relevance without allowing pockets of interest to distract attention from what should naturally be of national benefit. In contemporary Africa, Nelson Mandela represents that model of leadership by personal sacrifice to redeem his people from servitude (Isekhure, 1995:141-142). In the light of the above, Eze (1995:96) has this to say about leadership in Nigeria;

In considering the Nigerian situation, there seem to be certain issues in Nigerian leadership which require experimental investigations. For instance, it has been generally asserted that Nigeria management is marked by authoritarian leadership characteristics and practices. They are said to have maintained a rigid dictatorial approach, as well as master – servant, rider-horse relationship with subordinates. In fact, it has been said that a Nigerian man is by nature and training an autocrat who demands nothing but respect and obedience from his subordinates, and those younger and lower in status than him. Also, in public sector, the leadership has been associated with certain undesirable traits such as double – standard, pursuance of selfish goals, lack of seriousness and indiscipline.

Most African leaders assumed their role with limited experience and training in the art and science of directing and effectively managing the affairs of a modern state (Kamuntu, 1993:103). The challenge to African leaders is thus to develop the capacity that would enable us to strike a balance between the values of African societies and the governance that our nations must follow. However, the concern must be to blend the two rather than to treat them as if they were mutually exclusive.

The political power in Africa became concentrated in one political party and finally in hand of one leader. Making the rise of the supremacy of the office of the president over all organs of government, most African Presidents enjoyed re-election in perpetuity without any competition. Kamuntu (1993) observes further that consequent resistance to the concentration of power in the hands of one man – the President, was brutally suppressed with greater violations of human rights, resulting in massacres and millions of Africans becoming refugees or becoming displaced persons and many qualified African's seeking employment opportunities in foreign countries in search of personal security. Africa's continuing crisis presents a tremendous challenge to the continent and its leadership.

It is most unfortunate that political leadership aspirants in Africa do not see a pressing need to state their macro vision for the continent. There is no explicit formulation of any systematic values. Political leadership in Africa is parochial rather than national; it corruptly converts national resources into its project of primitive accumulation of personal gratification. Agbaje & Roberts (2002: 154), pointed out that;

Post-independence leaders in Africa not only personalized power but also privatized the state for the purpose of primitive accumulation, clientelism, repression and all forms of opposition. Instead of using the state for initiating development, African leaders utilized it as a vehicle for terrorizing the citizenry, thereby leading to the disengagement of the populace from the public realm.

The above statement shows that leadership and their cohorts in Africa have simply privatized the state for their selfish interest. Leadership in Africa is characterized by primordial – parochial, personalized and selfish tendencies, political brigandage, ethnic rivalry and cleavages, clientelism and privatized state apparatuses. Indeed, respected visionary leaders that are of proven integrity are needed to captain the ship of the nations of Africa. Such a leader of the people must have vision and mission. He should incarnate all ideals, for which his party stands and be able to actualize the promises of the party to the electorate (Adeola, 2007:110-111).

Leadership or lack of it has been said to be a major bane of Africans. It is agreed that the fundamental problem militating against development in Africa is the poverty of leadership making it the key issue even in the process of democratization. Thus, Adeola (2007:107) argues that;

The history of great nations has been linked to visionary and purposeful leadership, be it in the advanced industrialized countries or developing nations. Such leaders have played significant roles in the socio-economic development and political emancipation of their countries. Closely linked to leadership is ideology. In the absence of visionary leadership to give a clear – cut ideology, a nation continues to lack orientation and commitment. Consequently, leadership has failed to harness the resources and the ingenuity of the people for national development.

The trouble with Africa is simply and squarely a failure of political leadership. There is nothing basically wrong with the African character or political system in operation. The character of political leadership became a problem when most of them lost or lacked control of effective leadership. This variably leads to the scramble and partitioning of state resources to their selfish interests.

## **2.4 Empirical Assessment of Leadership and Governance in Nigeria**

In order to have a clear picture and understanding of political leadership crisis in Africa, this paper briefly examines leadership and governance in selected African countries. According to Afegbua and Adejuwon (2012:151), Nigeria is the ‘Giant of Africa’, the country became independent in (1960) out of 55 years of independence, the country has been under the control of tyrannical and autocratic military dictators for about thirty years. The military employed all sorts of intimidation, aggressive and elimination methods to remain and withhold the political power. With a paradigm shift from military dictatorship to nascent democracy, the Nigerian citizens are now faced with the same imposition of leaders, as at today they are confronted with grave bloodletting due to insurgency and insecurity (Bokoharam and Fulani Herbsmen). The primary responsibility of the leadership which is security of lives and property appears elusive in Nigeria due to clueless leadership. No tangible recorded development indices have been seen today in Nigeria. A country whose leaders borrow loan to finance budget. Today according to International Integrity Organization Group, Nigeria is world poverty capital and the most unsafe place to live. Yet even when the people wish to have them out of office via elections, they use the institutions of the state to impose themselves on the people as witnessed recently in the 2019 General Elections in Nigeria.

The political situation in Ghana is similar to that of Nigeria, for instance, since the country’s independence in 1957, Kwame Nkrumah ruled the country until 1969 when his government was toppled. Since then military ruled the country for almost twenty years (1979), Jerry Rawlings ruled the country from 1981 and changed to President after 12 years in power through a series of less-than-legitimate election before he handed over to John Kufor in 2001.

Zaire, formerly Congo-Kinshasa is a country in Africa that never experienced stable democratic governance as a result of despotic and tyrant leader. In 1960 Mobutu Sese Sekou terminated the government of Patrick Lumumba in a bloody and gruesome manner. Mobutu a self acclaimed life President of Zaire is one of the African leaders that over stayed their glorious days in office until he was chased out of the country. Yet the present administration in Zaire is not ready to give room for popularly elected leader (Afegbua & Adejuwon, 2012).

Malawi is a small country in Africa where Kamuzu Banda became the head of state in 1966, and proclaimed himself as “Life President” for the country and life chairman for his party. The human right record of his regime was so bad that Amnesty International (human right group) alerted the whole world on the frightening repression meted to opposition in the country.

In Zambia, President Kenneth Kaunda ruled for 27 years, from 1977 – 1991 when his ambition to become life president was cut short, before President Frederick Chiluba was popularly elected in the general election.

In Kenya, after the death of President Jomo Kenyatta in 1977, Daniel Arap Moi became their leader and ruled for years, he ruled autocratically and rejected any reform that can pave way for democracy in the country.

Also, in Central African Republic, Emperor Jean Bedel Bokassa toppled the regime of President David Dacko in 1966, since then he refused democracy to operate in the country. The government of the country was nothing but family business. He was sentenced to death and later reversed to life imprisonment as a result of world leaders and international organization’s interventions.

Liberia was founded in 1847 by Americans for freed slaves. The country was described as the oldest in democracy in Africa until 1980 when Samuel Doe killed William Tolbert who have been in government since 1951 with President Tubmen in a bloody coup. Samuel Doe ruled for ten years and turned Liberia to a personal court yard, until 1990 when he was brutally

murdered by Prince Yormie Johnson version of rebel. Then rebel version of Charles Taylor ruled the country in a tyrannical and despotic manner, until recently when peace returned to Liberia, and the country became the first country in Africa to produce female president in a general election.

The foregoing is a pointer to the fact that in Africa, most countries are still been ruled by the tyrants, with sit tight mentality. As a result of this, development becomes a mirage in the continent. This menace has dogged almost all African countries since independence that the whole continent is riddled with despots. Most of the leaders have decided to remain in power and aim to retain number one seat of their countries. Most of them are despotic leaders who intentionally render democracy useless in their countries simply because they want to remain in power. While some others choose to be the stooges of the western capitalists whose intention is to ensure that Africa does not grow beyond its present state of helplessness which is the guarantee for their continuous exploitative operation in Africa. This is the truth behind the killing of Patriotic leader like Muammar Gaddafi who resisted in all its ramifications western encroachment in Libya and refused to be their stooge. They tagged him a dictator and sponsored his assassination. But today the truth is out as Libya which was an epitome of peace before now, has peace as scarce commodity all thanks to America.

### **3 THE STRUCTURE OF NIGERIAN STATE, LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE**

The Nigerian State emerged as a colonial state according to Ogunmilade, Nwoko & Akhigbe (2017) is controlled by the foreign bourgeois class who dictate the economic and political content of the Nigerian state. The Nigerian economy is subjugated into the direct control of global capitalism. The Nigeria state attained political sovereignty in 1960 thus expanding the basis of capitalist accumulation to include the local bourgeois class. Meanwhile, the economic structures were skewed to sustain the hegemony of global capital in a peripheral state. Thus, the emergent leadership secured political power within the context of dependency, peripheralization and neocolonialism. This political class pursued power within the framework of the British parliamentary system. It is based on the fusion of power among the organs, principle of collective responsibility, bi-cephalous executive system, strong party discipline and strong opposition. The polity was administered on the premise of a regional structure within the context of the federal system allowed the regions to pursue policies and programmes hinged on their historical specificities. Besides, the parliamentary system evolved leadership that had immense followership and legitimacy. These strengths were used to mobilize the people behind policies. The regions under Obafemi Awolowo, Ahmadu Bello and Nnamdi Azikiwe respectively had visionary and charismatic leaders whose behavioural leanings and attitudes set the pace and context of politics and governance. The parties had ethnic origins and somewhat ideological contexts that constituted the fulcrum of political and economic governance. However, the situational factors like the 1962 and 1965 Western Regional crisis, 1962 and 1983 census crisis, and 1964 General Elections crisis accelerated the collapse of the First Republic (Obah – Akpowoghaha, 2013).

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

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

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

The Obasanjo administration emerged in the context of the hegemony of the military class over the political terrain. Obasanjo won the 1999 and 2003 presidential elections, amidst critical opposition to pseudo-military ruler-ship. Overtime, the president had been pilloried by civil society groups, trade unions and other parties. He was perceived as intolerant, arrogant, combative, bellicose, cantankerous and pedantic. This leadership style is linked to his military background and orientation, personal attributes and demeanour. Furthermore, his ruler-ship is critically perceived for national insecurity, rising inflation, collapse of local businesses, growing human poverty, homelessness and despondency, epileptic, unreliable and insufficient social facilities, over bloated bureaucracy, and no serious effort at fighting corruption.

Whereas, Late President Yar'Adua was elected to power in 2007, sponsored by another and two time Nigerian president, Olusegun Obasanjo. Umaru Yar'Adua was in office from 29<sup>th</sup> May, 2007 to 5<sup>th</sup> May, 2010 when he passed on after a chronic illness. The emergence of Yar'Adua's administration had an uphill task. During his administration, the country has a leader that was ready to come up with a nigh perfect leadership hopeful for Nigeria. He was first president to publicly declare his assets. Although, at a time he was referred to as 'go-slow' president because he had preferred details and due process to issues. His approach to handling the youth restiveness in Niger-Delta (MEND) and Boko Haram menace was effective. His administration initiated an Amnesty program in which billion was invested in training and rehabilitating these restive youth. Peace however was eventually restored in the region. And the terror attacks from Boko Haram, the nation's security men were moved into the northern region, understanding the terrain better, the Boko Haram camps in a swift and efficient operation were sacked. The terror master mind, Mohammed Yusuf was captured and killed and over 700 Boko Haram terrorists were massacred in the operation of July, 2009 (Brimab, 2014).

Yar'Adua' administration recovered Nigeria's refineries through BPE (Bureau for Public Enterprises) hat were sold to Dangote and Co. So, Yar'Adua's administration overturned the Transcorp purchase of Nicon Hilton and moved to rescue Nigeria from the paws of the cabal. His was against corruption was a applaud able one and the introduction of seven point Agenda gave serious hope for revamping Nigeira's economy and improving the standard of living of Nigerians.

The death of Late President Yar'Adua on 5<sup>th</sup> May, 2010 ushered in the Jonathan's administration. This administration has laudable achievement particularly on the economy. His administration recorded space for the practice of true democracy by creating the enabling environment where people from diverse backgrounds and divergent opinions are accommodated. The hall mark of his administration include free and fair election, liberalization of the press and guaranteeing the freedom of speech, integrating Nigeria's economy into global business community, increase in non-oil export from 2.3 billion in 2010 to 2.97 billion in 2013, initiation of Youth Enterprise With innovation in Nigeria (YOUWIN), reviving of the dead automotive industry where Peugeot, Nissan and Hyundai can assembly or wholly manufacture small cars, including Innoson Vehicle Manufacturing Company (IVM), etc in 2014. Establishment of Nine Federal Universities, transformation of agricultural sector, reduction of food imports by over 40% as of 2013, drastic arrest of Ebola outbreak (EVD), increased access to ICT, the initiative of cashless system, e-ID card, etc are more achievement of Jonathan's administration. What however flawed his administrative efforts is his ardent lack of political will of fight corruption head on. This elicited sterner criticism and adjective like weak administration was tagged President Jonathan's reign.

Following these criticisms against Jonathan's administration eventually led to the closing of Jonathan's ambition for 2015 election and this ushered in the Buhari led administration. The President Buhari's administration since 2015 to date is marred with intense security challenges and bloodletting. The issue of Boko-Haram, the invasion of farm lands and killing of innocent Nigerians by Fulani Herbs men, incessant kidnapping, increased armed robbery and banditry, etc.

The issue of increased poverty in which an international organization World Bank in 2018, declared Nigeria the poverty capital of the World (World Bank, 2018). The issues of girl child education in the north and the boy child education in the east have compounded the problem. The current administration seems a total collapse and failure in all sectors of the country. The selective fight against corruption as a tool for witch-hunting has left much to be worried about. The only recorded achievements accredited to this present administration are the introduction of the Single Treasury Account (TSA) which appears yielding result in curbing financial misappropriation. And the advancement of agricultural sector which has resulted



into dramatic reduction in import and has encouraged production of what we consume in Nigeria. (Baffour, 2015 & Nwanwetanna, 2019).

But the fundament which is security has placed the country backwards because no serious effort is being made to tackle it. The Fulani Herdsmen menace has continued to elicit executive protection. Currently, the establishment of Fulani radio station with Federal Government License is a proof of government support and pacification for them to continue decimating the innocent citizens. The selective fight against corruption is an obvious fact that the present administration is not committed in fighting corruption.

In conclusion, the dynamic nature of the structure of the Nigerian state, its leadership and governance is a product of a weak political structure that colonialism and capitalism designed for it. The leadership structure was deliberately designed by these colonialists to ensure the permanence of their economic interest hence they created a terrible political class (*Comprador Bourgeoisie*) who are the stooges of this greedy and wicked colonial masters. This inherited weak political class is disintegrated from the people such that their personal interests form the basis of government policies and has accounted for the discomfiting leadership Nigeria is faced with.

#### **4 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Inferring from the above, an extensive intellectual examination has been made on the challenge of political leadership in Africa with particular reference to Nigeria. However, it has been observed that the great challenge to development in the continent is leadership. It is instructive also to know that if the leadership is gotten right, development perhaps will sprout in the continent. As could be deduce from the empirical assessment, it is observed with keen interest that what characterized the leadership in the black continent is corruption, sit-tight syndrome, imposition of leaders, abuse of rule of law, dictatorship, conversion of collective wealth to personal wealth and the worse of it all is the personalization of governance and blatant abuse of human rights.

There is no gainsaying the fact that the quest for leadership is an undeniable fact in human history, especially in matters relating to the management of both human and material resources. Therefore, it should be noted that the success or otherwise of any country depends on the effectiveness or otherwise of its leaders. This shows that leadership is of essence in any human set up and it is tantamount to a stable polity and development. Therefore, it is the conclusion of this paper, that democracy has a role to play in helping to salvage Africa from the nagging problem of leadership. The quality of leadership in Africa leaves much to be desired. There is very urgent need now for able, true and efficient leadership. Such leadership must be in the hands of qualified, competent, enlightened and honest persons for the overall development of Africa.

Considering the complexity of leadership and with the urgent need to drive Africa into the path of progressive development, this paper makes the following recommendations. The crave for true patriotic leadership is basically the only guarantee for practical development in Africa. The need to groom a new breed of leaders who will understand that leadership is all about service and subjection of personal interest for collective interest. Leaders who are indeed selfless in propagating development as being witnessed in some developed countries like Switzerland, America, etc. Leaders who are driven by the consciousness and pride of identity of their countries and have the willingness to give everything for advancement of development in their countries is the only guarantee.

Again, aligning with Collins (2001), who noted that a paradoxical combination of humility and professionalism are necessarily required of a leader. That when we talk about leadership, it must be understood purely in the context of its capacity to resolve problems, manage complex situations and lead the people to their destined goal and national objective. It is highly recommended that there should be strong uncompromisable machinery set in place to choose competent leaders who have shown mental capacity to deliver not like the experience of shame we had in 2019 General Election in Nigeria where clueless and failing mental competent leadership is imposed on the people.

Practically, the Northouse leadership style is optimistically recommended here for Nigeria. This leadership paradigm suggests that leadership is a process that is ongoing and dynamic in understanding leaders and followers as it affects the situation in Nigerian structure. This style of leadership clearly explains the nature of leadership as well as what is expected of an effective leader. The paradigm of Northouse, which states that leadership is a process whereby an individual influence a group of individuals to achieve a common goal (Northouse, 2004) clearly focused on the leadership style needed in Nigeria.

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