

Political Culture, Leadership Crisis and Development Challenge in Nigeria: A Critical Analysis

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Abstract

The challenge of leadership and development in Nigeria and a number of countries in Africa over the past several decades of independence has been a matter of tremendous public concern to which a great deal of scholarly efforts had been devoted. The situation has led many potentially great countries like Nigeria to be counted among some of the worst places in the world because of endemic poverty, unemployment, diseases and insecurity that ravage a large segment of the population. Efforts at interpreting the social forces propelling the pervasive poor quality leadership and development problems afflicting most parts of Africa, with special reference to Nigeria, tend to emphasize factors like colonialism, ethnic diversities, military interventions and multicultural realities. This paper argues that the emergence of these factors as sources of sociopolitical destabilization and development quagmire in Nigeria represents the consequences of the underlying political culture that evolved in the course of the country's political development. Thus, the paper is an attempt to situate the challenge of poor quality leadership and its associated development challenge in Nigeria within the context of the prevailing political culture which tends to promote particularistic tendencies. The paper adopted Parson's social system theory vis-à-vis pattern variables to provide theoretical elucidation, and drew attention to certain categorical imperatives that can inspire the evolution of transformational political culture with social responsibility, transparency, accountability, ethics, discipline, fairness and collective interest as its essential ingredients.

Keywords: poor quality leadership, integrative leadership, popular accountability, mobs

Introduction

The centrality of leadership in the wellbeing of any nation is clear from the degree of emphasis and scholarly attention the phenomenon has received from experts attempting to interpret the causes of development crisis, especially on the African continent. The acute leadership problem that has been plaguing the continent since the end of colonialism remains one of the greatest obstacles to the development of the continent. African nationalists in the colonial era impressed it upon their people that colonial occupation and exploitation were stunting the development potentials of much of the continent. From Congo through Kenya, Ghana, Nigeria, Algeria, Zimbabwe, Mozambique and the

Gambia, the mantras were the same (Mamdani, 2010; Biney, 2008; Nzungu-Ntalaja, 2007; Fanon, 1980; Rodney, 1976).

Thus, there were expectations that the transfer of political power by colonial governments to Africans to manage their affairs would result in a tremendous improvement of the socio-economic and political conditions of Africans in view of the enormous human and material endowments on many parts of the continent (Biney, 2008). Although African nationalist thinkers had no intention of going back to the pre-colonial mode of socio-political organization in pre-colonial Africa; even as they fiercely criticized colonial administration as exploitative; they however entertained the view that proper management of the emergent mode of government (a product of colonial encounter) will propel the continent to a greater height.

In essence, this assumption that modern political institutions can propagate “the greatest good of the greatest number” when properly operated as envisaged by its framers might not have been misplaced. However, what came upon many African leaders as they ascended the positions vacated by the colonialists have for years left much of the continent lagging in almost all ramifications of progress (Ake, 2001). In other words, the emergence of African leaders, contrary to their promises and popular expectations, had resulted in the expansion of poverty and the spread of social disorder around the continent; and the single factor that has surfaced frequently in attempts at interpreting this contradiction is the crisis of leadership (Ninalowo, 2007; Sagay, 2002; Joseph, 1997; Achebe, 1983).

In the case of Nigeria, shortly after the attainment of independence, the emergent ruling class to which the nation had reposed much hope, in line with the leaders’ pre-independence nationalistic zeal and pronouncements, abandoned (or forgot their promises) and resorted to savage contestations for political and economic domination along ethnic lines. The ensuing political cantankerousness inspired the spread of social disorder and eventual collapse of the First Republic. Ever since then, the Nigerian nation had remained in a state of “arrested development” and the reason for this, as indicated in the preceding paragraph, is inextricably located in the nature of the country’s leadership (Nnoli, 2007; Okadigbo, 1983). This situation has inspired the outpour of several scholarly attempts at explaining the underlying factors of poor quality leadership, or “bad governance” as Moore (2007) puts it. Often time, these efforts tend to point out the role of ethnic diversity, corruption, poverty and colonial legacy (Udokoya, 2011; Badejo, 2008; Diop, 1987; Rodney, 1976). Little remembered is the impact of political culture. When it appears at all in literature, its focus is mainly definitional (Okafor, 2013; Agugua, 2006). This paper is an attempt to explore the nature of political culture in Nigeria and its implications for leadership and national development.

Capturing Concepts

In order to minimize the possibility for terminological ambiguity, it is necessary at this point to provide brief clarifications on the meanings conveyed

by some key concepts adopted in the present discourse, beginning with the concept of leadership. The significance of leadership in the wellbeing of any human groupings has long been acknowledged so much so that early Greek philosophers like Plato (427 – 347 BC) devoted a great deal of time pontificating on what should be the essential characteristics of leaders (guardians, in his term) to guarantee social harmony and the working of the state (Ebenstein, 1960). To highlight the importance of the position of leadership, Plato recommended an elaborate system of training for the guardians from infancy until they reach age fifty years to enable them acquire the requisite wisdom (Ebenstein, 1960: 8). At the level of definition, there is hardly any generally accepted definition of the concept. So, there are as many definitions as there are scholars who have attempted to define it; and such definitions are conceived from different perspectives depending on the interest of the author. In general however, every definition attempts to see leadership in relation to certain attributes, traits, behaviours, functions, roles relationships, influence and administrative acumen (Sharma, Sadana and Kaur, 2012). In what follows, a few definitions will suffice as illustrations.

Terry and Franklin (2003) conceived of leadership as the relationship in which one person regarded as leader influences others to work together willingly on related tasks to attain goals desired by the leader and the group. For Yuki (2002), leadership connotes the lifting of peoples' vision to a higher sight; the raising of their performance to a higher standard; and the building of their personality beyond its personal limitations. On his part, Mullins (1996) sees leadership essentially as a relationship through which one person influences the behaviour or actions of other people. This, according to Mullins, means that the process of leadership cannot be separated from the activities of groups with effective team building. Furthermore, Etzioni defined leadership as:

The ability, based on the personal qualities of the leader, to elicit the followers' voluntary compliance in a broad range of matters. Leadership is distinguished from the concept of power in that it entails influence; that is, change of preference, while power implies only that subjects' preferences are held in abeyance. (1965: 960)

A keen observation of the foregoing definitions, except the one given by Etzioni (1965), suggests that the definitions streamed from scholars concerned with management science. Nonetheless, what is expected of a leader in an organizational context, even though organizational settings tend to be limited in scope, is not significantly different from the behaviour expected of a leader in a wider socio-political formation or community. What might be said of the latter is that leaders are expected to do more than what management science says. Consequently, the scope of leadership responsibility in a socio-political formation requires greater leadership responsibilities and strength of character.

From the foregoing, a definition of leadership within the context of a wider human community may be proposed to mean, the ability to galvanize members of a particular community towards the direction deemed desirable, as well as the capacity to deliver expected social benefits and public goods in terms of the security of lives of the citizenry, provisions of social needs (such as affordable health and education) and creation of enabling environment for individuals to actualize their legitimate aspirations; with the leaders themselves embodying marked exemplary leadership traits. On what should constitute these traits, there is no straight forward answer because there are as many traits as they are many exponents. Plato for instance noted that the characteristic quality of leaders (guardians, as he called them) is “wisdom”, as opposed to “appetite” (the desire to satisfy material wants) which represents the characteristic traits of the “producers” (the third and lowest class in Plato’s categorization of human society).

Another important source of insight on what are expected of leaders is in the Bible, the Holy Book of the Christians. In Deuteronomy 17 verse 15 through 17, the Bible instructed leaders to shun luxury and avoid multiplying silver, gold, wives and horses (today’s equivalent of massive material accumulation) to themselves. Similarly, Jesus Christ, a peerless Jewish mystic of the greatest intelligence believed to be of divine birth and founder of Christianity, among other things, charged his followers in Mathew 20 verse 27 that “...whoever will be chief among you, let him become your servant,” to reiterate the need for leaders to be modest and humble in their conducts. Islam has also been observed to espouse sound leadership doctrines which denounced egoism and class distinctions and conceptions of “boss and underling” (Lari, 1977). Recent instances of what might be expected of leaders could be gleaned from a statement credited to a former president of the United States of America, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, to the effect that “the presidency is not merely an administrative office, rather, it is preeminently a place of moral leadership” (Hug, 2001). The import of the foregoing is to stress that leaders are not supposed to be associated with corrupt and primitive accumulation of wealth. Rather, they should be people of uncompromising morality.

On the notion of crisis, Ninalowo notes that “crisis exists where there is a lack of congruence between idealized or normatively valued expectations and realities as people commonly experience them” (2007: 90). Put differently, there is leadership crisis if a society is witnessing actions that contradict what are generally expected of a leader given certain idealized or normatively valued expectations. In all events, the central concept or the unit of analysis in the present discourse is the concept of “political culture”.

According to Pye (1962), political culture involves the set of attitudes, beliefs and sentiments which permeate a political process and provides the underlying assumptions and motivation that govern behaviour in the political system. Political culture also implies the political psychology of a country or nation. It refers to the system of empirical beliefs, expressive symbols and values which define the situation in which political actions takes place among

social groups (Okafor, 2013; Grant, 2003; Lipschutz and Rasmussen, 1989). In fact, political culture has to do with the way politics is seen and done in any particular society.

Efforts at accounting for political leadership problem in Nigeria tended to emphasize more on the perennial problem of corruption and the realities of ethnic and cultural diversities, but these problems were created by the prevailing political culture, or political psychology, as Okafor (2013) puts it. Thus, corruption and ethnic jingoism, which constitute parts of the problem, are in and out of themselves by-products of the prevailing political culture. To that extent, there is need to direct attention to the concept of political culture in analyzing Nigeria's leadership and development quagmires.

Theoretical Elucidation

Often time, theoretical attempts at interpreting political behaviours tend to rely more on Simon Hug's System Demand and Opportunity Push theories of political behaviour, and the ubiquitous Game Theory (Ordeshook, 2003; Hug, 2001; Swain, 2001). For the present purpose, this paper will adopt Talcott Parsons' Social System Theory (SST) to provide theoretical explication (Ritzer, 2012; Parsons, 1951). A social system is an organization of interacting individuals into groups or structures with different functions, statuses and characteristics which have implications for patterns of behaviour. For Parsons, the goal of social system theory is to elucidate on the principles underlying the motivation of human behaviour. In pursuit of this, Parsons put forward what he called "pattern variables" and identified five systems of pattern variables that can help to improve our understanding of why people behave the way they do in leadership context. They include, (i) Affective versus affective neutrality (ii) Diffuseness versus specificity (iii) Universalism versus particularism (iv) Achievement versus ascription, and (v) Self and collectivity. In Parsons' conceptualization, the dominant pattern variable in a social system shapes the behaviour of the interacting individuals, including the leaders. Parsons further expatiated on the behaviour pattern which arises from specific kinds of pattern variable, as will be seen presently.

Affective versus affective neutrality: According to Parsons, pattern variable is affective if and when it contains and promotes immediate gratification of actors' interests. On the other hand, pattern variable is affective neutrality if it imposes discipline and demands renouncing self-interest in favour of others interest.

Diffuseness versus specificity: Here, Parsons notes that pattern variable is diffused when actors' actions are oriented towards collective interest; but when actors use their position to pursue self-interest, pattern variable becomes specific.

Universalism versus particularism: Universalism refers to the value standards that are highly generalized; while particularism relates to values that have significance for a particular actor which may not be in the interest of the

generality of the people. Thus, pattern variable is universalistic if it tends to promote universal principles; otherwise, it is particularistic.

Achievement versus ascription: This has to do with how the political culture assesses an individual; whether assessments and appointments are based on meritorious ability or an actor's affiliation with individuals or organization or groups.

Self and collectivity: This is based on whether or not an action should be oriented to individual's goal and self interest; or group's goal and collective wellbeing.

Earlier, a conceptualization of political culture looked at it as a set of attitudes, beliefs and sentiments which permeate a political process and provides the underlying assumptions and motivations that govern behaviour of political actors in a society. In a more restricted sense, it implies the dominant political psychology of a people (Okafor, 2013; Pye, 1996). From Parsons' social system theory vis-à-vis pattern variables, it could be argued that the actions of leaders are informed by the prevailing pattern variable which fuels the political culture and vice versa. Thus, when political culture promotes pattern variable that is affective, leaders' orientations and actions tend to tilt towards immediate gratification of leaders' selfish interest. Similarly, when political culture is in favour of particularism, highly generalized standards are compromised in favour of particularistic interest such as nepotism, tribalism and *godfatherism* among other particularistic propensities. In what follows, an examination of Nigeria's political scene will be undertaken to demonstrate the nature of the nation's political culture and pattern variables *à la* Talcott Parsons.

Political Culture in Nigeria: A Brief Retrospection

One cannot fully comprehend why politics is done the way it is done in Nigeria, indeed, in much of Africa, without an adequate understanding of the historical circumstances under which the political system emerged. Mahmood Mamdani (2010) shared this same line of thought when he attempted to account for the causes of conflicts in Congo and Sudan. Thus, as a point of departure, an excursion into the development of political party system in Nigeria is necessary.

The development of political party system in the country can be traced to around 1914 when the Northern and Southern protectorates were amalgamated with the Colony of Lagos by Governor Lord Frederick Lugard (formerly Sir George Goldie) who was a representative of the British Crown for the colony at the time. The amalgamation gave rise to the creation of the Nigerian Council with about 36 members consisting of 30 Europeans and six Nigerians. In 1922, Sir Hugh Clifford became the governor of Nigeria, and subsequent development led to the creation of a new constitutional arrangement which came to be known as Clifford's Constitution of 1922 (page, 2003). For the first time in Nigeria, this development allowed for the formation of political parties, the first of which was the Nigeria National Democratic

Party (NNDP) founded by Herbert Samuel Heelas Macaulay in 1922 (Eborka, 2014; Adeniyi, 2011).

The next major constitutional development was the Richards Constitution of 1946. The Constitution came into effect in January, 1947 and split the country into three regions of north, west and east, and created regional councils in each of the three newly created regions. This action gave impetus to the eruption of major political activities and organizations in the country. For the first time, Nigeria witnessed the emergence of political parties to participate in the election of members of the legislative house as provided for by the Richards Constitution (Adeniyi, 2011).

Following this development was the creation of three dominant political parties, namely: the Northern Peoples Congress (NPC), the Action Group (AG) and the National Council of Nigeria and Cameroon (NCNC). With the exception of the NCNC, which had a measure of nationalistic complexion, these political parties could best be described as tribal organizations with no genuine and all-embracing mandate to set the country on the path of national development (Eborka, 2014; Adeniyi, 2011; Joseph, 1997). For instance, the NPC as the name and motto of "One North, One Destiny" suggested, was specifically for the North and led by the late Premier of Northern Region and the Saduana of Sokoto, Sir Ahmadu Bello (1910-1966). The party was, in fact, an incarnation of *Jamiya Mutamen Arewa*, a socio-religious group of northerners formed with the intent of assisting traditional rulers in the North to discharge their duties to the colonial administration of indirect rule in northern Nigeria (Adeniyi, 2011).

The same scenario of *tribalizing* political party played out in the West (present day Southwest) with the Action Group (AG) led by Chief Obafemi Awolowo. The AG itself emanated from a socio-cultural organization called *Egbe Omo Oduduwa*, established in 1945 by a notable Yoruba political leader, Chief Obafemi Awolowo. The original aim of the organization was twofold: first, to capture political power for the Yoruba ethnic group; second, to see to the unity of the Yoruba people (Adeniyi, 2005; Achebe, 1983). Of the three parties that came up at the time, only the NCNC led by Herbert Macaulay and Nnamdi Azikiwe, was national in outlook. The party later transformed into the National Convention of Nigerian Citizens when Southern Cameroun opted to become part of Cameroun in 1960. The NCNC too, however, was said to have acquired ethnic colouration like its counterparts in the North (NPC) and the West (AG) to represent the interest of the Igbo ethnic group in eastern Nigeria (Adeniyi, 2005). With this situation, the ground was set for fierce political contestations among the parties and their respective regions. The consequences of the ensuing events were symbolized by the final collapse of the First Republic in 1966, following the January 15 military coup (Adeniyi, 2014; Ubani, 2010).

As it were, a number of attempted interpretations to unravel the forces that directed and shaped political activities in the immediate post-independence era blamed the segregation of the country into three regions by Arthur Richards,

and consequently sowing the seed of ethnic politics in Nigerian political soil, thereby awakening ethnic consciousness among the constituent ethnic groups (Mamdani, 2010; Nnoli, 2007). This line of thinking represents a recurrent theme in most literature of colonial history to the effect that imperial powers usually pursue a policy of “divide and rule” in order to forestall national unity among the natives and guarantee the perpetuation of imperial rule. In particular, Mamdani (2010) argues vehemently that the colonialists’ usual adoption of the principle of divide and rule, or the legacy of parceling territories between tribes, tends to pitch one tribe against the other. The author referred to the examples in Congo, Sudan and Kenya to brace his argument. He noted that post-independence Congo and Sudan are marked by ethnic cleansing because of the condition created by colonial administration. For instance, Mamdani pointed out that Congo is made up of different groups which hitherto had been dealing with one another peacefully for ages without recourse to their differences until they became *tribalized* by colonial administrative policy of divide and rule. To *tribalize* in this sense means grouping people together on the basis of their tribes; and this has implications for access to societal resources.

The author argues that the policy was a design to suppress collective riots and agitations that might truncate imperial political and economic projects (Mamdani, 2010). Mamdani observes for instance, that in Katanga, Congo, series of decrees were passed in 1906, 1910, and 1933, requiring each tribe to be identified, separated and resettled. This separation, the author maintains, gave impetus to the awakening of tribal/ethnic consciousness which later aided groups’ and official tendencies for systematic discrimination (Mamdani, 2010: 11). A similar argument had been advanced by Crowther (1976) on pre-independence Nigeria when he observed that the British colonial officials in Nigeria signaled to the North to regard themselves as different and became the political midwife to the North against the other regions. Subsequently, each group prepared itself against the other; and that provided a veritable field on which ethnic politics flourished after independence.

As attractive as these foregoing submissions might be, the claim had been rebuffed as spurious (Nnoli, 2007; Achebe, 1983). Instead, it is argued that ethnic politics and social conflicts in many societies in Africa, with special reference to Nigeria, are the products of the character of the leaders in those societies (Achebe, 2012; Odukoya, 2011; Nnoli, 2007). Nnoli (2007) elucidated this point by comparing the experiences in Ghana and Tanzania with other former colonial territories such as Nigeria and Kenya. In the case of Ghana, the author disclosed that Ghana is a multi-religious society and has up to 92 ethnic groups speaking about 34 different languages. That notwithstanding, the first president of Ghana, Osagyefo Kwame Nkrumah (1909-1972) was able to build a party and society which transcended ethnic boundaries (Nnoli, 2007).

Similarly, Tanzania is made up of different ethnic groups with over 129 languages, however, by selfless and astute leadership and political skills of

Julius Nyerere, ethnicity and religious discriminations were downgraded in Tanzanian society (Nnoli, 2007; Achebe, 1983). By contrast, Nigerian and Kenyan politicians, rather than building across ethnic and religious differences, manipulated these realities for their selfish interests to acquire political power and wealth (Nnoli, 2007). Nnoli lamented that in Nigeria, politics is regarded as a means of increasing wealth, social superiority, relevance and domination, rather than as a mechanism of public service to improve the human condition across ethnic, gender and religious lines.

In Kenya, Badejo (2008) relates a situation where, in a desperate bid to retain power with his party: Kenya African National Union (KANU), Jomo Kenyatta, a Kikuyu, employed the crudest language against his opponents, especially, Oginga Odinga, a Luos and leader of Kenya People's Union (KPU) party. Kenyatta was said to have called on his ethnic group and other ethnic groups in Kenya not to allow an uncircumcised person to rule them. Oginga Odinga is from the Luos ethnic group where they do not circumcise their children as the Kikuyu; and as far as a Kikuyu is concerned, an uncircumcised person is not man enough to lead them. Kenyatta understood this and deployed it against his opponents from Luos! (Badejo, 2008).

Similar experiences have been observed in Nigerian political environment from the earlier stage of the country's independence. In October 1960, the late premier of the defunct Northern Region and Sardauna of Sokoto, Sir Ahmadu Bello, was said to have declared that the new nation called Nigeria was to be seen as an estate of their great-grandfather, Uthman Dan Fodio; therefore, they (the North) must ruthlessly prevent a change of power. He was cited as saying that, they will use the minorities of the North as willing tools and the South as a conquered territory, and never allow them to rule over the North or have control over their future (Oyedepo, 2014; Awolowo, 1947).

The above statement credited to the late Sardauna of Sokoto and Premier of defunct Northern Region, is archetypal of "linguistic recklessness" which is not only capable of arousing consternation among the other groups and putting them on a defensive posture; it is equally indicative of a parochial perception of leadership and profound deficit of admirable leadership qualities. Not even an open enemy is deserving of such demeaning and conflagrating tirades.

In the South, the case was not different. Achebe (1983) relates the assertion of James Booth when the latter drew attention to the poverty of thought exhibited in the biographies of Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe and Chief Obafemi Awolowo, and then contrasted them with the expressions of ideology to be found even among informal works of Julius Nyerere and Kwame Nkrumah. For instance, in 1937, Azikiwe was quoted as making the following statement: "Henceforth, I shall utilize my earned income to secure my enjoyment of a high standard of living and also to give a helping hand to the needy" (Achebe, 1983: 13). Ditto Chief Obafemi Awolowo, who was quoted thus: "I was (sic) going to make myself formidable intellectually, morally invulnerable, to make all the money that is possible for a man with my brains and brawn to make in Nigeria" (Booth, 1981: 49).

Achebe lamented the absence of intellectual rigour in the political thoughts of Nigeria's founding fathers, and noted that it was an indication of "a tendency to pious materialistic woolliness and self-centred pedestrianism" (Achebe, 1983: 13). An objective content analysis of the foregoing expressions would reveal that thoughts like that are more likely to produce aggressive millionaires than selfless leadership.

This attitude to politics by early national leaders in Nigeria, it can be argued, propagated a political culture that is averse to fair play and promoted crass materialism. As in most social processes, it did not take time before this pattern of politics became normative and shaped the character and approach to leadership in country. Today, Nigeria, along with a number of African countries, are terribly afflicted by a crop of corrupt leaders whose primary motive for seeking leadership position is self enrichment; with no regard for accountability and transparency (Nyong'o, 2007).

Political Culture, Leadership Pattern and Underdevelopment in Nigeria

In his book, *From Third World to First: The Singapore Story*, Lee Quan Yew reveals:

Our greatest asset was the trust and confidence of the people ... We were careful not to squander this trust by mis-governance and corruption. ... The other valuable asset we had was our people: hardworking, thrifty, eager to learn. Although divided into several races, we believe a fair and even-handed policy would get them to live peacefully together, especially if such hardships as unemployment were shared and not carried mainly by the minority groups. Singapore had no natural resources ... All it had were hard-working people, good basic infrastructure, and a government that was determined to be honest and competent. (Yew, 2000: 7-8)

A keen examination of the foregoing assertions and other similar statements of purpose and actions of the former Singaporean leader, Lee Quan Yew, and the development status of Singapore at present, would unveil a relationship between a visionary, committed, exemplary leadership and a nation's progress (Nyong'o, 2007). Experiences with Nigeria's leaders have been a case of monumental disappointment. Although references are sometimes made to the leadership savvy of some earlier nationalist leaders (Ofeimun, 2012), but that is only because they were more canny or less predatory in their avarice towards the nation's treasury. Even this conclusion is doubtful as many of them were said to regale themselves in lavish and repulsive opulence (Adichie, 2006).

In all events, the political culture in Nigeria encourages primitive accumulation of wealth, and most leaders tend to come to power with the principal purpose of enriching themselves through direct access to public funds. The greed sometimes creates the tendency to perpetuate themselves in power through their proxies, and massively appropriating public funds to the

detriment of provision of public good. The result is that, while many African leaders are ranked among the richest men in the world, their people wallow in abject poverty with little or no access to basic needs such as education, shelter and healthcare (Nyong'o, 2007).

In recent times, Nigerians have become confused spectators to the economic hemorrhage and massive pillaging of public treasuries by the political class and their cronies. Public funds of colossal proportion are misappropriated without scruples; while unemployment and poverty reduce able-bodied men and women to a beggarly and conquered people. The greed with which political office holders plunder and want to continue to have access to public funds is benumbing. Not too long ago, former governor of Akwa Ibom State, Mr. Godswill Akpabio, who is now a senator upon leaving office as a governor (a trend that many ex-governors have assumed, including former governors of Zamfara, Benue, Kwara and Enugu States among others) established a dubious "constitutional" mechanism that will continue to channel state funds into his private domain when he is out of office.

Mr. Akpabio introduced a bill he termed "Akwa Ibom State Governors and Deputy Governors Pension Bill 2014" in which he requested for an annual pay of two hundred million naira for himself and a little less than that amount for the deputy governor. He asked for a 5-bedroom apartment in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), and demanded up to fifty thousand US dollars per month to pay for cooks, chauffeurs and security guards (Olumhense, 2104). Akpabio also requested for free medical services for himself and his family at a cost not exceeding one hundred million naira per annum. Other sundry allowances he requested included furniture allowance of 300 percent of annual basic salary once in every four years; a yearly maintenance and fueling of vehicles allowance of 300 percent of annual basic salary; yearly utility allowance of 100 percent of annual basic salary, and entertainment allowance of 100 percent of annual basic salary! (Olumhense, 2014).

Similar criminal legislative devices had been established by former governors of Lagos and Rivers States, Ahmed Bola Tinubu and Chibuike Ameachi, respectively. This is excluding the scandalous "security votes" which allows politicians to appropriate millions of dollars unaccounted for every month (Uwimana and Wawro, 2014). Consequently, funds meant to provide public infrastructure are misappropriated, and the masses are left at the mercy of widespread poverty and acute dearth of public facilities (Abimaje *et al.*, 2014).

A 2011 report by the United Nations (UN) ranked Nigeria 156th out of about 179 countries in Human Development Index (HDI); while the World Bank revealed in 2012 that majority of Nigerians are poor, with about 84.5 percent of the population living on less than two dollars per day (Ploch, 2010; UN, 2011, 2012; World Bank, 2012a). Similarly, a recently released annual competitiveness ranking for 2014-2015 by the World Economic Forum (WEF) also ranked the country 127th position out of the 144 countries that participated.

The country has continued to be rated poor in African Governance Index (AGI) by the MO Ibrahim Foundation.

Report released in 2013 ranked Nigeria 41 out of about 52 countries. In 2006, it was rated 37th. It slid to 41st in 2011 and to 43rd in 2012. This is going on in a country where the legislators are the highest paid in the world, and the president has about ten official jets; coupled with the indefensible waste of public funds among federal ministers (Olumhense, 2014; Erinoshio, 2012).

Nigeria has lost several opportunities to establish a strong and sustainable nation in the hands of inept leaders, the most recent being in 1999 following the demise of General Sani Abacha. Rather than strengthen the nation's institutions to build the country by the opportunity offered by the circumstances at the time, the country has moved from a snobbish, self-publicist and magniloquent leadership, through a quasi philosopher servant-leader struggling with invalidism (but deeply appreciated for his feeble efforts at instituting transparency, due process and aversion for waste), to a faux-naif lackluster political class whose plan to remain in office far outweigh their vision for the country.

Corruption, waste and looting of public funds stink from every corner of the nation's life; and the people are told not to see acts of "petty stealing" as corruption by a serving president. Under these circumstances, state-building and national development will continue to remain a mirage. This affinity had been aptly captured in Mick Moore's (2007) *Political Underdevelopment: The Causes of Bad Government*; and Anyang Nyong'o's *Good Governance for Whom? How Presidential Authoritarianism Perpetuates Elitist Politics in Africa* (Nyong'o, 2007). The submission here is that in societies where politics is oriented towards private gain, systematic and open looting of public funds is almost normative. Consequently, state-building and socio-political and economic advancements remain an illusion.

Political Culture of Popular Accountability and Responsibility: Lessons from Japan and South Korea

In much of Africa, a simple political function is seen as a huge occasion that must be grabbed at the expense of peace and progress of the society. Some go to the absurd extent of constituting monstrous means that distort electoral processes to ensure that power remains in their family. We now have a situation in Equatorial Guinea where Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo is the country's president, and his son, Teodoro Nguema Obiang Mangue, is the vice president. Gnassingbe Eyadema was president of Togo from 1967 until his death in 2005, thereupon, his son, Faure Gnassingbe, became the country's president till date. Ditto Democratic Republic of Congo.

Other unpalatable instances include the disaster being constituted in Zimbabwe by Robert Mugabe, who has been in power since 1987. In February 2014, President Robert Mogabe lavished over three million Euro on his daughter's wedding. His private residence is estimated to cost about ten million Euro (Thornycroft, 2014). This monumental spending is amidst endemic

poverty and unemployment where about 80 percent of the population earn below poverty line of 13 trillion Zimbabwean dollars per month (\$41 equivalence), and unemployment is put at 94 percent (Thornycroft, 2014).

In Nigeria, it took a persistent public outcry to overcome a scheme for Third Term by former President Olusegun Obasonjo. Ditto the immediate past president of Nigeria, Dr. Goodluck Jonathan, who in a whirlwind of unprecedented crises, deployed the power of incumbency to intimidate opposition, degraded internal democratic infrastructure in his political party, the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), shooed internal contenders and emerged as a consensus presidential candidate of his party without any form of presidential primaries. These experiences and desperations are in contrast to what obtain in some parts of East Asia where the political culture is in favour of collective peace, popular accountability and responsibility and leaders sacrifice personal ambition in favour of integrity and national peace.

In Japan, Prime Minister Naoto Ken survived a vote of no-confidence in 2011, yet he resigned, citing popularity deficit, and urged his country people to choose another respectable leader who could serve their interests. Ditto Yukio Hatoyama in 2010 and Shinzo Abe in 2007. All stated that they felt they were not doing well enough. No corruption charges were leveled against them or members of their cabinet, but Japanese political culture of “existential popular accountability” compelled these men to resign any time popular opinion about them is dim (Kim, 2014; Ball *et al.*, 2013; Moore, 2007).

In April 2014, South Korean Prime Minister, Chung Hong Won, resigned from office over his administration’s poor response to a ferry disaster in which about three hundred people lost their lives. Chung Hong Won apologized for the government’s inability to prevent the accident and pointed out the need to deal with the many irregularities and malpractices in parts of South Korean society to avoid such incidents in future (Kim, 2014). Compare this with the situation in Nigeria where about 23 job seekers died in a pandemonium directly caused by government’s agency and leadership ineptitude on March 15, 2014, and the supervising minister (who still held on to the job at the time) blamed the victims for their deaths, instead of accepting responsibility for lack of proper planning on the part of the government.

Think also of the more than 200 secondary school girls abducted by Boko Haram at a government school at Chibok, Borno State in April 2014; and the government’s inability to rescue the abducted school girls. Rather than accept responsibility for this apparent state’s failure to provide security for the citizenry as envisaged in democratic theory and social contract, the citizens are told to blame political opponents for their miseries. This attitude to leadership in Nigeria and many countries in Africa can be checked if these societies can embrace *maat* political culture. The word “maat” derives from *maat*: an ancient Egyptian concept of truth, balance, order, law and justice. The ingredients inherent in the concept had been adjudged essential and capable of stimulating responsible leadership and facilitate the course of national development (Okafor, 2013).

Towards Maatic Political Culture and Popular Accountability for National Development

How people perceive, play and interpret politics in any society have its roots in the society's political culture as handed down by specific historical, social and political actors and actions over the years. Thus, propagating political culture that will promote political and social responsibility, accountability, ethics, discipline, fairness and collective interest, as opposed to self-interest, requires a process that will engineer a transformational definition of politics in Nigeria, in particular, and Africa in general. While there may be no one best way to the project, Okafor (2013) proposes an *afrocentric* theory of political leadership and integration as a way out of African leadership malaise. This theory, according to Okafor, holds that a purposeful, populist, *maatic* and historically conscious African political system is capable of effective and integrative political leadership. Such a system, Okafor notes, can weather the disruptive consequences of the social mobilization necessary for political integration.

This theory posits that an African political system capable of effective political and integrative leadership is one that manifest seven core ingredients and essential characteristics as follows, (1) the system is purposeful (2) the system is benevolent (3) the system is communicative (4) the system is concordant (5) the system is populist (6) the underlying political culture is *maatic* and (7) the political elite is historically conscious. An addition to this is the admonition to African states in Chiekh Anta Diop's, *Black Africa: The Economic and Cultural Basis of a Federal State*, that leaders on the continent should reduce luxurious living and judiciously equalize salaries in such a way that political positions are comparable to workers' job (Diop, 1987: 88).

From the preceding expositions, it could be adduced that attempts at overcoming Nigeria's development quagmires can hardly succeed if the system is not imbued with the foregoing cannons and ingredients. In this connection, it may not be out of order to suggest that the tasks before African states, with specific reference to Nigeria, should include using legislative mechanisms to knit the essential *maatic* elements into African leadership institutions and structure to breed a new sense of value and commitment to public service. With proper maintenance, over time, there will be an erosion of negative political culture in favour of a system that rewards hardwork, accountability, responsibility, modesty. Such process can transform the political psychology of the society, thereby setting the nation on the part of national development.

Similarly, the electoral reform which stipulates that there should be no electoral campaign before ninety days to election is a welcome idea. More should be done in this regard to bring sanity to the entire electoral process. For instance, there should be law prohibiting the handing of cash or other kinds of material gifts to electorates during electioneering campaign to enable voters cast their votes objectively. Corrupt politicians are taking advantage of the vulnerability of voters who are affected by widespread poverty and unemployment in the country. Thus, politicians easily buy their way to power by distributing short term material gifts like cash and food stuffs, and as

Nyong'o observed, "once in office, they profit by looting public coffers and implementing policies which are least attuned to fight the war against poverty" (Nyong'o, 2007: 165).

In all events, Nigerian government should be total and sincere in the fight against corruption. Widespread corruption among public officers has percolated the entire social system of the country and destroyed the society's moral fiber. A country that confers national recognition to individuals with known criminal tendencies cannot lay claim to being serious in any fight against corruption. Nigeria should emulate China and Singapore in her attempt at fighting corruption and make those who illicitly misappropriate public funds, no matter their position in the society, to face the book.

Conclusion

The preceding discourse is hinged on the proposition that the leadership problem in Nigeria is rooted in the political culture which tends to encourage primitive accumulation and private interest, as opposed to collective interest. This is believed to be the bane of the country's deplorable state of development (Moore, 2007; Nyong'o, 2007; Sagay, 2002; Achebe, 1983). For many Nigerians, leadership position is interpreted as a mechanism for social, political and economic dominance of groups and individuals over the others. Consequently, funds meant to provide public services are siphoned into private coffers, while poverty spread and ravage the wider population. Indeed, any attempt at overcoming the leadership vis-à-vis development challenge in Nigeria will require a social engineering that can propagate progressive political culture over time and erode "bad and non-developmental political culture" (Nyong'o, 2007).

It has been suggested that an African political system capable of effective leadership must contain seven essential ingredients such as purposefulness, benevolence, communicativeness and concordance. The system must also be populist, and the underlying political culture must tend to promote truth, balance, order, law and justice which are embodied in the ancient Egyptian concept of *maat*. The paper also invoked Diop's (1987) prescription that leaders on the African continent, in this case Nigeria, should reduce luxurious living standards and judiciously equalize salaries in such a way that political positions are comparable to workers' job. It is a known fact that Nigerian political office holders and lawmakers (many of them lacking meritorious abilities) are the highest paid in the world (Animasaun, 2013). No country can advance by using a greater part of its public funds to take care of political office holders; while staving sectors like education, power, health and public infrastructure the needed funds to operate effectively.

Furthermore, the paper noted the need to strengthen public institutions and the electoral processes. Essentially, there should be law to criminalize distribution of cash and food stuffs aimed at perverting voters' objectivity by politicians. This is a mockery of electioneering democracy whereby politicians gather mobs already battered by unemployment, chronic poverty and lack of

direction in the build up to election and distribute cash gifts to court their votes. The result is that the contender with the highest vote, regardless of his or her mission or moral credentials, becomes the victor engendering the emergence of *mobocracy* (government by mobs).

In the final analysis, the position of this paper is that improved understanding of the roots of poor quality leadership vis-à-vis socio-political and economic underdevelopment can show us the way out of the state of “arrested development” of many African countries, with special reference to Nigeria.

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