

Critical Appraisal of Leadership in Nigeria Context

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1. INTRODUCTION

Nigeria state is an alignment of nations, organized together by the caprices of colonial, boundaries. This “state” followed “nation”. In essence; “Nigeria” came into being long before a significant number of its citizens felt themselves to be “Nigerian”. They sensed themselves far more likely to be Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo, Fulani, Ijaw, Tiv, than citizens of Nigeria (Welch 1995)

The Emir was the highest authority (leader) in the North, the Oba was the highest authority (leader) in the west, the Igwe was the highest authority (leader) in the east and the Amayamabo was the highest authority (leader) in the south. This implies that the different ethnic groups that make up Nigeria as a nation was practicing their traditional forms of leadership in the day to day administration of their ethnic groups.

At Independence Nigeria adopted the parliamentary system of government favoured by her colonial master, the United Kingdom. But after series of coups and counter coups she opted for the presidential system of government. That is Federalism.

In the first Republic the ceremonial President was, Nnamdi Azikwe, from October 1, 1963 to January 16, 1966 while Abubakar Tafawa Balewa was the prime Minister from October 1 1963 to January 16, 1966.

The country was split into three geographical regions-western regions, Eastern region and northern region with independence, power over the regions was given to Nigeria- born citizens and regional legislatures were established.

It is expedient at this juncture to define what leadership is and various leadership styles.

According to Myles Munroe (1993), “Leadership is the capacity to influence, inspire, rally, direct, encourage, motivate, induce, move, mobilize and activate others to pursue a common goal or purpose while maintaining commitment, momentum confidence and courage”.

Federalism is a system of government that separates the powers of government between the national (Federal) government and State and Local government. Under Federalism, each level of government has sovereignty in some areas and shares powers in other areas.

Dr. Nnamdi Azikwe, after many years of agitation for nationhood became Governor General of Nigerian federation at in Independence from British in 1963, when the country was declared a republic.

Between 1963 to date , Nigeria have experienced different leaderships under the Federal system of Government with different approach to governance, in the first, second, third and fourth republic.

According to Lewin there are three major leadership styles; namely the authoritarian Leadership (Autocratic), the participative leadership, Democratic and the delegative (Laissez-faire) Leadership.

1. Authoritarian or Autocratic Leadership style is that style of leadership that leaders make decisions independently with little or no input from the rest of the group.
2. Participative or Democratic Leadership style is that leadership style where the decision making process cut across all levels of the society, by promoting the interest of the group members and by practicing social equality though this style of leadership still need guidance and control by a specific leader.LL 2 that the decision making is up to group members with little or no guidance to group members by a leader.

2. CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

The concepts Leadership have several definitions by different scholars. Leaders are made not born. If you have the desire and will power, you can become an effective leader. Good leaders develop through a never ending process of self-study, education, training and experience.

To inspire your workers into higher level of team work, there are certain things you must know, and do. These do not come naturally, but are acquired though continually working and studying to improve their leadership skills, they are not resting on their laurels. Leadership is a process by which a person influences others to accomplish an objective and direct the organization in a way that makes it more cohesive and convenient. Bass (1989-1990) theory of leadership states that, there are three basic ways to explain how people become leaders. The first two explain the leadership development for a small number of people. These theories are: some personality traits may lead people naturally into leadership roles. This is the trait theory. A crises or important event may cause a person to rise to the occasion, which brings out extra-ordinary leadership qualities in an ordinary person. This is the great event theory people can chose to become leaders. People can have leadership

skills. This is the transformational leadership theory.

3. DISCUSSION

The term “Leadership” means different things to different people but a careful look at some of the definitions by renowned authors will make the discussions more interesting. “Leadership is an art of making others to do what one wants them to do”. Bundel (1930) “Leadership is the ability to influence men and secure result through emotional appeals rather than through the exercise of authority “Mason (1934). Leadership can also be defined as the ability to persuade others willingly to behave differently”. Michael Armstrong (1998).

“Leadership is the ability to realize the potentials in others and direct skills, knowledge and capabilities of a group toward predetermined result. It does it through diverting the group’s attention towards means of fulfilling its needs which are identical to or consistent with known objectives. Tom Lambert 1996: key management solutions 50 leading-edge London; Mcgvrour Hill Pub.Co. In light of the above definitions one can say a good leader is that leader who influences, motivates and organizes people to achieve set goals that are beneficial to all its subjects.

Nigeria as nation have experienced different leaderships styles from the first republic to the fourth republic such as Autocratic and Authoritarian leadership, participative and democratic leadership styles at different times in the history of Nigeria through not in full practice even at some point Nigerian and up until present day democracy, Nigeria has practiced mixed system.

In first Republic when Nnamdi Azikwe was the ceremonial President while Abubakar Tafawa Baliwa was the prime minister between October 1, 1960 to January 16, 1963. During this period those in the leadership positions practiced selfless kind of leadership where all policies and programmes of government was geared to the benefit of the generality.

Central and regional governments; it took control of government, and rid of the federal system of government with many Igbo’s as advisers. In July of the same year, a group of northern army officers revolted against the government, killed General Johnson Aguiyi-Ironsi and appointed the army chief of staff, General Yakubu Gowon as the head of the military government. In 1967 General Yakubu Gowon moved to split the existing four regions of Nigeria into 12 states. Colonel Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu refuses to accept the division of the Eastern region, and declared the Eastern Region independent republic called Biafra and the remainder of Nigeria. The war started in June 1 1967, and continued until Biafra surrendered on January 15, 1970 after over a million people had died.

The policies and decisions of Brigadier Gen. Murtala Muhammed won him broad popular support and elevated him to the status of a folk hero. He initiated a comprehensive review of the third National Development Plan. Singing out inflation as the greatest danger of the economy. Additional 7 states were created in 1976. Muhammed Murtala was assassinated on February 13, 1976. He was succeeded by the Chief of staff supreme Headquarters Olusegun Obasanjo, who completed his plan of an orderly transform to civilian rule by handing power to Shehu Shagari on October 1, 1979 as an elected president of the second republic.

The President Shehu Shagari led government was known for the (Green Revolution) Agriculture was the focus of the government. During this period the export base of agricultural products increased immensely in the country and Nigeria was able to feed her populace.

Major Gen. Muhammed Buhari succeeded Shehu Shagari after a successful military coup d’etat that overthrew civilian President on December 31, 1983. Major Gen. Buhari ruled between August 17, 1983-1985 and within this period, his was revered for its ability to keep the country afloat by making progress through shrewd economic ingenuity even when it rejected IMF loan and refused for its gain in reducing inflation by refusing to devalue the nation currency. The Nigerian naira, curbing import of needless goods, curtailing oil theft and using counter trade policy to barter seized illegally bunkered crude oil for needful goods like machineries’, enabling it to export above its OPEC quota.

In 1985 a coup ushered in a regime headed by General Ibrahim Babangida. Nigerian economy experienced growth when he launched the structural adjustment program’ (SAP) in 1986. The policies entailed under the SAP were the deregulation of the agricultural sector by abolishing market boards and the elimination of price controls, the privatization of public enterprises, IBB also created additional 11 states between 1987 and 1991. Babangida stepped aside in August 1993 and handed our government to Ernest Shonekan. Within 3 months, by November Gen. Sani Abacha took over power. On 6 September 1994, Abacha declared that his regime had absolute power, placing his government above the jurisdiction of the court. Abacha’s government was accused of human rights abuses, especially after the hanging of ogoni activist Ken Saro-Wiwa by the oputa commission. Like the elite theory, almost all the policies and programmes were made themselves. Abacha was listed as the world’s fourth most corrupt leader in recent history. The funds were usually sent in cash or travelers’ cheques by the central bank of Nigeria to alhaji Ismaila Gwarzo his National Security adviser. Abacha also created additional six states in 1996, which brought the total number of states to 36.

Gen. Abacha promised to step down in October 1995 after the reforms are completed in three years. Nigeria was suspended from the Commonwealth the November Gen. Sani Abacha later died on the **8th June**

1998. His close ally major Gen. Abdulsalam Abubakar took over the government.

Presidential elections were conducted in February and in May 29, 1999 the former military head of state Olusegun Obasanjo was sworn in as a democratically elected president of the federal republic of Nigeria.

The Obasanjo political agenda (1999-2007) was focused on economic policy. The economic policy emphasis on poverty reduction, improve agriculture, education and human capital development, information and communication technology (ICT), infrastructure, transport, oil and gas, manufacturing and solid minerals based economy. In other words, the administration was a balance growth economy.

The privatization policy that transformed the telecommunication sector of the nation is one of the great achievements of democracy after the successful completion of two terms; late Umaru Musa Yari-Adua was elected president in 2007 and introduced the 7 point agenda which was based on unbalanced growth economy. The 7 point agenda policy statement of the Yar-Adua's administration was focused on:

1. Power and Energy
2. Food Security
3. Wealth Creation
4. Transport Sector
5. Land Reforms
6. Education

The long term objective of the policy Vision 20:2020, that is by the year 2020 Nigeria will be among the 20 leading economies of the world. The policy was achievable but unfortunately President Dr. Goodluck Ebele Jonathan was made the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria who is currently serving in that same capacity as democratically elected President, who was sworn in on May 29, 2011. President Goodluck Jonathan launched the transformation agenda. The transformation is based on a summary of how the Federal government hopes to deliver project, programmes, and key priority policies from 2011 to 2015 coordinated by the National planning commission (NPC).

The 6 point transformation Agenda includes:

1. Security
2. Power and Energy
3. Agriculture
4. Education and Health Care.
5. Skill Acquisition and Capacity Building
6. Anti- corruption and Public Service Reforms

All for the primary purpose of creating employment, reaching poverty and creating wealth.

The transformation agenda is an ongoing programme. From the discussion above, all the different leaders who have ruled this great nation at different agenda.

From the earlier definition given, it is an established fact that the ultimate goal and objective of government, that is leadership is the achievement of goal which shall be beneficial to all. Nigeria has not experience a government that is totally people oriented because the policies, programme, and agenda are made for the elite. The pervasive level of political bureaucratic corruption in the Nigeria has been linked to leadership crises. The absence of state autonomy in Nigeria enables the fractions of class to struggle to capture state institutions. On the contrary, the state in autonomous capitalist societies is beyond class struggle.

However, bad leadership, poor governance etc are sign posts of a major and fundamental crisis in the country irrespective of their different policies such as vision 20:2020, 7 point agenda, transformation agenda etc. The challenge is to rethink the Nigerian state and reduce its vulnerability to the control of fraction of the political elite, this class will likely emerge through ideology based politics, natural economic and development models, discipline party structures and hierarchies, a new model of politics that reduce the privilege of political offices and emphasize leadership. Today a greater number of political classes are corrupt, self servers, unfocused, intolerant, undemocratic, and ethnically bankrupt. Leadership in Nigeria today is not primarily for the interest of the citizenry but for the political class and their families, the people can go to hell. Patriotism

- ✓ The nation's long practice multi-parties structure and system should be review.
- ✓ Republican leaders should be copied. The political system of the country should be recognized.
- ✓ Government should be participating, the citizenry should be involved in the policy making process of the nation.
- ✓ Politics of the belly should be ignored.
- ✓ Instead of encouraging majoritarian system, proportional representation system should be encouraged.
- ✓ The excess privileged of political offices should be reduced.
- ✓ The society should condemn corruption and not celebrate it.
- ✓ Accountability and transparency should be practiced in all levels of government.
- ✓ The country's democratic system should be reviewed.
- ✓ The electoral process should be free and fair. The independent electoral commission of the country

- should be antonioius inreality. There should be no interference from the executive arm of government.
- ✓ Leadership in the country should be based on qualification and not by tribe or religion or sectional.

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