Leadership and Development in Africa: A Case Study of Nigeria

Kelvin Obi Kelikwuma

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the problem of leadership in Africa's development with particular reference to Nigeria. The aim is to rethink the existing views and beliefs on the unbreakable nexus between leadership (which is a humanistic variable) and development. This follows from the elusiveness of the latter in the country despite its desirable impact on the stability of every state. Deploying the historical method of descriptive analysis with materials derived majorly from secondary sources, the analysis that follows shows that leadership failure more than other factors accounts for Nigeria's development challenges. However, the work suggests the leadership model to facilitate development for the Nigeria state and its people. This is centered on the leadership of the statesmen, rather than those of the politicians that have arrested development in Nigeria. Drawing on the development experience of the Greek city-state of Athens, the study concludes that the statesmen think the state and its people before themselves and unlike the politicians, they do not seek leadership positions for self-empowerment as such can achieve development for the country.

Introduction

African countries in this 21st century are still faced with the problem of development with attendant social challenges. These have occupied the attention of scholars especially in the fields of humanities and the social sciences who variously attribute Africa's development challenges to leadership failure. Scholars such as Achebe (1983), Rotberg (2003), Paglia (2007), Awofeso and Odeyemi (2014)and Opone (2009& 2015), understand Africa's development challenges from different humanistic problems. Generally however, they revolve around leadership, which is central and within the terrain of the humanities. The need for a change of approach to issues of governance by the leaders and total overhauling of

the political leadership across the African continent are emphasized. For instance, Paglia (2007) analyses the Sudanese crises, leading to the creation of South Sudan from the Sudan in July 2011 and argues it was due to years of marginalization and uneven distribution of economic resources and political opportunities by the political leadership as against the media publicized ethnicity and tribalism as the root cause of the conflict. Also, Rotberg (2003) posits that effective political leadership is key to any country's development; hence Botswana and Mauritius through visionary, determined and selfless leadership were transformed from the level of weak and failing states to strong states, while the chances of development of African countries such as Mali, Nigeria, Zimbabwe and others were ruined by years of bad leadership.

Other scholars such as Achebe (1983) and Awofeso and Odeyemi (2014), see corruption on the part of leaders as central in the development challenges of Nigeria and other African countries. In an attempt to draw attention to the importance of the humanities in development, Opone (2009) studies "the relevance of history to national development". He attributes the development deficit of most African countries to poverty of idea on the part of African leaders on development issues. This is reflective of the neglect of humanities' fields especially history, which is the repository of the past development experience that can be translated into the present, to guide the future development. Hence, in another study, he advocates for Machiavelli's Prince as the leadership model for Nigeria's stability and development (Opone, 2015).

However, the continued exhibition of force and dictatorial tendencies by most African leaders in this dispensation has left most of the countries stuck in transition from military rule to democratic governance and at best produced hybrid democracy in some other countries with development remaining elusive in the continent. This provides a penetrating revelation that the realization and achievement of development by the countries of Africa through the Machiavelli's Prince model of leadership is near impossible for the now. This has created the need for a new perspective of political leadership in the continent. Against this background, this present study seeks to rethink the relevance of humanities to Africa's leadership and development in this century and beyond with a case study of Nigeria. The work is sub-divided into four

segments. The first focuses on statesmanship and the state with the Greek City-state of Athens in focus, the second ex-rays Nigeria's leadership problems, while the third is on statesmen's leadership as a model for Nigeria's development, focusing more on politics, while the conclusion is drawn from the expectations of the new model.

Statesmanship and the State

The concept of statesmen leadership even though is rooted in the political lexicons of ancient states such as the Greek City-state of Athens has continued to evolve in modern times. Hence, new understanding of it, continues to crop up vis-à-vis individuals and groups expanding role in the states across the world. This is so much that retired politicians, bureaucrats, high ranking civil servants and others are seen referring to themselves as statesmen, leading to the question of who is a statesman and what makes for statesmanship in a state? Overeem and Bakker (2016, pp. 4-6) argue that:

> Statesmanship can roughly be defined as morally excellent leadership at the polity level…A statesman is not simply a politician, but an extraordinary politicians who exercise wise leadership and…not just wise leadership but wise leadership of a special kind.

A leader whose rulership is tyrannical whether as civilian or military commander, is denied a place in the references to statesmanship. This is given that such governance is hardly aimed at guaranteeing general interest and common good in any given state. So that, in the cardinal virtues of a statesman, are prudence, thinking ability and knowledge-based, selflessness, moderation and reconciliatory ability (Overeem and Bakker, 2016).

The leadership of statesmen is distinct from other classes or model of rulers by their unreserved commitment to the wellbeing of the state and its people. However, the modern state characterized by constitutionalism and democracy, have tended to feature variation and contradiction on the concept and scope of statesmanship. The elements and principles variously reduce the primacy of individual initiatives for law and making statecraft an all-comers affair. The resultant effect is the

expanding conceptual framework of statesmanship. Public individuals and officials, especially the political actors now refer to themselves as statesmen even when the overall interest of the state and its people is less important in their consideration, creating statesmen without statesmanship (Overeem and Bakker, 2016).

Plato is credited with propounding the idea and concept of the leadership of the statesmen from the Greek City-state of Athens' political experimentation. This was developed by subsequent theorists and writers such as Aristotle, Cicero, Michiavelli (who added political realism to the concept of statesmanship in his work, *The Prince),* Coats and Kissinger (Overeem and Bakker, 2016).

Athens before 594 B.C. was at the back waters of history resulting from the narrow and selfish oligarchic rulership of the few landed aristocrats. The Aristocrats who intercepted rulership in 713 B.C when Athenian monarchy was dissolved (Maxey, 2010, p. 31) wielded political authority and stratified the Athenian society to the injury of the politically under-privileged class. However, the installation of the statesmanlike administration of Solon laid the foundation of the growth, development and much that Athens had to show for Greek civilization. The administration between 594 and 560 B.C checked and prevented the dictatorial tendencies of the aristocrats and the elites accumulation of large property by putting a limit on the ownable landed estates by individuals (Brinton, Christopher and Wolff, 1955, pp. 58-59).

The reform policies of Solon were developed by later Athenian statesmen who ruled the city-state. The first being Pisistratus who ruled Athens from 560 – 508 B.C when Cleisthenes succeeded the rulership of the state. The latter reduced the influence of the few Areopagus council members, leading to the shift of power to the majority. There was also Themistocles rule around 490 but the height of the statesmen rulership in Athens was under Pericles between 461 and 429 B.C., an era known as the Age of Pericles in Athenian history. During this period, "the legislative power rested with all the citizens gathered in the Assembly" (Brinton, Christopher and Wolff, 1955, pp. 58-60). Athens under the rulership of these statesmen was transformed into great power among the Greek city states. This is reflective of the leadership role played by Athens in the wars between the Greeks and the Persians in 490 and 480 B.C respectively, democratic institutions and cultural superiority which

were central in setting and defining Greek civilization. This was to the discomfort and jealousy of other Greek city states' rulers, especially the Spartan kings, who caused Athens' collapsing experience in 404 B.C. during the Peloponnesian War, as recorded by Thucydides, the great historian (Brinton, Christopher and Wolff, 1955, pp. 58-59; Kagan, 1965, pp. 106-111).

Thompson (1958, p. 431) posits that America overtime have been ruled by "learned men and public leaders", composing the statesmen such as Churchill whose rulership facilitated development for the country. The history of development among world countries, especially in the western hemisphere, is underlined by references to the rulership of statesmen who placed the general interest and common good of their states over personal and group interest. So that it is easy to say that statesmen provide the best leadership model for development.

Nigeria's Leadership Problems

Nigeria since independence, has been administered under both civilian (democratic) and oligarchic military system. In the same vein, the Greek City-state of Athens oscillation from the oligarchic government of the aristocrats to democracy underlined by the question of the best form of government and later shifting of emphasis to the nature of the political rulers is not different from Nigerian experience. The democratic government that succeeded the colonial rule in 1960 was marred by instability of varied manifestations. This was blamed on colonial antecedents and institutions bequeathed on the system, culminating in military intervention in Nigerian politics in January 1966.

The military ruled Nigeria between 1966 and 1979, and between 1983 and 1999. However, their rule was not free from the political cum economic vices and anomalies of the First and Second Republics despite their claims of corrective regimes and programmes. The military institutionalized corruptions and embezzlement. The military institution itself became politicized so much that the officers turned militricians without any differences from their politician counterparts. The failure of the Nigeria state during military rule was blamed on the military institutions and system, in addition to the old blame of colonial legacies.

The wake of 1990s marked a watershed in the political history of Nigeria, with the persistent agitation and move for democratization by

most Nigerians who keyed into the international environment where there was what has been variously described as "third wave of democratization" (Rakner, Menocal and Fritz, 2007, p. 7). Eventually, the military left the political arena for civilian rulershipin May 1999, giving rise to Nigeria's Fourth Republic. However, the fact that the years of democratic and civil rule in Nigeria have not heralded any meaningful improvement on the country's economic and political spectacles led to the positions that the system of government, political and economic institutions are not the main problems of Nigeria. Rather, the failing state of the country is as a result of leadership failure. The spate of corruption, insecurity, unemployment, economic hardship, illiteracy and wide gulf between the rulers and the ruled (masses), cast a black shadow on the future of Nigeria as a stable state.

It has been observed that the huge part of the national budget goes to the payment of political office holders salaries, allowances and other gratifications simply because their drive for governance is to better their economic status and those of their family members and friends first, before any other considerations. This in turn, leaves little or nothing for national development projects. The income inequality is yet to be recognized by the Nigerian leadership as a serious social problem in Nigeria. Millions of Nigerians are still living below poverty line. In fact, Nigeria is the headquarters of people living in extreme poverty in the world according to the extreme poverty index released recently by the United Nations.

In reaction to the observation on the high cost of governance in the country, some Nigerian politicians tended to compare the cost of governance between Nigeria and some developed countries of the West such as US and UK. They maintained that governance is more expensive in the latter than in the former (Editorial, Vanguard Online, August 30, 2015). This comparison lacks the historical knowledge of the governance and developmental process and stages between Nigeria and these countries. This is merely a political comparison. In actual sense, Nigeria runs the most expensive governance in the world after Australia.

While commenting on the possibilities of evolving selfless leadership in Nigeria, Chukwurah(1997, p. 82), notes that "the current Nigerian value systems over emphasize self-centredness and materialistic tendencies". The leadership class is advised to generate mission statement

which should be matched with philosophy of good governance. This admonition becomes plausible and important when considered from the fact that it is only well articulated political philosophies, especially that of good governance and policy implementation that can lead a nation to the path of development. This will create a departure from the prevailing style of electioneering promises of politicians while seeking political positions and self-empowerments upon succeeding power.

The greatest problem confronting the country is insecurity. This has taken a new twist with the Islamic fundamentalist and militant insurgency of the Boko Haram terrorist organization in the North East zone and Fulani herdsmen dastardly acts in various parts of the country especially in Benue state and Southern Kaduna. Both of which have led to the killing of hundreds of thousands Nigerian citizens and destruction of property worth millions and billions of naira, coupled with the rising economic hardship across the country. In recent time, the state of insecurity in the country has been viewed as a culmination of societal anomalities and its consideration became people centred. This appears to be so as agents of insecurity in a state usually respond to the political situation and economic hardship.

Leadership failure remains a factor in Nigeria's security challenges. It is the politicians who mobilize people along ethnic and religious lines which create religious intolerance between Moslems and Christians and unhealthy rivalry among the composite Nigerian groups. The resultant effect of this, is the ethnic violence, inter-religious and intra-religious crisis being experienced in the country. The leadership class that emphasis good governance and the upliftment of the social condition of the people and their freedom from poverty and hunger will definitely guarantee security in a state (Ekoko, 2012).

For instance, apart from the Islamic revivalism which has been ongoing in most Muslim states across the world, the Boko Haramists are composed of unemployed youths, who, during the formative stage of the organization became readily available tools for wrecking havocs as the leadership of Boko Haram promised them better life not just in paradise or heaven but here on earth. They were even offered monetary inducement for violent actions (Taire, 2018; Abrak, 2016; Tsokar and Adelowo, 2016).A service delivery and welfare packages-oriented leadership is required to solve the problem of insecurity in the country.

This can be gotten from the leadership of the statesmen as they see state wellbeing from the individual wellbeing in the state.

The military actions in the crisis ridden states of Borno, Yobe, Adamawa and others are yet to yield positive result of total decimation of the insurgence because it is not guided by state interests but the interests and ambitions of the politician leadership. Vanguard online Editorial of August 11, 2014, reports that "hundreds of women and children forcefully stopped military trucks from conveying their husbands and fathers to the Boko Haram-seized Gwoza by locking the exit gates of a barrack in Borno state, demanding quality fighting equipment for the soldiers". This action resulted from the high rate of killing of soldiers in the war zone by the insurgents for lack of sophisticated arms for the operation. This produced scores of widows and fatherless children across the military barracks, despite the billions of naira expended by the administration of President Goodluck Jonathan for arms procurement. The expended money became a conduit pipe for embezzlement and diversion of fund among the politicians between 2011 and early 2015. For example, the administration's National Security Adviser, Sambo Dasukiis facing a corruption case of about $2.2bilion of the arms procurement deal since November 2015 (Soni and Omonobi, 2015; Nwabughiogu, 2016). A development that was the cause of the death of innocent Nigerian citizens which could not have been the case were it not for the politicians model of leadership in the country.

Statesmen's Leadership as a Model for Nigeria's Development

The statesmen are not guided by acquisition tendencies as they think the state and the people before themselves and also advocate communal existence as such can moderate and solve the problems of Nigeria, where the means of production and distribution, namely, money, land and machineries are controlled by the few or minority, viz, the politicians, militricians and their affiliates.

Statesmen and nationalistic leaders are required in Nigeria as they will ensure that payment of members of the government at levels not higher than those of common skilled workers/labourers is proclaimed. A government of the statesmen will narrow the income gap by tightening up procedures for income tax collection from high-income groups and reducing the tax-burden of the peasants. This measure will address the

political and economic problems in the country. Firstly, it will avail resources and money for national development which will impact positively on Nigerian people as development is about the people and should not be limited to the rulers. It will also reduce cutthroat struggle for political positions, represented in election rigging and violence and other incidents that cause political instability as political offices will become unattractive and unlucrative for the politicians who exploit and enmass wealth. So that, the stage will be left for the statesmen who create abundance for all and rule for people's development. It takes only a statesman to be magnanimous in victory and sportsmanlike in defeat because his victory and failure is more of the state and the people than himself.

The statesmen know that military action carried out against states enemies should be total and decisive through the adoption of the strength of a lion which spare not an enemy. This is achievable through availing of material and human resources for such operations. Statesmen do not play politics with state educational system. They know the reforming effect of education because they formed the intellectual class. Education has the potentials to solve state's problems, including security challenges. Europe overcame religious fanaticism through enlightenment and reformation which put an end to religious wars in the continent.

Nigeria like most African countries remains a state in search of nationhood exemplified by the elusive unity and development in the country. Much have been stated on Nigeria's development challenges with leadership failure being the most attributable factor. The model of leadership experienced in the country since 1960 are the twin-brothers of politicians and militricians under the civilian-democratic governance and oligarchic-military rule respectively. The political leaders over the years vied for leadership positions to better their socio-economic lots and those of their family members and friends first before the collective interest of the Nigeria people. The revenue/resources meant for development projects which would have ushered the ordinary people like the leaders on the path to *eldorado* are diverted and looted across the country both at the national and state levels. Instead of seeing the national revenue as a common wealth of the people under the directives of the leaders for servicing of the people being represented, the crop of Nigerian leaders at all levels consider national revenue as national cake to

be shared among the ruling elites. This continues to deny achievement of development in the country. The statesmen, given their selfless and visionary dispositions provide a leadership model to turn the development tide of the country.

Conclusion

The foregoing discussion made a case for good leadership in the model of statesmen's leadership in development of Africa with the case of Nigeria. No doubt, the current crop of leaders are more of politicians than statesmen which is why development has continue to elude Nigeria, despite huge resources expended on development agenda and planning and unless Nigeria's leadership embraces statesmen, development will continue to elude the country. Thus, the Nigeria people through election should look beyond parochial and primordial considerations and vote the statesmen into ruling class because they possess good leadership qualities. European experience shows that emerging economies should not play with the leadership class. In selecting leadership to solve Nigerian problems through election, Nigerian people are to vote against the politicians and self-acclaimed statesmen who do not think the state nor the people but themselves. The self-acclaimed statesmen are not better than the politicians who exploit and enmass wealth at the expense of the people and are to be denied political ascendancy in Nigeria. Where they manipulate and rig themselves into governance, Nigerian people are to reject them through judicial and extra-judicial means. Moreso, when an elected ruler choose the way of the politician instead of statesmanship in his governance, such a ruler should be rejected and voted out of political positions. It is only by so doing that the right leadership to solve Nigeria's problems and facilitate good governance and development in the country can emerge.

This prescription stems from the basis of their visionary and selfless disposition which will in turn trigger development in the country. Moreso, the statesmen being patriotic and visionary leaders, imbued with rational and conscious reflective ability, have the comprehending traits to lead the state out of developmental challenges. Therefore, Nigerian peoples in this present democratic dispensation through election should look beyond monetary inducement and vote the statesmen into leadership positions across the country. When an elected leader refuses to

consider the common good of the generality of the people, such a leader is to be voted out. The leadership of the statesmen is a sure key for Nigeria's development.

References

Abrak, Isaac (2016), Boko Haram Using Loans to Recruit Members in face of Crackdown, The Guardian Online, Mon 9, May, https://www.theguardian.com.Bokoharam usingloanstorecruit... Retrieved 13/09/2018.

Achebe, Chinua (1983), The Trouble with Nigeria. Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishing Co. Ltd.

Awofeso, Olu and Odeyemi, T.I. (2014), The Impact of Political Leadership and Corruption on Nigeria's Development since Independence, *Journal of Sustainable Development, Vol. 7, No.5.240-253*.

Brinton, Crane, Christopher, J.B. and Wolff, R.L. (1955), A History of Civilization, Volume 1: Prehistory to 1715. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc.

Chukwurah, C.c. (1997), Patriotic Imperatives for the Great Nigeria Dream. Asaba: Multifes Publishers.

Ekoko, A.E. (2012), Security is about People, Abraka Humanities Reviews, *A Journal of the Faculty of Arts*, Delta State University, Abraka, Special Edition, November, 1-18.

Kagan, Donald (1965), The Dialogue: History of Greek Political Thought from Homer to Polybius. New York: The Free Press, Collier-MacMillan Limited, London.

Maxey, Chester C. (2010).Political Philosophies. New Delhi: Surjeet Publications.

Nwabughiogu, Levinus (2016), Corruption: Dasuki Awarded Over 300 Phony Contracts-Presidential C'ittee, Vanguard Online, March 25, https://www.vanguardngr.com. corruption:Dasukiawarded... Retrieved 13/09/2018.

Opone, P.O. (2009), The Relevance of History to National Development: A Case for Africa. *Abraka Humanities Review*, Vol. 2, No. 2, November, 81-94.

Opone, P.O. (2015), State of the Nigerian Nation: A Study of Machiavelli's "The Prince" as a Useful Model. *SAU Journal of Humanities,* Vol. 3. No.1, June, 92-103.

Overeem, Patrick and Bakker, F.E. (2016). Statesmanship Beyond the Modern State. Perspectives on Political Science.https://www.tandfonline.com.statesmanshipbeyo ndthe... Retrieved 09/02/2019

Paglia, Pamela (2007), Ethnicity and Tribalism: Are these the Root Causes of the Sudanese Civil Conflicts. Africa Economic Analysis.www.africaeconomicanalysis.org Retrieved 13/09/2018

Rakner,Lise,Menocal, A.R. and Fritz, Verena. (2007), Democratization's Third Wave and the Challenges of Democratic Deepening: Assessing International Democracy Assistance and Lessons Learned, Working Paper 1 for Research Project for Irish Aid. London: Overseas Development Institute.

Rotberg, R.I. (2003), "Failed States, Collapsed States, Weak States: Causes and Indicators", in Rotberg, R.I. (ed.), When States Fail: Causes and Consequences. Princeton: University Press, 1-25.

Soni, Daniel and Omonobi, Kingsley (2015), $2.9bn Arms Deal: My Story, by Dasuki. Vanguard Online, November 19, https://www.vanguardngr.com$2.9bnarmsdeals:mystory… Retrieved 13/09/2018.

Taire, Morenike (2018), Encounter: How a Fulani Herds woman Saved Me from Boko Haram- Survivor, Vanguard Online, August 18, https:///www.vanguardngr.com.encounter:Howafulani... Retrieved 13/09/2018.

Thompson, K.W. (1958). Statesmen as Philosophers: Written and Living Theories. The Review of Politics, Vol. 20, No. 4, Twentieth Anniversary Issue: 1. https://www. jstor.org.statesmenasphilosophers... Retrieved 09/02/2019

Tsokar, Karls and Adelowo, Adebumiti (2016), How Boko Haram Insurgents Bait Youths with Loans to Recruit, by DHD, Guardian Online, April 21, https://m.guadian.ng.howbokoharaminsurgents... Retrieved 13/09/2018

Vanguard Editorial (2014), Wives, Children Stop Military Trucks Conveying Soldiers to Fight Boko Haram, Vanguard Online, August 11, https://www.vanguardngr.com.wives,childrenstopmilitary. Retrieved 13/09/2018.

Vanguard Editorial (2015), It's More Expensive to Maintain Legislators in U.S., UK than in Nigeria, says Institute. Vanguard Online August30,
https://www.vanguardngr.com.it'smoreexpensivetomaintain...Retrieved 13/09/2018.