

Leadership and Followership – the Bane of Underdevelopment in the 21st Century Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Leadership and followership are the twin problem of Nigerian underdevelopment in the 21st century. No nations can exist and truly carry out the cause of the nationalism without leadership and followership. Someone must lead and someone must follow and what this simply means is that for every leadership, there is a followership and for every followership there must be a leadership. The two are so interwoven that hardly can you talk about one without the other. It is likened to a thread and the needle which are both needed to function in tailoring a cloth without which no proper sewing can be made. In tailoring a nation, leadership and followership must be involved. For where there is bad leadership, the followership will be grossly contaminated and where there is a bad followership, the leaders will be turned sour. Both will lack the necessary inspiration, motivation and encouragement to drive the wheel national progress and keep the nation on the right track. The 21st century Nigeria is on the threshold of backwardness due to bad leadership and followership. This paper investigates into the leadership and followership structure of the Nigeria at 21st century, how it undermined development in the nation, with critical analysis and assessment, thus providing solution.

Keywords: Leadership, Followership, Underdevelopment, godfatherism, power

INTRODUCTION

What is Leadership and what is Followership?

Theories on leadership and followership have been postulated and reviewed by many scholars in attempt to explain their working relationship and as well engage discuss on implications. As a result of this, definitions have been

generated. Joseph (1991) defines leadership as an influence relationship among leaders and followers who intend real changes that reflect in their mutual purpose. William (2010) defines leadership as the art of influencing others to their maximum performance to accomplish any task objective or project.

These definitions describe leadership as a process of influencing others. It is the ability of the leader to build relationships and influence people's behaviour as required to execute the vision (George, 2013). For theorists above, leadership in any nation of the world depends on influence which is necessitated by the spirit of motivation and influence. But some theorists have equally presented leadership as the process of change. To them, nothing could mean so much other than its persuasive sociality in achieving a shared goal. Edgar (2013) defines leadership as the ability to step aside the culture to start evolutionary change processes that are more adaptive. For John (1990) leadership is what the future should look like and aligning people with that vision and inspiring them to make it happen despite the obstacles. John (2013) defines followership as the ability to take direction well, to get in line behind, a program, to be part of a team and deliver on what is expected of you. To Christopher (2012), followership is the act and skill of effectively following a leader towards the achievement of vision. Thus from the two definitions above, one can critically arrive at the conclusion that while followership solely rests on one's ability to take direction and deliver on expectations, it is seen from another perspective as the art or skill set on a vision at the leaders direction or order. It therefore means that followership does not just blatantly follow with any thoughts or comprehension about what is actually going on (Bjustad, Thach, Thompson & Morris 2006)

An Exploration into the Leadership and Followership Theories

Leadership theories have been postulated and various theorists have prevailed on circumstances with pragmatic approach to explain their findings. The most widespread ones are the: Great Man Theory, Trait Theory, Behavioural Theories, Contingency Theories, Transactional Theories, and Transformational Theories.

The Great Man Theory is a 19th century idea according to which history can be largely explained by the impact of "great men", or heroes, highly influential individuals who due to their personal charisma, intelligence, wisdom or political skills utilized their power in a way that had a decisive

historical impact. Popularized by the Scottish writer Thomas Carlyle in the 1841, it met its counter-argument from Herbert Spencer (1820-1903) who formulated it and made its enduring relevance throughout the 20th century. Spencer said that such great men are the products of their societies, and that their actions would be impossible without the social conditions built before their lifetimes. Thus subsequent social history, economic history, and political history have de-emphasized the primacy of great men.

Trait theory of leadership is based on the notion that people are either born into leadership or are made with certain qualities that will make them excel in leadership roles. That is, certain qualities such as intelligence, sense of responsibility, creativity and either values puts anyone in the shoes of a good leader.

In the behavioural theories, a new perspective created, focusing on the behaviours of leaders as opposed their mental, physical or social characteristics. Thus with the evolution in psychometrics, notably the factor analysis, researchers were able to measure the cause and effects relationship of specific human behaviours from leaders. In other words, leaders are made not born. In the behavioural theories, leaders are divided into two categories:

- The leaders that are concerned with the task
- The leaders that are concerned about the people

The contingency theory of leadership originated from the notion that there is no single way of leading and that every leadership style should be based on certain situations, which signifies that there are certain people who perform at the maximum level in certain places but in minimal performance when taken out of their element. It is generally accepted within the contingency theories that leaders are more likely to express their leadership when they feel that their followers will be responsive.

The transactional theories, also known as exchange theories of leadership are characterized by a transaction made between the leader and the followers. This theory values a positive and mutually beneficial relationship. The effectiveness of this theory is based on the mutual value. The leader must find a means to align to adequately reward (or punish) his followers, for performing leader-assigned task. In other words, transactional leaders are most efficient when they develop a mutual reinforcing environment.

The transactional leadership theories are revolutionary in scope for they originate from radical point of things where leadership is pursued on activist

mission in bringing about the desired change. Transformational leadership is a style of leadership where a leader works with subordinates to identify needed change, creating a vision to guide the change through inspiration, and executing the change in tandem with committed members of a group. Transformational leadership serves to enhance the motivation, morale, and job performance of followers through a variety of mechanism which include connecting the followers sense of identity and self to a project and to the collective identity of the organization, being a role model for followers in order to inspire them and to raise their interact in the project; challenging followers to take greater ownership for their work and understanding the strength and weaknesses of followers, allowing the leaders to align followers with task performance.

Applying the Leadership Theories to Nigeria

The question is how do we apply the leadership theories to Nigeria? Which among them is practically applicable to the Nigeria situation? Is it the Great Man Theory, Trait Behavioural theories, Contingency theories, Transactional Theories or Transformational theories? It's quite evident that nearly all these theories have found application in the Nigerian society. Nigerian leaders either due to circumstances, in which they found themselves or created, have dramatized what is otherwise called the "episodes of history" or as a result of this have defined the leadership structure of Nigeria since independence. However, rather than analyzing the leadership situations of the country how it undermined development in the nation, we will concentrate on the leadership "episodes of history" since 1999, which in the process revolves around and is still the basis of the 21st century Nigerian leadership.

THE LEADERSHIP CRISIS OF NIGERIA IN THE 21ST CENTURY WITH CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF INFLUENCE AND CHANGE

Nigerian leadership crises in the 21st century began with seizure of political power in 1999 by Nigeria's enemies within corrupt members of the political class which included the military apologists advance fee fraudsters and ritual cultists such as "Otokoto" occultist confraternity in the Southeast Nigeria (intersociety, Umeagbalasi, 2013).

However this paper critically examines the Nigerian leadership as to myriads of underdevelopment it has brought to the nation, solely tied to

Godfatherism and cabal dominance, Personalization of power and Quest to remain in power. These among others have caused gross underdevelopment in the nation.

Godfatherism and Cabal Dominance

Godfatherism is the bane of Nigerian leadership in the 21st century and it is being shielded by cabal dominance who parades the corridor of power. These are the people who we can attribute the influential change of what according to this paper is called “current ruling factor” and the “post ruling factor”. Godfatherism can be said to have its origin in Christianity when God-parents helped to raise Christian children to become God-fearing, law abiding adults. This cannot be said of Nigeria of today, where many politicians beg to have godfathers even when they know what they are actually begging for will only come back to haunt them. This is because the so-called godfathers are always dominant individuals in the politics of an area or geopolitical zone and are capable of determining who win elections in that area or zone (Ortigbu, 2013). Cases of godfatherism exist all over and there are vast evidences to cite. Prominent cases is that of Alhaji Lamidi Adedibu in Ibadan who called himself the political kingmaker of Oyo State, Olusola Saraki, The Czar of Kwara State politics and Chris Uba of Anambra State.

Lamidi Adedibu(now late) had boasted himself of installing Dr. Olu Olunloye and Kolapo Isholaat various time as Governors of Oyo State including Rasheed Ladoja and he impeached him for egoistic display and arrogance to him while refusing to acknowledge his godfatherism. Olusola Saraki (late) of Kwara State also saw himself as the Czar of known politics had proved his political wizardry in a landslide victory, my making sure his son Bukola Saraki secured the gubernatorial seat. Saraki had at various times installed and made people Governor in his state and anyone who refused to dance to his political will won't be able to come to the leadership of the State.

Another interesting one with the most exciting story is Chris Uba of Anambra State who had openly declared himself as the “greatest godfather of Nigeria. Chris Uba, a member of the PDP Board of Trustees member was at the apex of his power during the 2003 elections, when he “sponsored” PDP candidates and rigged their election to offices across Anambra. Among the politicians Chris Uba “sponsored” in 2003 was PDP gubernatorial candidate Chris Ngige. The terms of their relationship were spelled out in remarkably

explicit fashion in a written “contract” and “declaration of loyalty” that Ngige signed prior to the election. Chris Uba provided Human Rights Watch with a copy of this document to bolster his contention that Ngige later failed to live up to the terms of their agreement. Ngige also claimed that shortly before his inauguration, armed men broke into his home and forced him, at a gun point, to sign a pledge that he would pay Chris Uba the sum of #3billion (\$23million) immediately after assuming office but in an interview with Human Right Watch, Uba denied that he never demanded cash payments from Governor Ngige but contracts (Human Right Watch 2007).

The influence of godfatherism on the Nigerian polity is having a serious damnable effect on the nation for incapacitating their acclaimed “godsons” who are in power thus influencing them to succumb to their wish in the sharing of the national cake. The money that ought to be used in pilot the civilized flight of progress is being demanded by these godfathers to cover their expenses. Another debilitating factor is the imposition of contracts and positions sometimes to mediocre who lack foresight of good leadership and could deliver, all as a result of favoritism and nepotism. This is injurious to the nation’s health and as such spills underdevelopment for they are objects and instruments of setbacks and backwardness. As writer of this paper will put it, such is an influential change that aligns the nation in the direction of battered and awkward objective on the rail of selfish indulgence to the detriment of too many people.

Personalization of Power

Personalization of power is another leadership problem in Nigeria. Leaders at the corridor of power have abused their very privilege of leadership by personalizing things to themselves. Chief Olusegun Osoba, the former Governor of Ogun State was caught in the snare of verbal personalization of power in the way and manner he arrogantly told Ogun State people during his election campaign of 2003 of his dividends of democracy as if he was the one bringing out money from his own pocket to execute those projects. Disappointed and annoyed by these careless talks the electorate vowed that they would not bring him back to power. The nonverbal personalization of power is often seen in the materialistic possessions and naming of projects by political leaders after themselves in an aggressive promotion of themselves. As Ochonu (2004) would put in Democracy and the performance of power

observations from Nigeria, “when power is fully personalized as is gradually becoming the case in Nigeria, the result is that the destiny of the person of the leader and that of the State are conflated” ((Human Right Watch, 2007; Ochonu, 2004).

In Ochonu’s assertion, this is manifested in not just in the occasional rhetorical outbursts of self-interested political official, although that’s the domain where it occurs most frequently. In 2001 as official of Obasanjo’s government launched concerted effort to promote their boss’s candidature for 2003 presidential elections, Nigerians were inundated for instance with talk about Obasanjo being the only person who could rule Nigeria without the risk of the union dissolving or self-destructing. He was routinely portrayed as a stabilizer and a unifier. Without analyzing the merit or otherwise of these claims, one must realize that these are deliberate, carefully crafted discourse designed to translate the political fortunes of misfortunes of the president into the salvation or ruination of the very soul of the union (Human Right Watch, 2007; Ochonu, 2004).

Now if as in the case of Ogun State Governor which was initially cited above in his verbal personalization of power, is damnable, what is more damnable is the nonverbal personalization of power in the materialistic execution of projects in attempt to exalt propaganda against merits. If the federal political leaders have largely exercise power in ways that validate Foucault’s formulation on the subtleties of power, the affairs of state governors in this democratic dispensation have realized the essences of a much broader theoretical postulate. The State Governors have exercised power in brutal and subtle ways, alternating and craftily between the two (Ochonu 2004).

There was a case of former governor of Kwara State, Alhaji Lawal who paraded the state with “up Lawal” slogan on a buses he purchased with the State’s money as if it was Lawal’s personal money he used in executing these project. The debilitating effect of this kind of action was more felt in Ogun State during Otunba Gbenga Daniel’s administration when he named several political projects of the State he executed after himself. What was later discovered is that rather than concentrations on more projects to be executed in the interest of the state, greater amount of money was being channeled towards propaganda in print and electronic media in selling his personality to the electorates, an action that made him a demi-god among his followers. This is a new national phenomenon that has swept across the nation. Other former

governors in such categories are Alhaji Abubakar Audu of Kogi State, Orju Uzor Kalu of Southeastern Abia State are all guilty of the personalization of power who in fact argued that the reason for such was to distinguish projects executed under his administration from those of his predecessors. Ironically, these are projects of personal promotions that are not being genuinely executed in the interest of the Nigerian States towards the development of her people (Human Right Watch, 2007).

QUEST TO REMAIN IN POWER

Paradoxically, this finds a better expression in godfatherism. Since leaders are subjected to the democratic limitation of regime, though inherently they long in his heart for the quest to remain in power. An action that is otherwise known as “Mugabeism” (named after the longest ruling African leader in Zimbabwe, Robert Mugabe).

Mugabe craving for rulership in Nigeria is being machinated for constitution amendment of third term in office and in the absence of it, post-ruling influence on successors. This is otherwise called an anti-Mandela model (named after Nelson Mandela who strongly opposed such idea in Africa). It gained popularity with Bola Tinubu in Lagos State and in Nigeria as a whole. This is quiet manifest in Obasanjo’s influence on his successors. Perhaps the reason leaders with such attitude have given are that it’s attempt to keep a watchdog on successors in the leadership position to ensure that they are able to preserve the legacies set down by their predecessors, to avoid derivations or derailment. Yet as reasonably as this might sound, it is well poses injury to the nation, resulting in waves of underdevelopment simply because such influence rather than encouraging the leader to freely operate in the conscience of freewill is hold held hostage by a political watchdog who is quick to fault his error and keep in his subjection to his enchanted mindset, against his creative revolutionary spirit which could have guided him the pathway of genuine transformation.

Having explored the leadership problems of Nigeria, it is pertinent to look into the followership problems as well. If going by the McCallum and Scott’s definitions, followership in Nigeria is supposed to be aligned to the direction and vision or call it the visionary direction of leadership, yet in the Bjustad, Thach, Thompson and Morris assertion such visionary direction must itself be based on thoughtful comprehension of the follower themselves.

Followers should be able to question their leaders and get a concise, definite assurance of where they are going. This will enable them to make their own input where it is necessary. But alas in Nigeria, reverse is the case. The followers have been ensnared by poverty which in the process has eaten so deep into their mentality that what can be best referred to as “poverty mentality” has been generated making them to succumb to the following intricably deplorable state of: Sycophancy, Gains of vanity and Masses unpatriotic silence

Sycophancy

Sycophancy is a very serious problem of followership that is generating bad influence on leadership and as such undermines development in any nation of the world, of which Nigeria is not exempted. Sycophancy is the followership problem of Nigeria. Honest appreciation and admiration for quality work and sterling character is healthy and often necessary. It helps ensure moral and continuation of top performance and conduct. It is when praise is used as a smokescreen to fog truth and to hid incompetence that it becomes a matter of concern. From genuine praise it merges into sycophancy, a weapon of the weak deployed to lower defenses to those in a position of relative strength. It is meant to subordinate principles to politicking. The key factor, therefore, is the position held by the recipient of sycophancy (Sycophancy and politicking, thewillnigeria.com).

It is a known fact that the Nigerian politicians and other government officials including some of their private counterpart derive joy is satisfaction from flattering and praises; they love and worship titles, awards and other organized recognitions. They hate artisans and any opposition to their failure and ideas. The daily praises of some of our failed politician. Sycophancy has been one of the most challenging factors why our roads still remain a dead trap despite all the billions yearly spent on them. It is the reason our public school are still looking like junkyard in this 21st century; and also part of the reasons we are still struggling to generate all the thousands of electricity megawatts promised by different administration (Ahmed, 2012).

Gains of Vanity

Gains of vanity is considered from the perspective of bribery and corruption which the followers have even indulged themselves in. they allow leaders to

bribe them through various corruptible means. This was quite evident in the Southwest Nigeria with a Nigerian Senator from Ijebu, Senator Buruji Kasham who had faced so many criminal charges and could bribe his way into the corridor of power capitalizing on the economic crises of poverty ravaging the people. In the last election 2015 there were cases that he gave the electorates bags of rice and threw a huge sum of money at them to have his way, an idea of “stomach infrastructure” (a slogan coined by Adams Osiomole former Governor of Edo State). Followers have lost their sense of taste for leadership due to gains of vanity

As Mandyen(2016) put it, corruption in the political realm undermines democracy and good governance. It is seen in the rigging of elections or buying of votes instead of winning/losing honorably. It is also seen in leaders making decisions that favour or benefit those who funded their campaign thereby putting public interest second. Government policies are seen to benefit the givers of the bribes not the general public. Political corruption sometimes results in resources meant for the poor and disadvantaged being diverted for other reasons (Mandyen, 2016).

Gains of vanity in the contextual usage here refer to various means and avenues being used by the followers to attract undue advantage to themselves, usually from the leaders. This is injurious and it undermines development in the nation.

Masses Unpatriotic Silence

Nigeria masses are suffering in silence. It is a form of silence that is unpatriotic. Nigerians keep silence not because what they are going through is satisfactory but simply because they have disgusting hatred for their nation. It is a form of followership distaste in which an average Nigerian has resigned to fate rather than doing something meaningful to change their leadership for better. For the sake of this study, masses unpatriotic silence refers to the act of indifference, lack of appetite and conscience for genuine development on the part of the masses who constitute the bulk of followership.

Masses unpatriotic silence stems out of a sense of disregard for anything that can be channeled towards patriotism in the interest of the nation. In the words of the former American 35th President, John F. Kennedy who was in office from 1961-1963 before he was assassinated said, “Think of what you can do for your country, not what your country can do for you.” These eternal words of

truth of the American leader, no doubt, has, from time immemorial, inspired a sense of national conscience among Americans in building an American society that has fully developed for the admiration of the world. And like what is obtainable elsewhere, in other countries of the world, followers refuse to nurse any act of unpatriotic silence, rather, they have come out to openly contribute to the cause of national development. The irony of it is that masses' unpatriotic silence generates some form of social radicalism which in turn produces and stirs up revolution. It is among these set of followership that revolutionary leader re-emerge.

Dahunsi (2016) on "why many Nigerians like to die in silence at the height of suffering and provocation" asserts that pretence is a hazardous trait among Nigerian people. It is a naked truth that all the hardship we are experiencing in our country today did not just sprout out or spring up overnight. It started a long time ago accumulating gradually. And because we have refused to voice out and to come together in unity to terminate it immediately, it has built up to an unbearable level which now spread to different hardship all over the land like and epidemic disease.

CONCLUSION

No nation succeeds or truly achieves development if its leadership and followership are at disarray for it is a commotion of influence and change in the wrong direction. That is why Nigeria is in the present state of peril. The leaders are not leading well with a true sense of vision that will pilot the flight of the nation's civilized progress. The followers have lost a sense of direction in what can be termed "purposeful followership". Leaders should be able to boldly tell their followers why they are leading the way they do and the followers should not just follow but should follow with a thoughtful comprehension of things. For Nigeria of the 21st century to truly develop, leaders and followers must set their priorities right. Nigerians must look for the right people to lead them and must imbibe the words of Abraham Lincoln that for every selfish politician, there is a dedicated leader. The leaders themselves must encourage a good followership by rejecting any form of abuse but should rather work towards development.

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