

The Politics of National Leadership and Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria

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Abstract

The politics of national leadership and democratic consolidation in Nigeria have continued to gain the attention of political scientists, historians, economists, and other social science and humanity scholars and writers. The fact may remain the rising worries over the trajectory of political democracy and national leadership in Nigeria as both are interwoven. The essence of this paper is to diagnose the gamut of the interwoven of politics of national leadership and democratic consolidation in Nigeria and with a view to chat a new course and develop a narrative that could help better the country's national leadership and democracy. The role money plays is no longer a novel to the prospects of political democracy in Nigeria and who knows how poverty had dealt with it too. In an attempt to deal with the problems of politics of national leadership and democracy in Nigeria, fragmented and poverty syndrome of democracy in Nigeria theoretical paradigm was initiated and developed by this author in order to help chat a new and a better course for the country's political democracy and national leadership using the secondary method of data collection and content analysis approach to assess the study. The electoral act should prohibit the sharing of money by any candidate of political party during party primaries. In that regard, this paper among other recommendations suggested the need for the Nigerian national legislature to create an act that would make provisions for national trust fund for national delegates of all political parties during general elections in Nigeria and in addition make the giving and collection of money during party primaries from party candidates by the party delegates a crime punishable by law.

Keywords: Democracy, Fragmentation, National leadership, Politics, Poverty.

Introduction

Culturally, Nigeria is a multi-tribal system in which every tribe wants to excel or suppress the other, so they are not on the same level playgrounds. Every person in politics is regionalized and people are capitalizing on that. There are more than 300 different tribal groups in Nigeria, all of which belong to the political definition Nigeria, but are distinct from one another in terms of cultural practices. Added to this, are economic disparities among the various groups as well as potential for conflict on religious grounds. Politics involves the gamut of processes

associated with the seizure of state power with the aim of possessing the legitimate authority to decide the faith of others regarding the distribution of tangible and intangible political and economic resources within the state. In that, the American Political Scientist, Harold, Lasswell, defined it as the power to determine who gets What, When, and How. That is to say that the power and authority to decide the faith of a political entity lies within its politics. And it was in that perspective, that Austin Ranney (1958 as cited in Nwosu, 2011, p. 5) submitted that politics is the art of “governing of men”. In this he tried to explain the relationship between those who rule and those who are ruled stating that it is the cardinal point of any political life. Echoing in same manner, David Easton was catchy in his definition of politics as authoritative allocation of values. By allocation of values Easton meant the distributions of resources in the society (Nwosu, 2011, p. 7). One can conclusively agree with me, that it involves tangible and intangible resources of the state. To sum it up, “politics has been defined as those activities that affirm the existence of political power and its utilization in the production and distribution of resources in the political system. It therefore recognizes concrete political questions such as repression, exploitation and domination which tend to arise from the authority structures themselves.” (Nwosu, 2011, p. 8-9). It follows that politics of national leadership revolves around the patterns and processes involved in the allocation of political power within a sovereign political state and in this case, the Nigerian state.

It was the great emperor Alexander De Great as we learned from history that asserted that he is not afraid of thousands of lion led by a ship rather he’s afraid of thousands of sheep’s led by a lion. No wonder that in our contemporary time, no day passes-by without one form of leadership Summit and Workshop being organized in one place or the other across organisations and society in our globalizing world and this is due and foremost because, the

success or failure, collapse or survival, progress or retrogress of a business, organization and a society depends largely on the Leadership of such places. That was why Jacob & Jacques (1990) posited that leadership is a process of giving meaningful direction to collective effort, and causing willing effort to be expended to achieve those collective goals. The implication of this definition is that, leadership has to do with the ability of the leader to show the right path to the group or people he leads and to be able to make them see the need to go the way he wants them to go (Oboma, 2016). Roger Gill (2012) opined that leadership is the ability to show people the way and helping or inducing them to pursue it. It entails envisioning a desirable future, promoting a clear purpose or mission, supportive values and intelligent strategies, empowering and engaging all concerned (Joseph & Gill, 2010).

Politics of national leadership defines the course and trajectory narrative of a state and as such, the tentacles of development and underdevelopment of the entire entity in that state are determined by it. Politics of national leadership is the key to social upliftment, social stagnation and even social decay, but there is no such agreement as to which kind of leadership is most capable of meeting and enhancing national politics and democratic consolidation in Nigeria. The ability of politics of national leadership to coordinate member's behaviour in the pursuit and realization of national goals is germane to development and in this sense the consolidation of democracy in Nigeria. Leadership therefore involves a relationship in which one person accepts the responsibility for the fate of self and others in relation to achieving a task. The problem of our country is that of leadership. Successive government have already missed and lost, considering the unrelenting progression of corruption, bad governance and bad economic management. The bad leadership and governance produces frustration and poverty impeding the country's political democracy and desired national leadership.

Democracy is a household name across the length and breadth of all liberal and not so liberal societies across the world today (Erunke & Uchem, nd). The concept has gain prominence largely because it is believed to be a *sine-quo-none* for growth, development and sustainability of the body polity as opposed to a military autocracy. Democracy is therefore a concept that is akin to people's interests, aspirations and collective desires for change (Erunke & Uchem, nd). The culture of democracy in any political setting reinforces itself in the overall, benefits people will enjoy from the system so much so that contrary practices devoid of the tenets and philosophies of democracy is seriously frowned at, and hence, could be seen as being counterproductive. The concept was based on the maxim contained in the American Declaration of Independence from British rule that all men are created equal, and they are endowed with certain inalienable right by their creator (Erunke & Uchem, nd; Joseph, 1987).

Since gaining independence from Great Britain on October 1, 1960, Nigeria has struggled to develop a fertile ground for democratic governance. However, on May 29, 1999, Nigeria became the world's fourth largest democracy (Adedokun, 2021). Just as culture is a people way of life so is democracy a people way of choosing, selecting or electing those that forms the government which controls and manages the affairs of their state. Democracy then is a political culture as it must reflect the patterned-way a people agree and adopt to elect those that runs the affairs of their state (Nnani, 2020). Democracy then produces governance model that meets three basic conditions: competition among individuals and political groups (political parties); inclusive system of leadership recruitment; and existence of a government of civil-political rights. These conditions underscore the importance of election both as a government legitimizer and as a guarantor of citizen participation in public governance. Nigeria is a heterogeneous country with diverse regional, religious, and ethnic divisions and as such characterized with

diverse culture and with population estimated to be around 200 million. Over nine general elections conducted since the attainment of political independence in 1960 reveals an electoral and democratization process substantially characterized with physical violence, electoral irregularities and interruptions of adjudication of electoral disputes and justice system (Nnani, 2020).

Statement of Problems

In Nigeria, the quest for national development is always at the heart of the leaders and the led. Leadership is the process of influencing group activities towards attainment of goals. Leadership has been among the major problems that have continued to spit on the efforts towards genuine democratization through exclusion of some segments of the economic classes from effective participation in the politics of the country. However, the quality of leadership in Nigeria since independence has been consistently low by human standards. Little wonder, Ndubisi (1990) asserts that no amount of billions of naira given to moral and intellectual mediocre could save them from messing up the money. Leading a nation is not something that any human being can efficiently and effectively do, but it appears Nigerians have not realized this after over many decades of shameful blunders. The Nigerian garden of leadership must be full of human beings, not animals. The moral quotient must be above average all the times if they are going to be law-abiding. There are three ingredients that you must consider in any society and these are “means of physical survival of the society; the defense of the society and how the society can be governed” (Nwosu, 2011, p. 66).

In Nigeria today, there is a seeming danger in our democracy as the will of the people is always manipulated in favour of few select comprador bourgeois class. This is evident in proven cases of unilateralism in the affairs of governance, god-fatherism, god-sonism and/or god-

augtherism; election rigging, etc. This trend has obviously characterized the civil governance since 1999 to date. And for very obvious reasons, however, it can be said that these trends have had very profound socio-political consequences for Nigeria's quest for peace, progress and sustainability (Erunke & Uchem, nd). According to Fayemi (2009), the long years of political misrule and bad governance exemplified by civilian administrations and military dictatorships since the country's political independence has left the nation politically de-mobilized, humanly underdeveloped and economically sterile with an ample population ravaged by poverty. Thus, with the return to democratic rule in the country in 1999, Nigerians had expected that the new wave of political leadership and democratic governance would accelerate the tide of development in the nation. The political leadership was expected to grapple with the socio-economic and political problems of the country, which border on poverty, corruption, lack of good governance, corrupt electoral system, unemployment, and insecurity, among others. For democracy to thrive, a nation must be imbued with a national leadership whose politics reflects and operates within the confines of the rule of law and constitutionalism as that remain the major characteristics that would empower her to defend and strive for democratic consolidation and development of the state. Until law-abiding citizens emerge electoral candidates within the politics of Nigeria's national leadership, the consolidation of the country's political democracy remains a mirage (Nnani, 2020). That was why Oputa (2014) posited that:

The subjection of all is to the law and not to the whims and caprices of a tin god or any empty tyrant...the essence of government is to manage the affairs of the state for the peace and development of all...government continues in being, to make life better (Oputa, 2014).

In this case, the essence of government would be to ensure the consolidation of democracy which underlines this better life. But this is not the case with Nigeria as Utom (2021) rightly observed and noted that:

For over two decades, Nigeria and Nigerians have lived in a superficial arrangement and frightening situation called democracy-where the masses have lost sight of the real and lasting meaning of both democracy and political playing field....While it is obvious that the federal system is skewed, a reality that makes the nation currently stand in an inverted pyramid shape with more power concentrated at the top and the base not formidable enough, making collapse inevitable if urgent and fundamental steps are not taken... For a nation to develop, it needs leaders, people who are activists with a good sense of judgment and interpersonal skills. At this very moment, we must not fail to remember that the greatest tragedy of our time without a shadow of doubt is the fact that ours is a nation which is regrettably laden by poor leadership. That's not the only explanation... The precondition for an honest government is that candidate must not need large sums to get elected, or it must trigger off the circle of corruption. Having spent a lot of money to get elected, winners must recover their costs and possibly accumulate funds for the next election as the system is self-perpetuating (Utom, 2021).

Projecting more on politics of national leadership and the consolidation of democracy in Nigeria Okeke (2014) posited that:

Democracy in Nigeria has only given birth to what Joseph and Gillies (2010:185) pinpoint as politics without progress and Kukah (2012:1) describes as the political class, treating Nigerian politics as national bazaar. Truly, in Nigeria's current post-military dispensation, politics without progress or politics as national bazaar, invariably translate to democracy without progress (Okeke, 2014).

As Kukah (2012) stated:

We may pride ourselves with having survived four back-to-back elections and create the illusion that our democracy has been strengthened. This is misleading because first, the elections are still massively fraudulent and our level of success is not measured by international best practices as such. Secondly, with very little evidence of changes in the lives of our people, our democracy remains risky, volatile and vulnerable to internal and external shocks (Kukah, 2012).

From the above stated issues, it becomes clear that national leadership in Nigeria is still under tutelage of bad leaders and ethnic cum party politics rivalry which threatens the very efforts towards the consolidation of the nation's democracy. Democracy in Nigeria has suffered huge setbacks since independence to 1999 and from 1999, had stayed till date. The questions then that many philosophical minds and scholars on democracy and national leadership in Nigeria would ask may look like; (1) to what extent has Nigeria's national leadership internalize

democratic ethos? (2) How has democratic system championed good national leadership in Nigeria? (3) What are the problems and prospects of politics of national leadership and democracy in Nigeria? These questions form the basis of this paper.

Significance of the Study

This paper will be of an immeasurable value to scholars whose discipline touches on politics, leadership, development and underdevelopment and to an average readable Nigerians with their immediate West African neighbours. It will serve as a plus to the academic literature and data of the fields of Political Sciences, Social Sciences and the Humanities.

Fragmented and Poverty Syndrome of Democracy Theoretical Paradigm

When they say that something is fragmented, it means that it is a small part of something that has broken off or small something that comes from something larger. Also poverty is a state of having little money or lack of enough money to take care of one's basic needs. It then means that it is a state of affair where one can utilize any available opportunity regardless of conscience and morality to meet up with his basic needs. It was the then American political activist and President, Abraham Lincoln who defined democracy as a government of the people, by the people and, for the people. The definition did not define the class of people that elects this government and what the government should do to earn the government of the people. Syndrome will then mean a set of opinions or a way of behaving that is typical of particular type of person, attitude or social problem. Hence the coinage of this theory that I call today, fragmented and poverty syndrome theory of democracy.

Democracy being the government of the people cannot thrive in a society where its people are majorly embellished and decorated with poverty coupled with tribal mindset and sentiment.

This is because both would inhibit her sense of reasoning and judgements. A poor man couldn't have afforded to leave his work, business, family and state to travel to the Nigerians capital city to vote for a candidate of his choice without the hope of being mobilized and appreciated in the form of motivation, this is because he lacks finance to take adequate care of his basic needs and that of his family and therefore every available opportunity to grab money for the survival of his family cannot be overemphasized. Though in a society where morality and conscience reigns supreme a man salvaged with poverty may resist the temptations inimical to his poor status in the society. The bottom line is that if Nigeria is a state where morality and conscience are extolled, the country's national leadership would have ensured the political economic development of the nation which would have taken care of the poverty syndrome. My take on the poverty syndrome of democracy is therefore premised in a society where morality and conscience is not in place at its national leadership and with the general society as such, the poor classes of the society which constitutes the larger number of the populace will always take incentives to vote for an electoral candidate until they naturally get tired of the bad governance ravaging them as a result of vote-buying and revolt hence a behavioural revolution. Oputa in one of his writings asserted that how can we say we are Nigerians and have to state our state of origin in the curriculum vitae, it should be that if one is a Nigerian, he is a Nigeria, hence the inclusion of state of origin in our curriculum vitae is an evidence of a fragmented society and such a society cannot strive in a democratic process and national leadership. So my take on the fragmented syndrome of democracy is that in a society where ethnic and tribal mark is always cherished over national pride and project, democracy will remain a joke and a mirage.

In the just concluded party presidential primary election of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in Nigeria, one saw how the entire delegates votes were bought with money and the delegates

without any regard to the quality of the candidate that shares those dollars voted him in hence it is not his business over the impact of the emergence of such a leader to the generality of the society. That is what poverty can do to the democratization process of a nation whose political economy is continuously backward and the national leadership cares less towards her sustainable development.

Also, the division of a state into ethnic nationalities entails doom for a growing democracy such as that of Nigeria. Most at times religion and culture plays key role in the fragmentation of a state into ethnic nationalities which continuously view power politics from their various socio-cultural cleavages. This state of affairs makes a citizen of such a state to vote towards its own ethnic cleavage without considering the quality of the person he votes in. Such a thing inhibits democratic consolidation and national leadership needed for a society to strive and develop. We all saw how Governor of Sokoto state Mr. Tambuwal stepped down for Atiku at the eleventh hour of PDP presidential primary of which no doubt he did that because the share same socio-cultural belief and from same ethnic cleavage without considering the effect of such action to the generality of the Nigerian state. That is what is obtainable in a fragmented democratic society.

There has been numbers of publications and writings on the problems of democracy in Nigeria, and I could have chose a theory out of these thesis for this paper but in order to bring the special attention of socio-political economy analysts and scholars of politics on the urgent need to tackle what I hereby call the tentacles of democratic problems in Nigeria vis-a-vis: ethno-religious socio-political fragmentation and poverty syndrome. Social science scholars has over adumbrated and enumerated the problems of democracy in Nigeria such as; vote-buying, election rigging, physical violence, thuggery and kidnapping, bloodshed, bribery and

corruption, manipulations of electoral justice systems, hijacking of ballot boxes, god-fatherism, national leadership partiality, nepotism and favouritism and the rest of it. The two tentacles of democracy problems in Nigeria as I stated here would make an average scholar with a special academic microscope and talent to understand that this tentacles, ethno-religious socio-political fragmentation and poverty syndrome, fathered and mothered the rest of the democracy problems in Nigeria and if these two major enemies of Nigeria's democracy is tackled, the rest of the problems will die a natural death. I would then sum this theoretical postulation of mine with the classical philosophy of Plato as stated in Nwosu (2011: 66) that:

According to Plato, for the realization of these functions in a society, appetite, spirit and reason are imperative.... it is an injustice to see a man of reason "philosopher King" (the ruler), or a man of spirit (the soldier) to be a worker and the worst of it all injustice of the highest order for a man of appetite to be a ruler (Nwosu, 2011 p. 66).

The status quo for this my theoretical postulation includes:

1. A campaign and writings to stop the inclusion of the state of origin in the curriculum vitae of all Nigerian citizens in Nigeria should begin now.
2. Nigerians should change from the ideology that voting inn someone that shares cultural affinity with them would better his life and vote national leadership based on quality and competence.
3. Morality and conscience of any Nigerian citizen vying for a political office need to be well screened and ascertain before any Nigerian vote for him or her.
4. The electoral act should prohibit the sharing of money by any candidate of political party during party primaries and make such an act, a crime punishable by law. In

furtherance to that, the constitution should create an act to establish for national trust fund to provide logistics and incentives for national delegates of all political parties during general elections in Nigeria.

5. Nigerians should see themselves as Nigerians and not as Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba or Efik, Ijaw, Ibibio, etc.
6. The need for churches, schools, governments and private organizations to continuously teach morality and conscience is necessary to deal with the democratic syndromes in Nigeria.

With the entrenchment of that status quo the problems of democracy in Nigeria would become an alternative forgone. I therefore call on Political Scientists in Nigeria, far and near to adopt this theory that I so propounded in this paper today, and work towards the attainment of its status quo.

Literature Review

John C Maxwell in his *'The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership'* (2007: 7-8) opined that for an organisation to change its direction it must change the leader. That is because according to him, personal and organisational effectiveness is proportional to the strength of leadership. He argued that when talented teams don't win, the leadership need to be examined. That is the case of Nigeria as one can agree with me that Nigerians are talented and hardworking yet our national political-economy is constantly taking the backward trajectory. The need to examine Nigeria's national leadership and democratic consolidation becomes imperative and cannot be overemphasized because one is yet to comprehend the problems and challenges of the

backwardness and underdevelopment trajectory narrative of the Nigeria's political economy as Kukah (2012) rightly contended that:

We may pride ourselves with having survived four back-to-back elections and create the illusion that our democracy has been strengthened. This is misleading because first, the elections are still massively fraudulent and our level of success is not measured by international best practices as such. Secondly, with very little evidence of changes in the lives of our people, our democracy remains risky, volatile and vulnerable to internal and external shocks (Kukah, 2012).

The essence of literature review in academic work is to unravel the positions and emerging dynamics of scholarly arguments and postulations on the phenomenon of study, and that is the reason behind subheadings under this section which would range from National leadership in Nigeria to Democratic consolidation in Nigeria.

Conceptualizing National Leadership in Nigeria

Ogbeidi (2013) posited that leadership is a body of people that directs the activities of a group towards a defined goal. Okeke (2014), agreeing with him submitted that leadership has to do with harnessing individual differences, strengths and weaknesses of citizens into achieving stated goals. That a leader is one who motivates a group to achieve a common goal, and a good leader is impartial and responsive as he must treat every citizen of the state equal and attends to each individual's needs appropriately and as such must be flexible and firm. He further posited that the flexibility attribute of a leader does not take away the element of firmness and determination and he must therefore be courageous in hard times and compassionate to every citizen of the state and, being able to persevere. Having understood leadership from that perspective, one then can be poised to ask what national leadership is all about. National leadership can then be said to mean the body of people that directs and manages the activities and affairs of the citizens of a sovereign entity called the state towards achieving the collective

goals and set targets and must ensure that timeframe is defined in order to progressively ensure other goals can be set so as to facilitate versatile growth and sustainable development of the state. The logic that would follow then is what if national leadership lacks the competence, integrity and virtuous elements to lead its citizens towards the right trajectory and the answer would be narratives full of ugly and tragic vibes.

Describing politics of Nigeria's national leadership and the fall of the First Republic, Graf (1979) aptly submitted that:

The story of the initial promise and prospects of the First Republic and its subsequent foundering as a result of accumulated problems of corruption, patronage, disunity, sectionalism, factionalism, 'primordialism', and many others have often been told. Indeed, what is surprising about Nigeria's first democratic regime is not the fact that it went under after only five years, but that it was able to survive as long as it did. Notably lacking was an over-riding sense of nationhood.... when in January 1966 a group of military officers led by Major Nzeogwu finally executed a coup, many Nigerians were indifferent to or indeed relieved at the demise of a regime hopelessly encumbered by corruption, election-rigging, vote-buying, indifference to the plight of its citizens and thorough ineffectiveness. The coup *d'état*, in a word, was welcomed by many as a coup de grace (Graf, 1979 pp. 7-8).

To take anchor from the submission of Graf (1979) would enlighten us on the challenges of politics of Nigeria's national leadership towards the country's democratic experiment and the fact that the problems seems genetic in the sense that it has been there since the country first democratic experiment. But let us look for a very recent scholarly position on the issue of politics of national leadership in Nigeria. On his part Kukah (2012 cited in Okeke, 2014) had this to say regarding the politics of Nigeria's national leadership under democratic settings that:

We may pride ourselves with having survived four back-to-back elections and create the illusion that our democracy has been strengthened. This is misleading because first, the elections are still massively fraudulent and our level of success is not measured by international best practices as such. Secondly, with very little evidence of changes in the lives of our people, our democracy remains risky, volatile and vulnerable to internal and external shocks (Okeke, 2014).

One then would be left with no wonder than to agree with Ndubuisi (1991) who aptly posited that:

The quality of leadership in Nigeria since independence has been consistently low by human standards. No amount of billions of naira which is given to moral and intellectual mediocre could save them from messing up the money. Leading a nation is not something that any human being can efficiently and effectively do, but it appears Nigerians have not realized this after over twenty-nine years of shameful blunders. The Nigerian garden of leadership must be full of human beings, not animals. *The moral quotient of leaders must be above average all the time if they are going to be law-abiding* (Ndubuisi, 1991 p. 45).

It follows that the politics of national leadership in Nigeria is surrounded and filled with men of greed, selfishness, pride, ethnic-orientation and disunity, corruption, and bereft of ideas for the consolidation of democracy and national development in the state. Having touched on politics of national leadership in Nigeria let us proceed with the conceptualization of political democracy in Nigeria.

Conceptualizing Democracy in Nigeria

Aside other social contract theorists, John Locke thought that the natural rights to life, liberty and property are to be best preserved in a democratic system of government (Nweke, 2015). Prior to the modern political philosophy, theories of democracy were manifest in the ancient Greek political thoughts as a rule by the citizens in general (Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy, 2005). Whereas monarchy remains the tyrannical instruments of kingship, oligarchy is a form of aristocracy favouring mainly the rich, but democracy is the rule to the advantage of the poor. “Democracy has its origin in two Greek words – ‘Demos’ which means people and ‘Kratos’ which means rule. When the two words are joined we get "people rule”. It simply means a government determined by the people. Democracy is government by the people and where the supreme power is vested in the people - the electorates.” To Abraham Lincoln as cited in Agi (2000) democracy is government of the people, by the people and for the people. He further

classified democracy into two categories: direct and indirect democracy. The former represents a system where people or citizens actively participate in decision making. Agi (2000) posited that this kind of democracy were practiced in some of the smaller ethnic groups in Nigeria in the pre-colonial times and in some Greek city-states, whereas, indirect democracy involves a system where representatives are selected by the people to take decisions and make laws on behalf of the people. In Book IV, Chapter four of his Politics, Aristotle enunciated forms of democracy. In his words:

There are several kinds of democracy. The first sort is based particularly on equality, where the poor and the well-off are treated equally and the majority rule since both groups have equal authority to rule. Other kinds of democracy include having the rule of law but allowing all to take part in offices, or allowing the multitude and not the law to have authority. In such a case, "the people become a monarch, from many combining into one." Properly speaking, however, such an arrangement is not really because "where the laws do not rule there is no regime.

In the like manner, the bottom line of the foregoing reinforces itself in trust, consent and agreement which are the basis for the stability of a governmental system. This is explicit in the portions of the Nigerian constitutional preambles thus:

We the people of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN), having firmly and solemnly resolved to live in unity and harmony as one indivisible and indissoluble sovereign nation under God... and to provide a constitution for the purpose of promoting good governance and welfare of all persons in our country on the principles of freedom, equality and justice (1999 Constitution as amended 2011).

Okeke (2014) contended that democracy is at the crossroads in Nigeria. National leadership and democratic consolidation also has altogether, only materialized in the inscrutable imaginations of Nigeria's national development planners. Indeed, a plethora of studies exist on democracy and national leadership in Nigeria [Achebe (1983), Joseph (1987), Oyovbaire (1987), Osaghae (1998), Ibobor (2004), Ofuebe, (2005), Joseph and Gillies (2010), Campbell (2011), Ogundiya, et al, (2011), Akwen and Gever (2012), Kukah (2012), Majekodunmi (2012), Lawal and Olukayode (2012), Nwanegbo and Odigbo (2013), Omodia (2013)]. There

is therefore, ostensibly in existence, a humongous volume of panacea on the possibilities of establishing an empirical nexus between democracy and national leadership in Nigeria. Romancing the existing protocol, Nnani (2020) posited that democracy deals with the way by which citizens of a political entity called state chose and established in the selection or election of those which forms the government, controls and manages its affairs. Democracy then is a political culture as it must reflect the patterned-way a people agree and adopt to elect those that runs the affairs of their state. Democracy produces governance model that meets three basic conditions: competition among individuals and political groups (political parties); inclusive system of leadership recruitment; and existence of a regime of civil-political rights. He contended that these conditions underscore the importance of election both as a regime legitimizer and as a guarantor of citizen participation in public governance. The possible rhetoric question could then be to what extent have Nigerians made careful and wise choices during general elections.

On the other hand, sustainable democracy is the practice which allows room for persistence of democratic projects over a long period of time without any external interference whatsoever, Jega (2002) argued that democratic consolidation is a term which describes the vital political goal for a transiting democracy with intermittent flop by authoritarian rule. The term consists of overlapping behavioural, attitudinal and constitutional dimensions, through which democracy becomes routinized and deeply internalized in social, institutional, and even psychological life, as well as political calculations for achieving success. Jega further argued that though Nigeria cannot be referred to as “a new democracy” as one would have wished; it has not reversed or regressed back to the dark days of authoritarian military regime. What this means is that the nation is still engaged in democratization process. However, what is critical

is the question of the nature and consequences of the democratization process (Erunke & Uchem, nd).

In this regard, Odo (2015) posits that democracy provides right to groups and individuals and includes freedom of expression, freedom of association, freedom of conscience etc. He contended that when responsible and accountable leadership is installed, these freedoms will be imbibed and allowed to operate without hindrance. More so, when these provisions are constrained, the system becomes chaotic and unproductive. Echoing from that perspective, Nwokike and Chidolue (nd) posited that regrettably political leaders in Nigeria have been accused of highhandedness, intimidation and suppression of oppositions and critics. Democracy, by implication connotes that absolute power resides with the people who play vital roles in enthroning and sustaining democracy (Nwokike and Chidolue, nd).

Edigheji in his brilliant new book, *Nigeria Democracy Without Development: How To Fix It*, argued that one of the crucial variable that contributes to democracy without development in Nigeria is the capture of the state through a system of non-merit-based recruitment and promotion of civil servants... while the rule of law, political and civil liberties, which constitute the focus of electoral democracy, are necessary, they are not sufficient conditions for the enhancement of human dignity and inclusive development. Going beyond the conventional argument that the prospects of democracy and development in a post-colonial country are invariably linked to its level of economic development, political culture and social make-up, the book analyses the root causes of Nigeria's democratic failures through an institutional analysis framework.

Research Methodology

This paper employed secondary method of data collections and content analysis to analyse and discuss the phenomenon understudy.

A Critique of Politics of National Leadership and Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria

Consequent upon man's natural ego-centric inclinations, the state of nature being an abode of no law and perpetual war lacks mechanisms for common good and societal preservation. Thomas Hobbes, John Locke and Jean Jacques Rousseau are popular social contract theorists who conceptualized political institutions to entail organic transition from the precarious state of nature to organized and a civilized society akin to the rule of law and the general will of the people. It is an established truism that the birth of any commonwealth or body politic is usually preceded by visible expressions of dissatisfaction for a society approximating that of a state of nature and that underscores the relevance of politics to national leadership and democracy (Nweke, 2015). It was the then Chief Justice of Nigeria, Hon. Justice M.I. Uwais GCON in a lecture delivered at the All Nigerian Judges Conference in Abuja on November 1999 who humbly submitted:

Today, democracy is restored and fresh hopes are rekindled in the people as the rule of law replaces the rule of man. The re-establishment of democratic governance is a testimony and re-statement of the commitment of the people to the rule of law and respect for human rights, which the founding fathers of our country cherished.

Politics of a nation leadership determines the trajectory of her democratic consolidation. This is because politics determines policies, programmes vis-a-vis actions and inactions of nation-states. The politics of national leadership and democratic consolidation of nation-states lies within its people and politics. In a political system where national leadership and government emerges through electoral democracy, the politics of such states then determines its democracy and national leadership tune and vice versa. Nwokike and Chidolue (nd) submitted that,

“People have wrongly believed that politics and politicking is a dirty game and should be avoided by all reasonable individuals. This has created room for the emergence of "half -baked" persons in leadership positions since the men of wisdom and intellectuals are unwilling to lead. Also, to many, politics is an easy way of making money since nobody cares to ask questions. In a country where a local government counsellor earns more than a university professor, the message is very simple: money invested in politics is a good investment. Politics have become all comers’ affairs. Politicians now struggle to occupy leadership position for what they will get from the system.” In that vein, Ezeanyika in Nwachukwu (2003, p. 52) that humbly noted that politics is no longer just the solution but part of the problem. That presupposes politics of national leadership to be for the progress and democratic consolidation in Nigeria and as a yardstick for the country’s progress and development but rather it seems the major catastrophe facing the nation-states today. While writing on the topic; *Competition without Catastrophe*, Kurt M. Campbell and Jake Sullivan, among other concerns argued that the best defence of democracy is to stress the values that are essential to good governance, especially transparency and accountability, and to support civil society, independent media and free flow of information. They noted that these steps could lower the risk of democratic setbacks and improve the politics of national leadership in the developing nations of Africa.

It is Nigeria and her politics that would determine its democratic outcomes and the narratives of the politics of its national leadership. That was why L.K. Yew, pioneer/former Prime Minister of Singapore once noted, “My experience about developments in Asia has led me to conclude that it takes good people to have good government. However good the system of government, bad leaders will bring harm to their people. On the hand, I have seen several societies well governed in spite of a poor system of government, because good, strong leaders

were in charge. I have also seen so many of the over 80 constitutions drafted by Britain and France for their former colonies come to grief, and not because of flaws in the constitution, it was simply that the precondition for a democratic system did not exist.” For example, the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria states that Nigerians have resolved to live in unity and harmony as one indivisible and indissoluble Sovereign Nation under God... And to provide for a Constitution for the purpose of promoting the good government and welfare of all persons in our country on the principles of freedom, equality and justice, and for the purpose of consolidating the unity of our people and with regards to the above, Ndubisi (1991) was provoked to submit some questions from the attitudes of politics of national leadership in Nigeria:

Is it not a shocking and zoological prototype behaviour that the very Constitution which installed Nigerian leaders and which bound them to ‘abolish all corrupt practices and abuse of power’ was trampled upon, discarded, and in its place planned, developmental and endemic corruption and systematic abuse of power were gloriously installed with all imaginable contemptuous and disdainful disregard of the feelings and wishes of Nigerians who elected them to serve them? Is it not arrogant nonsense for any governor, legislator or judicator to pretend that Nigeria is making political progress with such treatment of the Nigerian constitution? Is not retrogressive to promote statism, ethnicity and sectionalism in contravention of section 15 (political objectives) of the Nigerian constitution (Ndubisi, 1991, p. 91).

A report titled, *Ethics And Standards in Electoral Process in Nigeria (guiding tools/principles)*, put together by the Centre For Value in Leadership (CVL), Lagos in partnership with the Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre (PLAC), and supported by MacArthur Foundation) provides a link between the factors that impede credible election in Nigeria and far-reaching measures that could pave way for development and orderliness in the nation via election of good leaders. The outcome of such an election must be acceptable to a majority of the electorate and it must be acceptable within the international community. If elections are to be free and fair, laws designed in that regard must not just exist; they must be operational and be enforced. And the

power of freedom of choice conferred on the electorates must be absolute and not questionable. But contrary to these provisions, since the re-emergence of democracy in Nigeria in 1999, our country has conducted different elections. And tragically unique is that they were marred by varying degrees of malpractice.

One would say, why talk about election in a paper of this nature? Elections are at the heart of politics of national leadership and democratic consolidation. The implication is that electoral process in Nigeria is vulnerable to abuse, through massive rigging and other forms of electoral malpractices by political parties- especially by those in power as they seek to manipulate the system to serve their partisan interest. Elections, which are a critical part of the democratic process, therefore, lose their intrinsic value, and become mere means of manipulation to get to power. This derogates the sanctity of elections as an institutional mechanism for conferring political power on citizens in a democratic dispensation. For democracy to thrive, a nation must be imbued with a national leadership whose politics reflects and operates within the confines of the rule of law and constitutionalism as that remain the major characteristics that would empower him to defend and strive for democratic consolidation and development of the state. Until law-abiding citizens emerge electoral candidates within the politics of Nigeria's national leadership and the consolidation of the country's political democracy would remain a mirage.

The politics of national leadership and democratic consolidation in Nigeria can best be comprehended and appreciated in Nwosu (2013, p. 275) who noted that:

The desire to accumulate wealth made them to elongate their stay through dubious means and their continuity agenda has made African leaders to be predators, which have no feelings of their subjects and they can only exploit them in order to enrich themselves. To them change oriented attitudes, is a taboo, they will always want to perpetuate themselves into office and peradventure a change is to come, they will do everything possible to present their stooge as a replacement... it has stultified the level

of development in Africa and thereby enthroning mediocrity in place of meritocracy and this is a clog in the wheel of progress and development of Africa.

Ndubisi (1991, p. 80-1) had this to say with regard to Nigerian national leadership and morality

If it is accepted that ‘Nigerian leaders have been remarkably honest and courageous in admitting that this country is like a 20th century Sodom and Gomorrah because its morals are in tatters and its discipline in shambles, it should be accepted, too, that they had not been as serious in facing the problems in action as in verbalizing them... To a very high degree the moral tune of a society is dictated by the political elites. The 1979 constitution actually set guidelines to ensure high morality. One of them stipulates that legislators, ministers, advisers, and the chief executives should declare their assets three months after assuming duty and at the end of their tenure. Now three years have passed and apart from the President and his Vice, there is hardly any other who had complied with this ethical code. And nobody seems to enforcing compliance.

In his classification of moral development, he stated that animals and human beings nearest to beasts behave at the preconventional level of development. That is to say that they do not respect rules and regulations, laws, conventions and ethics.

Disunity and ethnic cleavages have maximally dealt with Nigeria’s democracy and politics of national leadership, and in this direction, Oputa (2014) noted that, “lack of national unity and national consciousness constituted and still constitutes Nigeria’s major distress” From a historical perspective, the Shagari administration captured the fragmentations and divisions along ethnic lines with regards to national politics and democratic process in Nigeria and went ahead to work towards the peace and unity of the country. He pursued this vigorously. Some of his supporters and critics alike felt that his love for peace and unity were turning into weakness. He tolerated insults and provocations from many of them which no Nigerian leader of the time would have tolerated. Quoting the Newsweek of October 12, 1981, Ndubisi, submitted:

As a leader of a nation renowned for rough-house politics, Alhaji Shehu Shagari comes as something of a surprise. A mild-mannered, unassuming and rather ascetic character, he made sharp contrast to the ebullient figures who tend to dominate Nigerian politics. His two years presidency has been noted for its cautions and unconservative hue and

the emphasis that Shagari places on the need for consensus and cooperation.... ‘The main preoccupation of my administration’, he said, ‘has been to ensure that this country is stable and that there is peace and harmony. I had slow things down by setting a rather cautious pattern of administration (Ndubisi, 1991, p. 77).

The implications of the above submission is that Nigerian leaders pursued and demonstrated a political democratic narrative and trajectory full of fragmentation and disjointed national leadership and orientation, and as Shagari emerged president and followed a contrary narrative of that conservative, they became angry and fought against him. It is pertinent to state that the present administration of Muhammadu Buhari reverberates’ the conservatives of fragmented and disjointed political democracy of national leadership and politics in Nigeria and today the country is in a deep political and economic mess. In that (Nwokike and Chidolue, nd) analytically submitted:

Elections and eventual emergence of a political leader is interpreted on the basis of ethnic affiliations and sentiments. Leaders are chosen based on where they come from and who they represent. Virtually all the political parties (both past and present) in Nigeria had their origins in tribal sentiment. This scenario continued to dictate the pace, political, social and economic development of Nigeria. More so, political leaders, through their actions, have shown no sign of bringing warring groups on a round table for discussion and resolution of presumed fear, hatred and suspicion. The current government of President Muhammadu Buhari, in his appointments, toed the old line of favouring one region and ethnic group against others (Nwokike and Chidolue, nd).

In all the challenges bewildering the politics of national leadership and democratic progress and development in Nigeria, leadership perspectives of our people and government remains the gross and crux of the matter as Ndubisi, finally submitted that:

The price of leadership is enormous in whichever direction it is paid. Negatively paid, it is a disaster. Positively paid, it is noble, glorious and great. It does not matter who pays it, the leader or the led. The price of mismanagement of the First Republic was paid with disaster. Arson, rioting, vandalism, murder, insecurity, bribery and corruption, sectionalism and nepotism all compounded to cause friction, frustration and loss of precious and innocent lives (Ndubisi, 1991, p. 91).

The interwoven of politics of national leadership and democracy in Nigeria has shown our national leadership to remain the linchpin of the country’s democratic consolidation and progress. Edigheji, in his brilliant new book, *Nigeria Democracy Without Development: How*

To Fix It, powerfully and analytically submitted that the Nigerian democratic experiment is marred by monumental flaws, notwithstanding the modest progress it has achieved so far. More specifically, he convincingly offers two principal explanations that account for democracy without development in Nigeria: *poor leadership and weak institutions*. He lamented that another crucial variable that contributes to democracy without development in Nigeria is the capture of the state through a system of non-merit-based recruitment and promotion of civil servants... while the rule of law, political and civil liberties, which constitute the focus of electoral democracy, are necessary, they are not sufficient conditions for the enhancement of human dignity and inclusive development. It is in like manner that Njoku (2019) in his inaugural lecture titled, *Administrative Imperatives for Nigeria's Economic Stability, Growth and Development*, submitted that:

It is not enough to state that poverty in a wealthy Nigeria is common because of general greed among the elite class-parliament of vultures and lack of political will to develop Nigeria's economy for general well being. Most importantly, there is selfish interest of the minority rich people to subjugate and keep majority Nigerians below subsistence level. Beyond this, the administrative passengers and vampires suck and swallow Nigeria's wealth and blood... the irony of Nigeria's wealth is comparable to the words of Samuel Taylor Coleridge in the Ancient Mariner: "there is water, water everywhere/Nor any drop to drink."... That is why majority Nigerians are carrying the burden of bank loan toady. In short, administrative passengers and vampires are parasites in our economy. They do not give anything to the economy but they want to take everything (Njoku, 2019, p. 38-39).

It is not out of place here to state that the greedy political parasites, passengers and vampires in the name of national leadership and democracy placed Nigeria in a shameful economic condition, and so the economic sad story have continued to impede the country's democratic progress and national leadership development. Oputa in this regard submits that:

The standard of discipline and the general moral tone of a society can very well depend on who is at the helm – a saint or a villain. The history of our immediate past is still fresh in our minds. Assailed on all fronts by the abject corruption of our erstwhile leaders, the Nigerian society gradually yielded to the new morality of greed and to the need of religious mammon. The proper role of a leader is to lead; and in leading the life

of the leader should be a model for the society. What his works preach and teach, his actions ought to show, just as the distress diagrams drawn by a geometry teacher illustrates his proofs... the economic distress in our country calls for a daring and creative resolve from our leaders.... but it will be a fiasco, a complete disaster, if our leadership is closely linked with neo-colonialists intent on exploiting and despoiling our economy. In such a case leadership becomes part of the problem rather than part of the solution. The same disaster will follow if the leadership is selfish and corrupt.... If Nigeria is to assume her rightful place in Africa and on the world scene, she has to start afresh, from the very beginning, and lay solid foundations for her growth – morally, politically, economically and socially (Oputa, 2014, p. 29-30).

Summary/Conclusion

Ake posited that in so far as there is economic inequality in a society that society cannot have political democracy because political power will tend to polarize around economic power. Romancing Ake's position, J.R. West stated that government with large oil receipts need less consent from the governed to stay in power. They can reward their friends and buy off their opposition or pay to have it crushed. And H.J. Laski, also analytically stated that in any society even when based on equal and universal suffrage, the existence of economic inequalities biases the incidence of government in favour of the rich (Anozie, 2009).

It should be clearly stated that like social and economic development in Nigeria, political democracy remains a farce in the hands of zoo leaders. Political instability which resulted in the most bloody and wicked civil war was the price of zoological leadership which the Nigerian masses paid for the recklessness of their political leaders. Democracy in Nigeria is our collective business as a nation-state. In a democracy, the concept of people is very critical in the measurement of the indices of its survival, growth and sustainability. Above all, the electoral process, which is a spring-board for choosing public office holders is vital in our analysis so much so that, its success reinforces the effective functioning of the process of governance in no small way. It therefore goes to show that smooth conduct of elections in Nigeria is a function of the nation's stability, strength, probity and accountability (Erunke, nd).

It is quite disheartening that political leaders boldly speak of progressive governments in Nigeria when they have neither respect for the Nigerian constitution that gave them mandate to form political parties nor for the masses of the people who gave them support in the hope that their previous animal behaviour must have been a thing of the past. Until law-abiding citizens with national pride of the unity of the country emerges electoral candidates of political parties, the politics of Nigeria's national leadership and the consolidation of her political democracy would remain a mirage. Romancing in this direction, Oputa (2014) submitted:

Values, not necessarily the prevailing lust for acquiring money from politics; new men with new patriotism, new dedication, new loyalty to the cause of the nation and a passion for social justice – unless we have such individuals (virtuous individuals that Plato referred above, we may find out, as we learn in history that men refuse to learn from history; we may find out that Nigeria has since 1960 learnt nothing and forgotten nothing... we may return back to square one with the now customary probes, searching post-mortem, to estimate how much in their lust for power and ill-gotten wealth, the so-called leaders to whom we entrusted our destiny and that of our country robbed and despoiled their fatherland (Oputa, 2014, p. 15-16).

In that, lies the crux of politics of national leadership and democratic narrative and trajectory in Nigeria. The fact remains that our past political leaders have overwhelmingly portrayed themselves as mere house/gate keepers who delight in feeding fat on the national political misadventure that led to the widespread misfortunes of the people. Thus, the political candidates presented as leaders for public offices have not been absolutely fair, impartial to national interests, devoid of nepotism, with no reasonable ability to differentiate between personal, family and public relationships and matters that cause political discords and disaffection in the national interests. They must not become drainpipes for siphoning public funds or psychologically unstable to act reasonably in matters of national interest, observe national realities while shunning the allure of being drug barons, couriers or addicts with tendency to push the country towards the abyss of national calamity.

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