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## **Leadership Problem and National Development: Is Nigeria A Failed State?**

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### **Abstract**

*This paper discussed the problem of leadership failure in Nigeria and its impact on the social, economic and political development as well as on unity of the Nigerian state. The objective was to demonstrate that leadership failure was responsible for massive killings and death of many innocent citizens by the Boko-Haram insurgency and Hausa-Fulani herdsmen under the guise of religion. The government of the day seems not to have done enough to protect the lives and properties of the citizens as demonstrated by the fact that most of those involved in these crimes and atrocities are hardly brought to book. The paper employed both the library and observatory research methods in its investigation and analysis. It was documented that the most dangerous aspect of this leadership failure is that the majority of Nigerians suffer from dangerous diseases and malnutrition as a result of corruption, embezzlement, bad planning and the misuse of the economic resources of the Nigerian state. It recommended improvement in the living standards of the people and to strengthen some of the government institutional agencies that are unable to prosecute and arrest those who have committed murder and other offences.*

**Keywords:** Leadership Failure, Corruption, Development, Poor service delivery and lawlessness

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### **1. Introduction**

Recently in Nigeria, there has been an increasing rate of armed robbery, kidnapping and corruption in high quarters. The sacrifice such as “Back to Land” which the masses are told to make have not succeeded in salvaging the situation. Meanwhile, the leaders continue to embezzle and loot the treasury (Transparency International, 2005). The leadership have been accused of all sorts of corrupt practices including money laundry, outright stealing and false declaration of Assets (Lew, 2006). The rate of crime and

criminality has been on the high increase. Hardly does a day pass by without news of killings and destructions of lives and property in many states in Nigeria and not much have been done to bring the perpetrators to book (Osuji, 2012).

When the leadership of any country cannot effectively protect and provide the basic necessities of life for its citizens, such a government is said to have failed. A situation where citizens are no longer protected from external and internal aggression, when there is constant killings and destruction of lives and properties on a daily basis and the government of the day are not doing anything tangible to save its citizens (Otite, 2007). This is now the situation in many states of Nigeria. Citizens of the country are not sure of their lives and what will happen to them in the next moment. The most worrisome situation is that none of the perpetrators have been arrested or brought to book. No wonder Amen (2007) likened Nigerian state to a diabetic patient whose excess sugar in its blood stream served no positive purpose.

Starting from 2007 till today, many innocent citizens have been killed by the Boko Haram insurgents. It is so terrible that people are killed indiscriminately whether in the market or church and any gathering places, and citizens are not safe anywhere in the country. Recently, the activities of the Hausa-Fulani herdsmen ravaging every nook and cranny of the country particularly in the northern and middle belt of the country. A situation where people are killed and murdered with impunity in the country and the government of the day has not been able to do anything tangible to stop this dastardly act. In fact, this is a sign of leadership failure. Since the emergence of the Hausa-Fulani onslaught in Nigeria, an estimated number of over 20,000 people had been killed (Adeyemi, 2012) and the greatest surprise is that not even one of the culprits has been arrested and prosecuted. Based on the present situation in Nigeria, Kew (2006) and others have asked whether Nigeria is a fragile or a failed state. There are basic conditions and characters that make up a failed state. These conditions are already in place in Nigeria where lawlessness, killing, hunger, corruption and ethnic violence including electoral fraud and activities of the godfatherism are dominating centre pages in most national newspapers in Nigeria. A situation that appears as if the government has failed in its responsibility to provide and protect its citizens. Kew (2006) posited that Nigeria has lost its pride of place in the African continent to corruption as wasteful management of its enormous oil resources and patron-client politics have become the order of the day.

The World Bank in 2005 listed Nigeria as one of the 46 fragile states in the world (Benn, 2005). Worse still, there have been series of killings resulting from clashes between the Odua People's Congress (OPC) and other sundry groups which is an indication of how terrible the situation has become in Nigeria and equally, perhaps, the clash between the OPC and Hausa-Fulani who claimed the indigeneity of Idi-Araba in Lagos State on the ground that they had lived in the area for a very long time, is as a result of lack of proper definition of some constitutional issues such as indigeneity, citizenship, fiscal federalism, self-determination and others. This is one of the reasons some people have been calling for a sovereign national conference to settle some of these pending issues in Nigerian federalism.

The situation in Nigeria is such that one finds it difficult to explain why a country that is richly endowed with abundant resources, has not been able to successfully transform its resources for the improvement of the standard of living of the people because it is stuck in corruption (Njoku, 2005). For example, many past governments could not account for over \$400 billion out of the revenue derived from oil since it became the mainstay of the

Nigerian economy (Kubaje, 2006). The most dangerous aspect of it is that the majority of Nigerians are poor with all manners of diseases and sicknesses. While about two thirds of Nigerian population are enmeshed in poverty and living on less than US\$1 per day (Jerome, 2007), Nigerians also suffer from deprivation and live in squalid urban conditions. The failure of government interventionist strategy to stimulate patterns and processes of development in various regions of Nigeria has left a large part of the population, especially the youth, with a siege mentality (Utomi, 2004). Many Nigerians are frustrated and, thus, antagonize anyone believed to be directly or remotely connected with their long suffering; the resultant effect of this is chaos in various parts of Nigeria. A number of Nigeria youths are involved in kidnapping, armed robbery and piracy because of the present predicament. Nigeria is facing an enormous complex of old and new problems and has continued to rank very low in all known indices of development. Malnutrition is widespread, infrastructure is in shambles, health prospects are poor, social institutions are rated very low, illiteracy level is high, unemployment is widespread and ignorance and political apathy are commonplace.

According to Kew (2006) a failed state consists of both errors of omission when a state failed to do things that could have improved economic performance and errors of commission when the state does things which worsen economic performance. According to them, failed states are countries that lack strong power of government to preserve order. Any country known for serious mismanagement of its resources, bad policies, corruption and pronounced insecurity of lives and property as is witnessed in different parts of Nigeria in recent times can be described as a failed state.

The State Fragility Theory attempts to explain the situation that will necessarily occur when a government fails in its responsibility towards the people in terms of provision of the basic necessities and protection from attacks and inhuman treatment. In the context of this situation, the state becomes very fragile and any little thing will result to conflict.

Hansen (2003) posited that if a state fails to perform the functions necessary to meet citizen's basic needs and expectation, a section of the population could decide to resort to conflict because their expectations were not met and because they were denied major opportunities that make life better. Perhaps this accounted for the reason for the emergence of agitations by so many regional and ethnic groups like the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP) and Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) etc. All these agitations and problems have led to the demand for resource control by some states in the Niger Delta Region.

A fragile state according to Olsen (2000) is incapable of maintaining law, order and security. A situation where the legitimacy of the state is questioned based on the fact that the people's feeling is that the government of the day has failed in its responsibility in protecting them, then such a state can be described as a failed state. This is the reason Kew (2006) described a country that is failing or at a high risk of failing as one which lacks the authority to protect its citizens from violence and to provide basic necessities of life, as a fragile state. In Nigeria, in recent times, there have been frequent killings of innocent citizens on a daily basis in Nigeria by the Hausa-Fulani herdsmen. There is no day you will not hear of killings of people in Benue, Kogi, Nassarawa and Southern Kaduna and while it is worrisome up till now, none of the offenders has been brought to book. The citizens believe that the government of the day has deliberately kept quiet in all these atrocities committed against the innocent citizens of Nigeria (Ajaero, 2011).

Also, the Compliance Theory tries to explain the reasons why people obey and disobey the rule of law in spite of the presence of the law forbidding such actions (Olsen, 2000). According to him, unless stiffer penalties are imposed on any convicted person, people would continue to disobey the law. The work maintained that there were certain factors which motivate individuals to obey or not to obey laws. For this case, a potential violator of the law calculates both the likelihood of being detected and the weight of punishment if caught. In Nigeria, the reason why people disobey rules and regulations or laws is very clear; the way and manner the leadership emerges and jumps into wealth without adhering to rules and regulations and when they commit offence or fraud nothing happens to them. In fact, political position in Nigeria is seen as an opportunity to become rich. In Nigeria, the way people respect wealth and how those in government acquire wealth without being questioned has given room for people to overlook the law and do whatever they like, since nothing serious is done to those who steal public money. The government itself has no moral justification to condemn people who commit offences as a result of religious extremism and bigotry in northern Nigeria that result in daily killing of innocent civilians particularly women and children, massive ethnic violence in the Middle Belt (North Central) as well as South East and South West electoral violence with killings and destruction of lives and properties worth billions of naira. Otite (1999) posited that violent crises and conflicts have become a regular feature of social life in Nigeria, which is as a result of our multifarious culture and nationality, together with religious bigotry, ethnic cleavages, political differences and electoral malpractices that are thrown up by the negative zero-sum game dynamics of our failed political class and pathological corrupt leaders.

## **2. Objectives of Study**

The objective of the paper is to highlight and state in clear terms the leadership problem in Nigeria and the high rate of joblessness, unemployment corruption, crime and underdevelopment which could amount to leadership failure. The conduct of elections in Nigeria where the wishes of the masses are not respected is a good exemplification.

## **3. Is Nigeria a Failed State?**

Fragile states, for the World Bank, are countries with significant number of the world's poor people. In other words, states that create negative spillovers such as conflict, instability and refugee flow for their neighbors, a country that lacks either the will or the capacity to engage in productive venture, safeguard human rights and provide the basic institutions for development. A failed state is known for problems and difficulties in development and has weak institutions and constant high risks of conflict like the case of Boko haram and Hausa-Fulani herdsmen in Nigeria.

In Nigeria today, corruption has taken a very centre stage in national life and nothing vigorous seems to be going on to tackle it. Most of the institutions set up to fight corruption are not free from this dangerous disease. To many of our political elites, public funds are meant to be plundered and shared among one another. In fact, appointment to the public service is a call to plunder and collect or steal your share. Today, corrupt practices such as over invoicing, contract scam, embezzlement and outright looting of public treasury have become the order of the day.

There are conflicts everywhere even in the oil sector which is the basis of the Nigerian economy. At least 400,000 barrels of the country's 2 million barrels a day of oil

production is being sabotaged through actions apparently planned by frustrated youths in the Niger Delta Region. For quite some time now, many expatriate oil workers have been kidnapped and some killed and drilling platforms of major oil companies have been blown up or occupied by militant youths (Sagay, 2005). This notwithstanding, many lives have been lost, people's property destroyed, and there have been over heated speeches here and there which tried to provoke and aggravate the problems of the Nigerian state. This is because of the Nigerian leadership's inability to mediate, deliver and protect the citizens of the country. Many foreign nations particularly America and Britain had in the past concluded that Nigeria will soon disintegrate into smaller states because of the high rate of crises, corruption and political violence in the country.

In Nigeria today, there is a strong agitation for resource control. The reason for this is because there is the belief that the resources produced or derived from the Niger Delta Region are not used for the development of the area hence the agitation for resource control.

In the Northern Nigeria, another problem has equally raised its ugly head in the form of religious crisis. This religious crisis has equally threatened the very existence of Nigeria. This is the Boko Haram group hiding under the guise of Islam that threatens to Islamize Nigeria. Omwuamanam (2012) was of the opinion that one of the main objectives of the sect (Boko Haram) is to Islamize Nigeria and Northern region in particular. As a matter of fact, the rest of the Nigerian state is under the threat of this Islamic group. This can be seen from the activities of the Boko Haram sects and the speeches of their spokesman Abu Oaga, when he warned Christians in Northern Nigeria to accept Islam without which there will be no peace. This statement made by this sect led to increased rate of killings, burning and destruction of lives and property which cannot be quantified and uncountable number of innocent citizens have been killed. Thus, the group has brought untold hardship on the generality of the people. Many policemen and soldiers have equally lost their lives because of the activities of this group. In the midst of all these crises and electoral violence in Nigeria, many are asking whether Nigeria should be regarded as a failed state?

Additionally, elections and electoral processes in Nigeria have been marred by crises which had generated so much animosities, with what happened after the annulment of the June 12, 1993 presidential election as a reference point. Most of the crises and violence have often created a situation that would have led to military incursion into the nation's political process, particularly the 2007 general elections which witnessed widespread violence at both intra and interparty levels. The scale of violence got to a level that even declaring an intention to contest election in Nigeria was a great risk to one's life (Onwudiere and Berwind Dort, 2010). The most dangerous one was the 2011 general election which led to the death of many Nigerian youth corps members on national assignment. This election in particular left more than 800 people dead, as killing and rioting took place in 12 northern states (Onwudire and Berwind Dort, 2010). It started with a widespread protest by supporters of the then main opposition candidate, Muhammadu Buhari, who lost the election to former President Goodluck Jonathan.

### ***The Nature of the Nigerian State***

Nigeria was a British colonial enclave; Britain, our colonial master, forcefully integrated the various traditional political systems and pre-colonial modes at different stages of development into the modern state of economic system. In their process of development, Britain pursued different policies in Northern and Southern Nigeria until the amalgamation of 1914 and the political economy was structured towards satisfying the

needs of the British government. As a matter of fact, Nigeria was made to serve the interest of the British government and this was one of the major reasons for colonization.

The uneven development of the regions resulted in the emergence of the local and regional elite who assumed power or whom the British colonial masters handed power to for their own interest so that even at independence they would continue to make returns to them or serve their interest to the detriment of their own people. The adoption of one-sided federal state and the creation of regions by the colonial state have provided a framework within which the dominant ruling elite sought access to regional power as a basis for their exclusive control over the economic base.

The basic reason for lack of growth and development of the Nigerian State is that the conditions which the British and other capitalist nations put Nigeria or their colonies and the way the British and the rest of them achieved the initial rapid and sustainable growth were quite different from what exists in the third world nations. Most of their policies were that of divide and rule, no surprise that instead of growth spreading throughout the post-colonial state what is obtainable is growth without development. Unfortunately, the political elite to whom they handed over power continue to steal money and take it back to the capitalist nations for safe keeping while their people wallow in hunger and poverty. They see the state as a primary institution for wealth accumulation and as a means of domination and control (Jega, 2000). In fact, this made the state not only the biggest spender of resources but also the largest employer of labour.

The character of the Nigerian state encourages client politics where the state controls opportunities for commerce and a wide range of jobs in every administration. In this struggle, application and commitment to the rule of public service and ethics of the profession are thrown overboard (Egwu, 2005). Thus, political power becomes a license to wealth accumulation and means of security. It is within this context of the dominant role of the state in Nigeria's political economy that one can explain the desperation of Nigerian's governing elite for state power as evident in the naked manipulation of the electoral processes with all kinds of wickedness and impunity. The danger of this process becomes the reason why the political elite struggle to capture political positions in order to control them for their own use. This nevertheless explains the reason for state failure when the wrong persons who are not capable and mature to rule the state capture or ascend to power, hence the manner of their leadership and activities will result to state failure.

### ***Nigerians Poor in the Midst of Plenty***

Nigeria is presently one of the 20 poorest countries in the world with over 70% of the population classified as poor, while 35% live in absolute poverty (Leigh, 2007). Although, Ake (2005) blamed this on the penetration of Western capitalist system, while colonialism bequeathed weakened economy, the corrupt and self-seeking leadership and poor policy decisions of the Nigerian government have destroyed the economic and political potentials of Nigeria.

Nigeria is richly blessed with abundant natural resources capable of making it the most effective state in Africa. Nigeria is the sixth largest oil producer in OPEC and has an estimated proven oil reserve of 36.2 billion barrels; it is the tenth largest in the world, the eight largest exporters of oil and the United States fifth largest source of imported oil (Akindele, 2005). Nigeria has a natural gas reserve of about 182 trillion cubic feet, the seventh largest in the world. Apart from this, its recoverable coal reserve amount to 209

million short tons but produced less than one percent because the coal industry suffers from extremely low productivity and high transportation costs.

In 2002, oil and gas export accounted for more than 98% of export earnings and about 83% of federal government revenues. As at the year 2002, the non-oil sector continues to grow to an estimated rate of about 75% (Akindele 2005). At this time, the power sector reform committee had disclosed that Nigeria has enough gas deposit capable of sustaining uninterrupted electricity supply for 150 years but that a five-year blueprint to revamp the sector would gulp about ₦10,03 trillion in terms of reviving the existing and new projects to achieve regular power supply. According to the report, the Power Holding Corporation of Nigeria (PHCN) has been indebted to gas suppliers to the tune of ₦14 billion as a result of inefficiency and corrupt practices. The committee had discovered that out of the 37,000 workforce, over 15,000 were ghost workers.

Based on the above, Nigeria has no reason to be poor or be classified among the poor states in the world. Corruption is the strongest factor that has dealt a very serious blow to the Nigerian economy. Bribery and corruption have made Nigeria a very notorious state to the extent that most foreign companies in Nigeria make fantastic gains by bribing Nigerian officials to secure contracts. A typical example is the case where a foreign company allegedly gave out ₦767.4 million to bribe officers of the Nigeria National Petroleum Corporation and others to secure contract for the gas project (Akindele, 2005).

### ***Leadership Failure and Development Problems***

Development involves moving from a lower level to a higher state both economically, socially and politically. Those affected by lack of development include the weak, oppressed, deprived, dominated, poverty-stricken and those who are hungry which is a result of leadership problems. Nigeria after 59 years of independence with a huge deposit of mineral resources, the country is still faced with poverty, unemployment and lack of development. Nigeria is the 6<sup>th</sup> world largest producer of crude oil and the Nigerian oil is the second best in the world. Why must the country be poor (Dibua, 2006)? Lack of development has given room to so many agitations, particularly against marginalization, by different ethnic groups. The issue of lack of development has led to various agitations by the Niger Delta region advocating for better recognition and development of the region which has often degenerated into various forms of crisis and violence (Ikelegbe, 2005).

At the emergence of the Fourth Republic in 1999, the hope of most Nigerians was that the political system will develop to the extent that democracy will produce the best leaders for Nigeria, hence sustainable development will be ensured. However, the opposite is the case. Since 1999, there has been the emergence of very influential groups including both military and civilians in government who hijacked the leadership of the country and perpetuate corruption, thereby instituting underdevelopment and poverty for the masses (Fadia and Fadia, 2009).

According to Ihonvbere (2004), the problem of lack of development as a problem of leadership. When the wrong person who never had a good background and training comes to power through election rigging and for the interest of certain group of people known as godfathers, when such a stooge comes to power he uses the state money to service the men that brought him to power and this will continue to promote unemployment, poverty, hunger and underdevelopment (Alemika 2007).

#### **4. Conclusion and Recommendations**

Perhaps if the Nigerian political elite that are highly influential with a high command of resources which they have acquired as a result of their accessibility to the position of authority will realize the purpose of leadership and sacrifice part of the stolen resources for the betterment of the masses, crises and conflicts will at least be mitigated in Nigeria. The issues and factors which lead to killings and wars will be a thing of the past, because it is very much clear that part of the factors that lead to the emergence of Boko Haram religious insurgency is hunger, and poverty. The reason for the emergence of ethnic conflict is hunger and unemployment, while the case of agitation and marginalization is because of underdevelopment. When the government of the day becomes very conservative, non-innovative and occupies itself with luxurious life, parading stolen wealth around while the generality of the people continues to languish in poverty and hunger, crisis will continue to loom. The state will become very volatile and have the potential to trigger violence in any little provocation. Omeje (2006) and Ihonvbere (2004) posited that the Nigerian masses see the political elite as corrupt, irresponsible, unintelligent and unreliable. They see the increasing looting of the treasury and amassing of wealth by the ruling class as illegitimate, illegal and fraudulent practice. With their patrimonial nature of leadership, the ruling class believe that they are untouchable. Most of them use their position as opportunity to acquire wealth. According to Ebin (2009) government in Nigeria is simply an organized framework for looting the national treasury since they know or believe that nothing will happen to them. No wonder electoral process in Nigeria is a do or die affair. It is structured in such a way that those who win take all. It becomes an insurance and life process for wealth. This is the reason that in Nigeria people go to any length to win election because of the benefits that accompany it.

The major problems inherent in Nigerian's political process and leadership struggle are ethnic based. The Nigerian elite use their participation in ethnic activities as a base for their campaign during elections and from this point the seed of hatred and disunity is sowed; when they finally win the election, every attention is directed to their own ethnic group not minding what the constitution says, which, to the writers of this article, is the beginning of corruption, nepotism and sectionalism. Perhaps if the elite will know that they are there to serve every Nigerian, the better things will be for us.

Politics in Nigeria is a money-making venture - the reason elections must be won at all cost. If this do or die attitude is changed and those going into political positions know that they are going there to serve the interests of the people, things will be better.

Corruption and abuse of office have eaten very deep into the very root of most Nigerian political elite. Most of the institutions established to combat corruption are not working to expectation. Such institutions like the EFCC, ICPC, and the Nigeria Police Force are examples. So, if the level of corruption in Nigeria is reduced, the country will be a better place for all of us. This is the reason people go into politics in Nigeria, so that they can steal like others. In Nigeria, politicians who steal money are celebrated, nothing happens to those who steal public funds and those convicted are allowed to go scot-free.

What will solve the leadership problem in Nigeria is for the government to take the case of economic development and empowerment of the youth seriously. Violence and crises occur because the government, both past and present, has failed to provide the enabling environment for the citizens to exercise their rights and make advances in their chosen professions. In most cities of the states of the federation there is no electricity, no good roads and no portable water, while the political elite continue to flaunt their ill-gotten



wealth. Hence, the youth decide to kidnap them in addition to engaging in armed robbery as a source of livelihood.

Finally, the major issues ravaging Nigeria now are the cases of social agitation, resource control and underdevelopment. The idea is that the regions that produce crude oil that is the source of the country's wealth is, however, neglected. Unless the issue of resource control is finalized and solved, the regional crises, issues and problems that gave rise to Niger Delta crisis will continue to raise their ugly head from time to time.

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