O R I G I N A L A R T I C L E

Leadership Dynamics and Peace Development in Nigeria

Patrick Odu Egbeji

Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies,
Nasarawa State University, Keffi, Nigeria.
patrickegbeji@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

There is no gainsaying the fact that the leadership of any society or organisation determines the tempo of peace and development within it. Despite the fact that progress within every society is a combined effort of both the leaders and followers, the responsibility of setting the stage for this to happen rests so much on the leadership incharge at the time. No wonder leaders are either blamed or praised for anything that happens within their reign. The same decimal shows forth in a political setting where the hope of the masses is either sustained or dashed by the quality of leadership involved. Nigeria is a peculiar society that has gained a global spotlight because of the place it occupies not just within the comity of African nations but also within the Black race in the globe. Using the exploratory approach, this paper argues that the quest for peace and development in Nigeria is subservient to the body language of its leadership because peace is a by-product of well-engineered leadership craftsmanship which fosters growth and development. The paper concludes that if Nigeria must enjoy peace and meaningful development, it must ensure that good leadership is borne that would galvanize and properly harnessed its lofty potentials.

Keywords Leadership Dynamics, Peace, Development, Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

Scholars in the academia have been apt in pinpointing leadership as the most critical ingredient in the development of nations. This is not in any way an attempt to disregard the indispensable role of the followers or the masses in the whole development process because as Egbeji (2018) has established in his work on the common good, governance and

patriotism, leaders' performance potentials are stifled when followers do not support them. But then the ability to garner the support of the masses for positive results depends on the ingenuity of the leadership in question because the leader plays the entrepreneur of all the factors involved in development, coordinating them towards the achievement of set goals.

Since the independence of Nigeria in 1960, the polity has been swung in peace and development quagmires because of the problem of leadership. In the effort towards solving this problem and forging for reliable leadership, Nigeria has swung between the democratic and military systems of governance. In spite of its oscillatory history of governance swing, Nigeria today can boast of having had a smooth run of democratic leadership for close to 20 years now after the military regime was *red carded* beginning in 1999 beginning with the Presidency of Olusegun Obasanjo. Although questions are still raised as to the type of democracy practised in Nigeria given that military tendencies still persist in elected leaders, most of whom were former military personnel; people's convictions have remained dogged that democracy would surely hold sway in Nigeria after passing through its present acid test.

It must be pointed out from the very beginning that the Nigerian polity is a peculiar one. As an independent nation, Nigeria is marked by a wide range of diversity in terms of culture, ethnic group, language, religion and politics. Amidst this diversity is the fact that Nigeria is blessed with supra-abundant human and natural resources. This apparent diversity with all the potentials that are inherent in it has made it a complex phenomenon that needs craftsmanship for its management. Obviously, this diversity will explain different interests because of people's differences in traditions and orientation. It takes a gifted leader to ensure that all of the differences are properly managed towards peace and development. This quest for commendable leadership that can manage the complex phenomenon of diversity in Nigeria towards peace and development is what informs this discourse. In the efforts towards this, it is worthwhile to be guided by the following interrogatives: What is the connection between leadership and peace? What are the factors that can prepare leadership and peace for development? What is the situation of leadership and peace in Nigeria? What are the challenges of leadership and peace in Nigeria? How best can leadership be forged to yield peace towards development in Nigeria? An attempt at serious discourse on the above questions among others will better prepare leadership for peace towards development in Nigeria.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LEADERSHIP AND PEACE

Leadership and peace are two dominant concepts that have wide range of interpretation among scholars. As a concept, leadership refers to the act of being a leader. A leader is anybody in the position of authority that guides a particular group, organisation or society towards the attainment of its goals. Leaders are usually those that co-ordinate the resources of the group or society under their care towards the attainment of the common good. At every point and in every setting, a leader is important because as Ozumba (2013, pp. 2) have observed, "a leader is one who exerts unusual influence and considerable power". Odimegwu (2002) sums the central place of a leader as follows: Virtually all human endeavors, be it in the home, corporate, religious and national settings, leadership is the pivot. Every leader has a primary jurisdiction. To the family head, it is his immediate

environment. To the politician, it is those who voted him into office as a reaction of acceptance over his unfolding to the people his manifest of what he will do. For the clergy, it is his parishioners that look up to him for moral and spiritual guidance.

Depending on how leaders carry out their responsibility of governance, they are either considered as good or bad leaders. A good leader is one that yielded positive results in helping the group under his/her care to the attainment of the set goal. On the other hand, a bad leader is one that lacks the managerial ingenuity to guide the group, organisation or society under his/her to the attainment of set goals. Peace, on the other hand, is a more difficult concept to define. Two broad ways of understanding are common among scholars: positive and negatives interpretations of peace respectively. Positive peace refers to a situation where individuals or groups can live in a manner that facilitates the development of their full potentials per their needs and wishes. In this state of positive peace, social institutions do not promote economic exploitation, poverty, and political repression. On the other hand, Negative peace connotes the absence of war or other associated forms of directly organized violence such as physical harm. Structural violence does not exist in a state of positive peace. Structural violence amounts to the institutionalization of mechanisms of inequality of opportunity directed against a particular group and its actual implementation (Agada, 2018, pp. 52-53).

Generally, a society is said to be peaceful when occasions of conflict or violence of any kind are reduced to a minimum. In such a setting, people of different interests and orientation are able to co-exist harmoniously and the common good is at play. Agada suggests this when he adds that "peace is considered to be consensual when an agreement is reached that ends hostilities or violence and when as a consequence a new relationship based on mutual trust, harmonious interaction, and positive interdependence is achieved" (2018, pp. 53). The negation of peace is the case when there are crises of different sort in a society impeding co-existence and the pursuit of the common good.

There is no doubt that there is a correlation between leadership and peace. The state of any society as either peaceful or conflict-ridden depends on how the leaders run it. This role of leaders is more critical in complex setting because they are dealing with people of different interests. When these interests are not met or where there is a suspicion that one group or some groups are favoured at the expense of others, there is certainly going to be conflict which disrupts peace. Although peace is participatory process, the arbiter for this participation is leadership. Little wonder then that heads of societies are held responsible for whatever happens during their period of reign.

From the foregoing, it implies that leaders play a special role in ensuring peace in society. Leaders must have the charismatic quality of balancing the needs of those they lead. One of the best ways of doing this is ensuring that the common good is at the centre of all they do. The common good refers to the sum total of social conditions which allow people, either as groups or as individuals, to reach their fulfillment more fully and more easily (Ilo 2018, pp. 287). Egbeji adds: "The common good principle expects that the good of all be sought in spite of the differences that exist among peoples. By this standard, the common good principle becomes a uniting force for concocting integration among people with apparent diversity" (2018, pp. 530). Thus, in a society where the common good is at work,

all members of the society no matter their divergent interests are given a sense of belong. As a consequence, this sense of belong predisposes them better to be patriotic. This is where peace building rears its head as a participatory process that involves both the leaders and the led.

FACTORISING LEADERSHIP AND PEACE FOR DEVELOPMENT

Leadership and peace are essential factors in societal development. It is no surprise that Pickus (2013) states in her editorial that "across different sectors and diverse geographies, leadership has always been an integral element to driving progress." This should not come as a surprise because peace in a society is only guaranteed by the quality of leadership in play. Different dispositions are necessary for leaders to bring about progress. This progress is always a by-product of peace which is engineered by good leadership for peace development because as Olaniawo underscores, "good leadership generates effective process of transformation" (2016, pp. 397). It goes without asking what it means to have good leadership for peace. Suggesting and answer to such an inquiry could come from both the positive and negative angels.

Positively, good leadership for peace development could mean creating conditions from the scratch that are reflective of the common good. Such is what obtains in societies that have dependable structures for sustainable development. Bringing this to bear on governance abhors sectional tendencies which could result in clash of interests. No attempt is made here to assume that it is possible to build a society where there is complete absence of conflict. Rather, it is a suggestion it is possible to build a society that conflict is reduced to its barest minimum.

From the negative angle, leadership for peace could involve an attempt at diagnosing the conditions that make a society volatile and finding reasonable solution to them to avoid conflicts. This is what Satterwhite, Miller and Sheridan (2017, pp. 67) refer to "…characteristics and practices embodied by leaders who work to minimize violence and conflict". Thus, good leadership will find out what could be the cause of the clash of interests among diverse people, why agitations from certain segments of the society. The whole concern does not end at findings, but also at evolving strategies to tackle the problems found. When this is done, the leadership creates an atmosphere where everyone has a sense of belonging. However, there is need too for the leadership to be remarkable to be able to exude such insightful qualities whether from the positive or negative ends. In other words, good leadership is necessary for peace, and where there is peace, development is a possibility. This is precisely where leadership and development have a connection. The truth about this is corroborated by Ohazuruike (2018, pp. 234) as follows: "Historically, no nation of the world grew and enjoyed steady development in virtually all spheres of its national life without experiencing good selfless leadership. This is largely because qualitative growth and development has [have] always been an outcome of good governance initiated and guided by exemplary leadership". It is the same point that Ajayi (2006, pp. 44) echoes when he observes that "leadership is one of the essential determinants of development and a core ingredient in organizing, mobilizing and inspiring societal resources for the attainment of goals".

The role of good leadership to development has always given people reasons to blame their leaders when things go wrong with the societies of their jurisdictions (Enor& Edor & Odok 2010; Chime, 2015; Edor 2016). Little wonder then that it has been avered that "… the greatest problem of humanity is that of leadership despite the technological, scientific and economic advancement in the global context" (Ozumba 2013, pp. 1). By implication, good leadership holds the secret to peace which allows development a chance. Development will remain a mirage for any society that is bereft of good leadership or devoid of peace. Leadership and peace are necessary ingredients for the overall development of any society.

AN ASSESSMENT OF THE LEADERSHIP AND PEACE SITUATION IN NIGERIA

It is not easy to sketch a perfect assessment of leadership and peace situation in Nigeria because Nigeria has a history of leadership that swings between military and democratic types. Since its independence, leadership has always been the bane of development given that other factors including peace rest so much on it. At every transition point in Nigeria political history, prospective successors have always considered themselves as being on a rescue mission made necessary by the failure of the incumbents (Ogar 2012; Ogar & Ogar 2019). With ease, these leaders pinpoint different areas of failure of the government they want to succeed is culpable and why they need to come in to save the situations. Going down memory lane, up to the present time, there have been four stretches of civilian democratic governance and republics (1963-1966, 1979-1983, 1993 and 1999-Present) which were intermittently disrupted by some military, political, economic and social forces in 1966, 1983, and 1993 (Obioha 2016, pp. 252).

Since the time of Independence, Nigeria has struggled for leadership that would guarantee peace to no avail. Indeed, leadership is a major problem in Nigeria because as Wambutda (1991, pp. 16) has noted, "Nigeria is certainly in desperate need of good leadership, for the constant change in the leadership in our history clearly testifies that we are a people groping in the dark, searching and yearning for a more reliable form of government – government which is fair, just, and caring enough to evoke spontaneous patriotism from the citizenry". This is so because in each dispensation, the manner of governance has always divided the people along ethnic and religious lines. Such divisions have always raised suspicion among the diverse people that make up Nigeria. It is either the leadership in-charge is nepotistic or sectional. This outcry has often come in the area of appointments to top government positions. Many people are aggrieved that they are being marginalized because they fall under the category considered as the minority and this deprives them of many *goodies* others seen as the majority enjoy. The resultant effect of this situation has often been conflicts that have shaken the polity to its bone marrow.

Beyond the major factor of sectionalism in all its forms, leadership in Nigeria has also affected the peace situation in the polity as a result of its inability to deliver in many areas. Mismanagement arising of leadership positions occupied by incompetent figures who are incapable of driving the country to its desired level of sustainable development is a key factor. There issues that concern lack of transparency and accountability and the like. These

negative indices among others associated with leadership in Nigeria have left the polity in the state of turmoil.

Objectively, Nigeria at present has not enjoyed its desired peace. The polity has had to face the problem of insecurity which is the highpoint of the lack of peace. There is no gainsaying that Nigeria is today witnessing one of the most excruciating moments of insecurity in its history. In the North-East is the *Boko Haram* terrorism and in the NigerDelta is militancy. The North-Central and beyond has been coloured with herdsmenfarmers attacks and across the nation is the problem of kidnapping. Generally, one can confidently underscore that Nigeria's peace situation is precarious. This unfortunate situation may have come as a result of a combination of factors, but leadership bears the most blames because it is leadership that determines the working of other factors. Here, an analogy of what the entrepreneur does to other factors of production perfectly captures the role of leadership in societal development. It is worthwhile, therefore, to take a look at the challenges associated with leadership and peace in Nigeria.

LEADERSHIP AND PEACE CHALLENGES IN NIGERIA

There is no gainsaying the fact that Nigeria has leadership and peace challenges. These challenges have stampeded the nation's efforts in marching with its counterparts across the globe in terms of maintaining sustainable development. The extent of these challenges is expressed in the relationship between leadership and peace, given that the former prepares the ground for the latter and the latter shows forth as the by-product of the former. From the perspective of leadership, it is easy to discover how difficult it is to pinpoint a particular style as the most appropriate in Nigeria. Going down memory lane and mapping Nigeria political history from the period of Independence in 1960, it could be revealed that Nigeria has tasted both the military and democratic systems of government. During the military regime, there was a craving for a transition to the democratic government. All of this was done with the conviction that the situation of the country was going to be better-off. However, experience seems to have proven this assumption wrong as leadership scorecards have shown similar results over the years.

An objective assessment of leadership will show evident corruption in the form of misappropriation of resources (human and material), nepotism in terms of religion and ethnicity, miscarriage of justice, oppression and/or maginalisation of the weak and minorities, disrespect for human life and dignity and the like. These debasing indices permeate all facets of the national life given their supposed institutionalization by the leadership cadre (Ajor & Erim 2011; Ajor & Odey 2018). The insitutionalisation of these unethical and debasing shades by the leadership of the country does not necessarily need to be official to hold them culprit, but the fact that its body language shows no signs of rebuke is enough. It may be argued that various dispensations have had structures to check such excesses and unethical acts such as War Against Indiscipline, Rebranding, Change and so on, but the truth of the matter is that most of these structures stand on corrupt foundations which make their efforts counterproductive. There is no way that structures standing on corrupt foundations can produce results different from the foundations that hold them in being.

The consequence of the failure of leadership in Nigeria has left the polity constantly unstable because there is an apparent displacement of order in the scheme of things (Ajor & Erim 2010). Thus, the security of the country is volatile and various uprisings are a common phenomenon. The concept of security is all-encompassing. It involves the availability of the basic needs of life (food, clothing and shelter), justice and fairness in the conduct of the affairs of society, the protection of life and property, the provision of a level playing ground and convivial atmosphere for the development of the individual and by extension the larger community. When all these are lacking, there is no guarantee for peace. It requires, therefore, that the leadership does its function in ensuring that these necessities for peace are in their right perspectives.

LEADERSHIP FOR PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

The position of this treatise is that leadership has a central role to play in the quest for peace and development in Nigeria. In other words, the mode of leadership in a society determines the society's physiognomy in terms of peace and development. Leadership in Nigeria must make necessary adjustment to ensure that peace and development are guaranteed a fertile ground to flourish. This may require a number of steps. First and foremost, leadership must be the function of competent citizens. This goes a long way to stress the importance of leadership education for prospective leaders. In addition to this education, those who assume leadership positions should emanate from the will of the people. True leaders are not forced on the people; they emerge from the people's will. The democratic setting allows room for that to happen through elections. Unfortunately, the Nigerian setting has shown that leadership is commodity that could be bought even by those whom society knows full well have no capacity and ability to lead. This situation must be nailed to ensure that only competent and authentic leaders emerge or occupy the corridors of power.

In frank terms, one the process of raising leaders is immune from the inadequacies it has been submerged in over the years in Nigeria, there is sure hope that the emerging leaders will deliver the goods of the society to the citizens. Thus, such leaders must make their hallmark the pursuit of the common good. This becomes an antithesis to the individualistic cum selfish attitude of leaders that has not guaranteed the country peace and development. In the spirit of the spirit of the common good, Nigerian leaders will give all the citizens a sense of belonging not minding your ethnic, religious or political affiliations. In other words, all citizens will be treated with equality, justice and fairness. As a result of this, the leaders will ensure that the needs of the different people(s) in the society are attended with undue attention to some at the expense of others. This is where the polity can be guaranteed of appreciable level of sustainable peace and development. Nigerian leaders must be morally upright and exude integrity of character that would enable them fight corruption wherever it rears its head. This implies that they must be exemplary in the conduct of their affairs and give no room for any suspicion of foul play. It is within this frame of thinking that double standard will not be promoted and equality before the law will reign supreme. By entrenching this attitude into the system, unethical practices such as nepotism in all its forms and injustice will not have any place in the polity.

CONCLUSION

Leadership remains an indispensable factor for peace in human society. The world will continue to struggle in its effort towards peace unless good leaders are recruited across the nations in the globe to man societal affairs. Our world has continued to remain volatile because of failure of leadership in one way or the other. Nigeria's struggle to attain peace has been subject to constant setback because leadership has not lived up to expectation. This has had severe consequences for development because failure of leadership has swung the polity into a lot of mess. The way out of this mess is simply a reorientation and repositioning of the leadership structures in Nigeria in order to give peace a chance for development to ensue. These leaders much establish structures of peace involving justice and the pursuit of the common good. It is only under such conditions that peaceful coexistence can be possible in a multi-linguistic, multi-ethnic and multi-religious Nigerian context. The many problems besetting Nigeria today will continue to plague the polity unless the leadership problem is redressed. There is no possibility of peace in a complex society like Nigeria without reliable and good leadership.

REFERENCES

Agada, J. E. (2018). "Exploring Peace Education for Consensual Peace Building in Nigeria." *Walden University Scholar Works: Walden Dissertation and Doctoral Studies Collections,* 2008. Scholarworks.waldenu.edu/dissertations.

Ajayi, R. (2006). The Role of INEC, ICPC and EFCC in Combating Political Corruption. *Money, Politics and Corruption in Nigeria.* Abuja: Garki Press, 2006.

Ajor, J. O. Colonialism and Rural Labour Migration Among Bekwarra 1940-1960. *Journal of Religion, Culture and Society, 1/1, 84*, 88.

Ajor, J. O., & Erim, P. O. (2010). The Canoe Craft of the Ogoja People in a Survival Battle in Colonial Nigeria. ABIBISEM: Journal of African Culture and Civilization, 3(1).

Ajor, J. O., & Odey, J. S. (2018). History: The epicentre of national integration. *Lwati: A Journal of Contemporary Research*, *1*

Ajor, J. O., Erim, P. O., & Majuk, S. E. (2011). Colonial Challenge to the Ogoja Salt Industry, Eastern Nigeria. *Lwati: A Journal of Contemporary Research*, *8*(2).

Edor, J. A., & Odok, J. E. (2010). The Marxian School of Law and the Nigerian Legal System. The International Researcher, *4*(1), 91-100.

Edor, J. E. (2005). The inductive predicament as an indispensable sable evil for practical life. *Sophia: An African Journal of Philosophy*, *8*(1), 110-115.

Edor, J. E. (2016). Capital punishment: focus on the sanctity of human life in (Boki), Africa. Sapientia: Journal of Philosophy, *8*(1), 86-102.

Egbeji, P. O. (2018). "The Common Good Principle, the Masses and Leadership: Igniting Patriotism for Effective Governance in Africa of the 21st Century." *Humanities and the Burden of Governance: Proceedings of the 1st International Conference of the Faculty of Arts, Nasarawa State University, Keffi,* 527-534.

Enor, F. N., & Chime, J. (2015). Reflections on revolution in theory and practice. *Pyrex Journal of History and Culture*, *1*(2), 13-16.

Eyo, E. B., & Ojong, F. O. (2008). Peace and conflict resolution as a foundation for national development. *Sophia: An African Journal of Philosophy*, *11*(1).

Ilo, S. C. (2018). *The Face of Africa: Looking Beyond Shadows.* Spectrum Books Limited.

Mendie, P. J., & Eyo, E. (2016). Environmental Challenges And Axiology: Towards A Complementary Studies In Eco-Philosophy. *Journal of Integrative Humanism*, *7*(1), 144-150.

Obioha, E. E. (2016). Role of the Military in Democratic Transitions and Succession in Nigeria. *International Journal of Social Sciences and Humanity Studies,* 8(1).

Odimegwu, F. (2002). "Leadership: Responsibilities and Imperatives." *Nibrew News*, 40(1).

Ogar, J. N. (2008). A revisitation of the question of truth. *Sophia: An African Journal of Philosophy*, *10*(2).

Ogar, J. N., & Ogar, T. E. (2019). An Appraisal Of Globalization And Its History. *Cogito*, *11*(3), 182-195.

Ohazuruike, K. (2018). "Leadership and National Development in Nigeria." *PACEM Journal of Peace and Development,* Vol. 1, No. 1, 2018: 233-246.

Olaniawo, N. S. (2016). "Leadership and Accountability in Oyo State: An Appraisal of the Performance of the Muslim Governors (1999-2007)" Conference Proceedings of the 1st Annual Conference of the Department of Islamic Studies, Nasarawa State University, Keffi, 397-406.

Ozumba, M. C. (2013). Bethrand Okafor and Martins Solomon Udom. "Plato and the Leadership Question: An Evaluation of Philosopher-King within the Nigerian Political Structure." *The Nigerian Academic Forum*, 20(1), 1-8.

Pickus, K. (2013). The Critical Role of Leadership in Driving Social Innovation. *Scroll*

Satterwhite, R. M., Whitney M., Sheridan, K. (2017). Leadership for Sustainability and Peace: Responding to the Wicked Challenges of the Future.

Sowcik, M. (2015). *Leadership 2050: Contextualizing Global Leadership Processes for the Future*. Bingley, United Kingdom: Emerald Group Publishing Limited, 59-74.

Wambutda, D. (1991). "Leadership and Biblical Studies." *African Journal of Biblical Studies,* iv (1).