

**QUO VADIS NIGERIA? A PHILOSOPHICAL INTERROGATION OF A NATION IN GRIP OF
POLITICAL INCOMPETENCE**

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ABSTRACT

Why are the Nigerian youths, in great numbers, migrating to Western nations and many other African countries today? Again, why does the rate of insecurity in Nigeria continue to increase daily? In many parts of the country, citizens cannot sleep with both eyes closed due to the menace of bandits, unknown gunmen, and deadly Fulani herdsmen terrorists. These groups kill innocent Nigerians in Benue, Jos, Kogi, Enugu, and Ebonyi, while widespread kidnappings occur in many other areas, with perpetrators demanding ransom payments. Boko Haram terrorists are also unleashing deadly attacks on citizens, pushing the Nigerian state closer to stagnation and near collapse – what some described as the threshold of a failed state. Inflation is alarmingly high, reflected in the soaring prices of goods and services, the high cost of food items, chronic electricity shortages, and skyrocketing fuel and diesel prices. The exchange rate of the Naira to the Dollar is equally disturbing. Nigeria is often referred to as the “Giant of Africa” due to its land mass, abundant human capital, and rich natural and human resources. However, these advantages have not translated into improved living conditions for the average Nigerians. This paradox is largely attributable to poor leadership, systemic corruption, and political incompetence among Nigeria’s ruling elites. Yet, amidst the current calamity and widespread hardship, the All Progressive Congress (APC) - led government appears unbothered. Rather than focusing on alleviating the sufferings of people, their preoccupation seems to be securing victory in the year 2027 general elections. This is deeply troubling as it raises the question, how many citizens will still be alive by then, if the present situation remains unchanged? Using Philosophical analysis as our methodology, this paper undertakes a critical interrogation of the Nigerian state, guided by the Latin question: “Quo Vadis?” (Where are you going?). In our analysis, we examine the fundamental causes of the Nigeria’s decline and propose viable solutions and the way forward. With these recommendations - centered on ethical leadership and productive governance- we hope that, like St. Peter who, upon asking Jesus this question, turned back and embrace the crucibles of the discipleship, Nigeria too will turn back from the brink and move towards genuine democratic leadership, good governance, and economic prosperity for its citizens.

Key words: Philosophy, Nigeria, Leadership, Political Incompetence, democracy and Development.

INTRODUCTION

African countries have been known for poor governance and corruption and that has been the secret of African underdevelopment, however, rather than dwelling only on this generalization, it good to note that few African countries are really trying their best as globally good governance is a corner stone for sustainable progress and societal well being and some African countries are actively working to make sure they get it right. Basing on world economics and low corruption level, we can count: Mauritius, Namibia, South Africa, Botswana, Ghana, Senegal, Malawi, Lesotho, Burkina Faso and Gambia. One may be expecting to see Nigeria in this list as it’s the giant of Africa, never and it’s quite a pity. Nigeria faces significant challenges in achieving good governance and sustainable development. Despite its status as Africa’s largest economy and population, while Nigeria has made giant strides towards democracy since the end of military rule in 1999, issues like corruption, weak democratic institutions and human capital limitations continues to hinder the progress. The countries’ performance in government and development, ranks lower compared to many other African nations. Particularly in areas like transparency and poverty reduction¹ More facts about Nigeria is that it consistently ranks poorly on Transparency International’s Corruption Perceptions Index, indicating systemic corruption that undermines development Index² and have governance challenges owing to weak institutions, lack of accountability and limited citizen participation in governance which remain a significant hurdles.³ In its socio- economic issues, one sees that despite its economic potentials, Nigeria grapples with high poverty rates, limited job creation and inadequate human capital development.⁴ In comparism other countries in Africa , one notices that while Nigeria has the largest economy in Africa, it lags behind some other nations in terms of human development indicators like : education and health and in overall governance.⁵ Nigeria has demonstrated leadership in regional affairs, particularly in its support for liberation movement in South Africa ⁶ There is recognition that Nigeria has the

potential to leverage its resources and human capital for better development outcomes through improved governance and leadership.⁷ We now first define the basic concepts in this work and plunge into deep analysis as well.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS:

“**Quo Vadis?**” - This is a Latin phrase that translates to “Where are you going? It is famously associated with a legend in Christian tradition where St. Peter, fleeing persecution in Rome, encounters Jesus and asks him this question. Jesus replies that he is going to Rome to be crucified again, prompting Peter to return to the city and face martyrdom.⁸ Equiparating this to the Nigerian nation, one sees that Nigeria just like Jesus is equally going somewhere, but Jesus mission is positive and it’s for salvific purposes, but looking at Nigerian nation being led by corrupt leaders and seeing the way Nigeria is moving and the horrible things happening: inflation, hunger, insecurity, corruption among other things, one sees immediately that its mission is never for the prosperity of its citizens and if it’s not redirected, it may land to a failed state as it has already gotten half of the characteristics. Nigeria is no longer in charge of its territory and it’s the third among the most terrorized and kidnapping countries in the world. Banditry has taken over some areas of the country and even (its oil), the most important source of foreign exchange revenue is now 80% stolen and only 20% is accounted for and it’s the only country that is not meeting up its OPEC quota. Again, Nigeria is no longer in control of its economy, and in a country of around 200 million, over 100 million people are living in poverty and more than 70 million people are not working and its unemployment and under employment are the worst in the whole world. This is the cumulative effect of its leadership failure over the years.

NIGERIAN BAD LEADERSHIP: A THREAT TO DEVELOPMENT

Nigeria – It’s the most populous country in Africa and it is located at the western coast of Africa. It is bordered to the north by Niger, to the east by Chad and Cameroon, to the South by the gulf of Guinea of Atlantic Ocean, and to the West by Benin Republic. Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba are the major tribes and have other prominent tribes like: Fulani, Ibibio, Efik and the likes. Almost since her Independence in 1960, bad leadership and corruption have been its greatest challenges to development till date. Bad leadership has been the bane of Nigerian underdevelopment. Nigeria is a product of strange amalgamation of about 250 ethnic groups in 1914 by a representative of British imperial majesty, Sir, Lord Lugard. Nigeria gained independence in 1960 and became a republic in 1963. So, the federal republic of Nigeria can be traced to British and Roman colonialism (Roman colonized British) and this link explained the modeling of Nigeria constitution after European concept of law and justice. Therefore, on paper, Nigerian constitutional law provides the principle that could sustain good governance and ensure a just and egalitarian society because it was an offshoot of English law. For instance the popular law of general will was the basis for 1999 Nigerian constitution, a thorough look at the Nigerian constitution will show that all the major concepts of Rousseau’s General will is contained in the Nigerian constitution, of which if applied and implemented, the problems and issues of bad leadership will be a thing of the past. This bad leadership is also the root of some ethnic crises in the country.

In a clearer elucidation of Nigerian democracy, one sees that the political class or the managers of democratic governance in Nigeria are ill equipped or ill disposed to render selfless services to the country. They submerged the general will to an individual class will or sectional will. The executives are draconian, corrupt and incompetent; this is evident in eight years Buhari’s regime. The legislatures are sycophants and ill equipped to perform the function of check and balances on the executives while the judiciary is afraid to render justice. The concern for positive change and transformation arose out of the way successive government have dethroned general will and substituted it for individual will while piloting the affairs of the country. Nigerian politicians are bereft of the idea of good governance. This stemmed from the age longed practice of god-fatherism which encourages the enthronement of stooges. This scenario enables people with less moral standard to bastardize and loot the treasury for their self-aggrandizement and personal gain. Men of proven integrity, ability, zeal and determination who can better the lot of the masses are discouraged from aspiring to lead by such vices as god-fatherism, rigging of election, kidnapping, elimination of dissenting voices and opposition. Nigerian 2023 Presidential election is best fitted example. The aforementioned ills have inflicted Nigerians with apathy and lackadaisical attitudes towards political institution and consequently eroded their confidence on this institution of governance. The reality nowadays is this docility, apathy, and inaction by the Nigerians is certainly creating on an enabling environment or terrain for more bad leaders in Nigerian political arena, which now is a major avenue for them to get rich instantly. Corruption is the major factor militating African development especially in Nigeria. Ehuasani writes that:

Nigeria has been stripped naked by corrupt, greedy and callous elites. They have been humiliated, pauperized and reduced to a state of destitute by the combined forces of military dictatorship, political subterfuge, economic profligacy and moral degeneracy.⁹

The Nigerian state is corrupt and has been managed and even presently been managed by corrupt leaders who have made the state an instrument of capital accumulation rather than using it for the interest or for the development of the citizenry. Africans and Nigerians may have a good plan for development, but as is supervised by corrupt leaders, they can hardly do a thorough job as corruption and development are antithetical.

FRANTZ FANON AND HIS WARNING ON AFRICAN POLITICAL ELITES

Fanon criticizes African elites for replicating the exploitative structures of colonialism after independence, rather than fostering genuine national liberation and development. He argues that African political elites are now national bourgeoisie that are now focused on personal enrichment and maintenance of power, rather than serving the need of the masses they just use the same method of exploitation as they are now new exploiter and neo colonizers.¹⁰ And indeed, that is really what many of African leaders are.

He criticized the political parties formed by these elites for the lack of genuine nationalism. Ab initio it will look like it represents the broader population, while in action it only represents a small group of local exploiters who have made a deal with former colonizers.¹¹ Fanon highlights the social division created by the political elites, that is, the gap between the urban dwellers (politicians themselves) and the rural dwellers.¹² Failure to address western influence, these elites prioritize their own interest over the need of the nation.¹³ Aggression and Assimilation is another point, as they use the aggression of the colonial, instead of challenging colonial power structure, they assimilate it and use it for individual interest. Talking of violence as a tool, he holds that the colonized may resort to violence as to be free and the violence will be just to dismantle the colonial system and not simply replicating its oppressive structures.¹⁴ In his critique of national culture, he holds that a true national culture cannot exist under colonial domination and that the struggle for national liberation is intrinsically linked to the creation of a new culture.¹⁵

PHILOSOPHY AND PLATO'S PHILOSOPHER KING AND EDUCATION

Philosophy/Philosophical Assessment and Philosophy of Life - Philosophers are not in agreement on the meaning of philosophy, however, there are common grounds among philosophers pertaining to the etymology of the word 'philosophy' as one may see in many philosophical texts. Martin Heidegger says that "philosophy speaks Greek"¹⁶. Etymologically, the word "philosophy" comes from two Greek words joined together: "philos" and "Sophia". *philein*-to love, *philos*- loving, *philia*- love, *sophos*-wise, *Sophia*-wisdom. Hence, we can say, "*philosophia est philia tes Sophias*"- "philosophy is love of wisdom. A philosopher is a lover of wisdom, a person strongly desirous of wisdom. Wisdom here begins with wonder that is, astonishment. This kind of wonder is not ordinary wonder but of deep curiosity. An embracing wonder, that is, wonder about things in totality and not in bits by bits. Plato says, "It is through wonder that those who began philosophy started off" Also, "The sense of wonder is the mark of a philosopher"¹⁷ Philosophers wonder about things through reflective thinking. They wonder about things through their ultimate causes or from their fundamental point of view. Hence, the scholastics define philosophy as "*Scientia rerum per ultimas causas*" which means "Science of everything through their ultimate causes."¹⁸ based on the light of reason.

Philosophy is a critical reflection on the realities in the universe; this includes the human person himself or herself. For C. B. Okolo, philosophy is a "critical enterprise, something dynamic, a quest, a search ..., a spirit of evaluative inquiry into all area of human experience, of the world in which we live, of man himself and his place in the universe."¹⁹ He further contends that it is the duty of philosophy to give a "coherent and systematic account of the multifaceted universe of being and knowledge of what is, and how man knows it."²⁰ This implies that philosophy covers every aspect of human endeavors. In other words, it studies the whole of reality. Thus, it is most ambitious. **Philosophical assessment** is to apply the tools of critique and objective scrutiny in its assessment of its subject matter. The focus here is on the phenomenon Nigerian and poor governance from its bad and corrupt leaders. Finally, **Philosophy of Life** - is a personal framework for understanding the world and one's place in it, encompassing beliefs about existence, values, purpose, and how to live²¹ Philosophy of life is a set of core ideas that guides a person's thoughts, feelings and actions, often developing in response to life's big questions. In a nutshell, it is a group of core ideas that governs everything a person thinks, feels and does.²² These core ideas develop as our responses to the big questions of life or existential riddles life asks each of us. A life philosophy is like a car engine or computer operating

system, these are somehow hidden and invisible, but, whether we interact with them or not, they are always there and making everything to work. Life philosophy pilots one's affairs in life.

Plato and the Philosopher Kings - From Plato's Republic which talks about the ideal state, one sees the classes of citizen in the ideal state: the rulers (the philosopher kings) the guardians (the soldiers) and the artisans or the common people. Plato's division of state is in line with his Psychology, where one sees the tripartite soul.²³ First is the rational part which has the virtue of wisdom, the spirited part which goes for the virtue of courage and finally the appetitive part which goes for food and drinks. The harmonization of these classes of citizen or these parts of the soul brings about justice. Talking of **Justice in Plato**, Plato holds justice is found in the state. For him, justice is summed up by organization or system in which each class performs its function or role according to his ability for the good of the whole, without arrogating to itself the role belonging to others. For Plato, the guardians or the rulers should be given extra and well informed education, so as to be able to lead the society. Plato's thoughts of guardian rulers in his Republic emphasized that education is a major criterion more or less a stepping stone for citizen to step into the class for rulers proper. They are also expected to pass through qualitative higher education system, which will enable them perform their functions. This higher education system is absolutely necessary, because, this will in the end produce what Plato regards to as philosopher kings who will be at the helm of affairs.

Plato holds that it is compulsory for rulers to have passed through higher education training. And he holds too that society cannot grow into a reality until philosophers become kings or kings and rulers truly become philosophers. Philosopher king is useful to the world's political system and the present day leadership since it aims at the production of incorruptible and competent leaders at the helm of affairs in the state. Governance of incompetent and bad leaders lead to mis- management, corruption and economic depression as it is the case with the present day Nigerian nation. When one looks at Nigeria and its citizens and of course the way things are going on, one understands that the only remedy to Nigerian defacto situation is for both Nigerian politicians as well as the citizens to come out of the cave, especially the cave of ignorance, corruption and bad leadership and of course bad followership. They are to embrace education, to be well educated and to be critical. Plato's educational ideas are rooted in his philosophical thinking.

Plato placed premium on Education - In Republic, Plato portrays that education makes students not only to be thinkers but critical thinkers; it makes them to be philosophers. The ability or capacity to think critically helps one to solve certain problems, be it political, religious, and academic and the likes. From Plato's idealism, especially in his Allegory of the cave, one learns that the experience outside the cave will enable man to be critical, so as not to accept anything just because others are accepting such, but to seek a deeper meaning of realities. Plato's educational ideas are rooted in his philosophical thinking which is connected with his views on the nature of the state and the end which the citizen should strive to attain. Not minding that Plato's communism seems to be utopic and can hardly practiced anywhere, but his educational views served as a point of departure for Hellenistic school and his educational ideas are still valid till date as education till date does the work of information, formation and reformation.

Plato, came up with his communism and elevated the rulers much as he was very surprise that enormous consideration were not placed on the task of governance, especially on preparation of citizens for the awesome task or duty of governance. Ignorance is almost taking precedence as there were no state sponsored education to enable people participates with knowledge and intelligence, especially on the part of Athenian rulers or rulers of the state, which is the bed rock of good governance. The task of education, Plato holds is to make each person to perform most competently and most efficiently the functions of the class he belongs. Education is a powerful instrument for reconstruction of the state and for the social, political and economic development. Education is still relevant even in our modern time, as it draws out or turn the eyes of the soul from darkness to light, by this, Plato meant leading the person from darkness of the cave of ignorance into the limelight of knowledge. Not just like pouring water into a bowel, no, education helps the individual to discover knowledge through his own reasoning process to equip him to be useful to the society. Education aims at producing individuals that have the knowledge of the Good.

NIGERIA POLITICAL INCOMPETENCE AND ITS CONCEQUENCIES

An elucidation of Nigerian leadership reveals that it has largely been driven by incompetent political actors-particularly during the final years of its military regimes and more notably in the past decade of its fourth republic. The prophetic warnings of Frantz Fanon have found tragic fulfillment in the Nigerian political elite. As Fanon predicted, many post independent African leaders transformed their leadership into a new form of colonialism-new colonialism- serving their own interest rather than those of their people. These leaders have not only looted and

collapsed the national treasury into their private coffers, but they also continue to borrow from foreign nations such as United States, France, China, and others. What is most painful is that these loans are rarely directed towards productive investments or long term development projects. Instead, the borrowed funds are often used for unproductive consumption- purchasing private jets for the president and vice president, acquiring bullet proof vehicles for executives, legislators, members of the judiciary, and ministers, among other self serving expenditures. Even worse, in some cases, funds are borrowed simply to be shared among themselves. The legislature, rather than serving its constitutional role of oversight and checks and balances, has become what many Nigerians now described as a “rubber- stamp” body. Lawmakers hastily approve loan request from the executive branch with little or no scrutiny. These political allies, acting as modern day neo-colonialists, often resides part-time overseas. Their children are educated abroad, their families live comfortably in foreign countries, and they use looted public funds to finance lavish lifestyle and acquire expensive properties abroad. Frequent international travels- funded by the national travels- only further underscore their detachment from the realities faced by the ordinary Nigerians. It’s owing to the above reasons that they usually see no need of developing the country, building good schools, health care systems and other infrastructures and whenever a huge amount is mapped out for all these projects, they must find ways to collapse the whole money into their pockets. This is indeed the level Nigeria have been and it is still in this level today as the Tinubu government is getting to be the worst ever.

The ideology of Philosopher King as the best to rule is feeble to the political elites of Nigeria, instead of thinking along that side, Nigerian seems to practice not only gerontocracy, but it’s practicing kakistocracy as observed since a decade. An attempt to get a good leader in the past 2023 presidential election was marred by the Buhari APC government by using Independence National Electoral Commission (INEC) chairman to rape the masses of a good presidential candidate (Mr. Peter Obi) they voted for²⁴. Going through tribunal, one sees that Nigerian tribunal is not the hope of a common man as they have been compromised by the corrupt leaders who appointed the judges. Nigeria is fast running to a failed state owing to incompetence and some of the consequences are seen below.

Political Incompetency – Political incompetence is of the major factor that drives Nigeria nation fast into its doom. It was witnessed during military regime and was witnessed also during democratic regime especially in the APC government of Buhari and Tinubu, it is witnessed in the economic management characterized by recession and inflation, youths unemployment and over-dependent on Nigerian crude oil without diversification of economy. Other areas of incompetence are security failure which is on its apex now and in ethno- religious and regional bias which the two presidents championed most. Again is in poor anti corrupt records and recently Tinubu was declared to be third most corrupted person in the world. The tenures are known with weak democratic institutions.

Education Decline- Example, during Buhari tenure, There was a serious under funding of education sector in budget allocation, and he always placed unqualified minister. There is neglect of schooling infrastructure, obsolete curriculum, frequent and prolonged strike owing to government failure to meet up with agreement, poor quality and teacher crisis. There is exodus of students outside the country, thus an avenue for brain drain. Again, digital divide and COVID-19 setbacks and policy inconsistencies are all the outcome of poor governance.

Judicial Compromise – With Buhari and Tinubu governments, there is no administration of justice in Nigeria as there are executive suppression and intimidation of the judiciary, pervasive corruption, insecurity, poor standard of legal education in Nigeria.

Health care failure – this is owing to inadequate funding, poor infrastructure and shortage of healthcare professionals. Thus, the cumulative imports are poor health outcomes, including high infant and maternal mortality rate. Other challenges are inequitable distribution, weak referral system and a lack of essential medical supplies, inadequate health Insurance coverage, corruption and mis- management.

LEADERSHIP AND DEMOCRATIC LEADERSHIP PARADIGM

Leadership is an action of leading a group of people or an organization. It’s the ability of an individual, group or organization to lead influence or guide other individuals, team or organizations²⁵. Democratic leader is someone who asks for input and considers feedback from their team before making a decision²⁶. Democratic or participatory leadership is about letting multiple people participate in the decision making process .this type can be seen in business, school and in government²⁷ Democratic leadership is shared leadership.

Democracy: Many African countries have been on democratic governance for long without gotten its dividends, Nigeria in inclusive. This is due to distorted practice and institutional processes of democracy, alongside capitalist models of globalization; and neo-colonialism has turn Africa and Nigeria inclusive into states of political confusion,

and loss of a fine-tuned democratic identity. Little wonder, scholars now demand new ideologies for civil rule in Africa and in Nigeria.

Democracy is from the two Greek words, “demos” meaning “the people”, and “Kratein” which refers “to rule”. It is a system of government in which the people exercise the governing power either directly or through representatives periodically elected by them. In democracy, supreme or ultimate power is vested in the people and exercised directly by them or by their agents under free electoral system. In democracy, decision making system is based on people’s majority opinion. And majority rule with minority right protected and represented. It is government by election and not selection. Aristotle holds it’s “the rule of the many for the good of the poor” as opposed to oligarchy which is “The rule of the few for the good of the wealthy”²⁸ Abraham Lincoln, (on November 19, 1863 at union cemetery in Gettysburg, Philadelphia) holds that democracy is: “government of the people, by the people, and for the people”²⁹ Democracy as a system of government has institutions that promise to guarantee the people’s self rule and attainment of the common good. So, democracy is a form of government that best protects human rights because it is the only one based on recognition of the intrinsic worth and quality of human being. It recognizes the masses for it is the masses that elect their representatives. Democracy is characterized by: rule by the majority, the rights of all the citizens are equal, there is right to dissent and disobedience, and it provides norm for political participation. Similar to these characteristics are the basis for democracy, which includes: 1. Good government policies that must reflect what people want. 2. Quality information on the government and debates will also be available 3. It’s government of the majority 4. Constitution is seen as the basic rule book or supreme rule of the law. 5. Citizens are of equal rights.

Democratic Leadership/Paradigm Democratic leadership is shared leadership where group members participate as everyone is given opportunity to participate and ideas are exchanged freely and discussion is encouraged, however, under the control and guidance of the leader of the group. Democratic leadership style is one of the most effective types and leads to higher productivity, better contributions from group members and increase group morale. So many countries in the world are now into democracy and democratic leadership. African leadership may not be a good example of excellent democratic leadership as so many African leaders are corrupt. But, we can portray **Julius Nyerere** of Tanzania to have excelled in democratic leadership. His excellence started in his thoughts on party system and democracy. This philosopher-statesman was a man of great vision and strong belief in the role of the leading party in the relations between the people and the state. He considered the leading political party, an embodiment of people’s wishes and aspirations, as an agent of their articulation and cushion against excesses of state power³⁰. He promoted a political philosophy called *Ujamaa*. He was not corrupt in his leadership.

Nelson Mandela is another African democratic leadership paradigm. Under Nigerian leadership and development, one sees tribal, religious sentiments and discrimination, but Mandela in his democratic leadership was a man of peace, forgiveness, had a powerful presence and disarmed enemies with smile. He was a visionary leader, a man of positive thinking. He dismantled the legacy of Apartheid by tackling institutionalized racism and fostering racial reconciliation. His leadership statement could be seen in this speech at Rivonia trial in 1963. “I have fought against white domination and I have fought against black domination, I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities, it is an ideal which I hope to live for and to achieve but if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die”³¹ Nelson Mandella Never wavered in his devotion to democracy, equality and learning. Despite terrible provocation, he never answered racism with racism. His life is an inspiration to all who are opposed to oppression and deprivation. Another world example is **Dwight D. Eisenhower**, the republican president of United States during 2nd world war. He was known to have used strategic approach to solving military and diplomatic issues. As supreme allied commander during the war, he didn’t command automatically, he is known with his quote “together, we must learn how to compose differences, not with arms, but with intellect and decent purpose”. He exemplifies his wish to create more harmony and consensus in everything society does. He wanted to involve other people in the decision making and sought out expert opinions from others. In Nigeria, not minding so many presidential aides and special advisers, not much real or true change is experienced.

Abraham Lincoln is another famous example of democratic leadership. He became a leader in the new Republican Party and gained national attention in 1858 in debate with national democratic leader Stephen A. Douglas. In his democratic style, one finds empathy or ability to share the feelings of another, emotional intelligence, the ability to mix with others. He also has skills to persuade and lead teams. During American civil war, he was said to have formed a cabinet composed of his political rivals in whom he put his faith. **George Washington** – when guiding the U.S government, he appointed strong leaders to his staff. His decision not to serve a third term exemplified a democratic leader who knows when to pass the torch. He was not like some African greedy leaders who still want to continue

ruling, not minding the tenure ship and age. **John F. Kennedy** – a charismatic leader at heart, had both laissez-faire and democratic leadership styles. By laissez-faire, we mean a delegative leadership in which leaders hands off and allow group members to make decisions. **Thomas Jefferson** –A statesman, diplomat and a Lawyer, third president of US (1801-1809). He was both an authoritarian and democratic leader. **Jimmy Carter** – 39th US president, a politician and a philanthropist, a former naval commander. He exemplified both the qualities and pitfall of democratic/participative leadership styles. Democratic leadership is seen in some companies: Major Clinics, Google Amazon.com, Twitter and Ginni Rometty, also in some universities, building sites and the likes.

WAY FORWARD: FOR BETTER NIGERIAN DEMOCRATIC LEADERSHIP

When some of the areas mentioned below are reformed, Nigerian politicians will have no option than to reform and rectify themselves as well and follow the rule of the law or the election process for any office one is vying for.

Constitutional Electoral Reform: This is overdue as the masses or the electorates have been calling for this and to no avail. There should be a transparent process of winning election in Nigeria and this is the work of INEC, so as avoid the problem of one candidate winning all the polling boots and another is being declared the winner by the INEC, as it was the case in Nigeria 2023 presidential election.³² This lack of transparency in election process is the real cause of voter apathy as majority of the electorate will not come out to vote when they knew their votes will not count. The process should be transparent for everyone to see that people's choice and mandate are respected.

Decentralization of Power- There is great need for decentralization of power, for example, there should be state police to be controlled by the state governments and governors as the chief security officers of their states. The federal government controls Electricity, Petroleum or NNPC, NITEL, NIPOST, Aviation, Customs. Immigration, Armed forces, Air forces, Railways, Police force and others and many of these institutions are not working owing to much corruption in the system, thus, the need for decentralization of power or control.

Encourage participatory Governance: Democracy is called participatory democracy right from its origin in ancient Greece or Greek city states (polis) where men gather at the Agora to debate on some important affairs and it's the same in African traditional communal settings of yester years. Nigerian democracy is a representative democracy owing great population involved, but project recommendations and system of public input in policy making should be created. Constituency democracy ought to be maintained, where there is town hall meetings and project reports published for public scrutiny.

Active citizenship and Active civil Society – By Civil societies we mean the aggregate of nongovernmental organization linked together by common interest and common activity, examples: Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) like Socio – Economic Rights and Accountability Project (SERAP), and Faith based organization, church institutions, student union, Labour union, Trade unions. civil activists, among others; they are not enemy of government but an indispensable allies with the government, they are the watch dogs, monitoring government activities, exposing corruption, advocating for justice and the collaborators with government. But if they cease from being the watch dogs, there is no how government can allow them to be collaborators. They are the voices of the voiceless by advocating for social justice for the people, exposing and magnifying the voices of the voiceless. The civil society should be capacity builders through education, training, and mobilization. Again civil society in the country should be service provider, where government ran short; the civil society fills the gap, especially in education, health issues and in provision of infrastructure, one can really do something for his country.

Ethical Re-orientation –Here, we are talking about change of Nigerian value system. Most Nigerian citizens are self-centered and corrupt. Lack of self-discipline both as individuals and as a society is a major setback to the country. Others includes corruption which is the decline in moral or ethical values, thereby getting into moral anarchy, modernization of values, much recognition and esteem to riches and intellects and conceptual debasement of leadership itself. Owing to the above evils, there is an urgent need for ethical sanitization and re-orientation of our value system. We need to hold esteem, the value of handwork, and inculcate it to our youths for as Franc-Fanon said: work, over and above everything else defines the essence of man, defines the existence of man. Another is value of truth, for truth is now a scarce commodity, the value of respect for the elders and superiors, self discipline, respect for life and the likes, and with this reform, internet and Yahoo fraudsters can be reduced.

Promotion of Meritocracy over Nepotism(Meritocratic Institution)- Since All Progressive Party (APC) government started ruling Nigeria in 2015, nepotism in public appointments came to its climax, even in this present Tinubu's government, meritocracy is not yet promoted and the result is always inefficiency in various sectors. Example could be seen in appointment of minister for education as from 2015.

Youth Inclusion in Governance (Youth Engagement)- This has been the African problem as in Nigerian present kakistocracy (where the worst individual, or least competent is ruling) and gerontocracy where old men that should

have retired from public service and are competing to rule and worst is they have no moral character and care less about good leadership and service, but they continue to loot the nations' treasury. Good and honest youths should be included in governance as they are leaders of tomorrow that can start from today.

Strengthen Democratic Institutions: Here, we mean the independent institutions like INEC, Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC), Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC), and the Judiciary. The president should stop unnecessary inducement and interference in their work as they should be independent, and do the work of checks and balance. Judiciary should be the hope of the common man and should be independent of the Nigerian president.

Implement strict Anti-corruption Measures: To reduce corruption in matters of work and in payments, the government should subscribe to pay direct, and E-payments or digital payments. Certainly, Integrated Personnel and payroll Information System (IPPIS) has been established, but it's not fully delivering, especially in the university system nowadays where after payments through IPPIS, the university sorts it again before paying the individual lecturers. This is bad, they should pay direct as corruption is still everywhere.

Civic Education and Leadership Training: This is very essential both on the part of the leaders and on the part of the citizens. Leaders should know about stewardship and servant leadership and rectification of thoughts, hearts and family while the citizens have to know their civic rights, duties and responsibilities.

Reduction on the cost of governance: Corruption comes in here owing to embezzlement of public fund, but when the cost of governance is reduced, government posts will be less attractive and competitive, and a dedicated individual can then come out and serve the public with moral probity and accountability. As Nigerians are into serious recession, a good government should reduce the exotic cost of governance.

PHILOSOPHICAL EVALUATION AND CONCLUSION

Thus, in this paper, we have shown that due to the poor leadership of Nigerian political elites, the country is rapidly heading towards mega inflation, un-productivity, moral decline, neo-colonialism and various other forms of social and economic decay. We referenced Plato's concept of socialism, where the philosopher-king represent the ideal ruler, and also examined democratic governance as a viable paradigm of political leadership. In a true democracy, leadership is not the rule of a single individual, but rather the coordination of one individual at the helm of affairs working collaboratively with experts and institutions to manage the state- while maintain central control and responsibility. To address Nigeria's leadership crisis, we propose several solutions. One of the most critical is the active involvement of the masses and strengthening of democratic institutions as watch dogs of government activities. These institutions are not enemies of the state but indispensable allies. Their role includes monitoring government actions, exposing corruption, advocating for justice. As collaborators with the government, civil society groups cease must consistently demand accountability at all levels of governance. When civil society fails to function as a watch dog, collaboration with the government becomes ineffective. Civil society organizations must serve as the voice of the voiceless, advocating for social justice and amplifying the concerns of marginalized populations. They should also act as capacity builders through education, training, and civic mobilization. Furthermore, civil society should fill service delivery gaps- particularly in areas like education, health care, and infrastructure- where government efforts fall short. Every citizen has a role to play in nation building. Leadership in Africa should reflect the spirit of African communalism, which is rooted in mutual support, love, belonging, and co-operative coexistence. A leader who governs with this communal spirit is more likely to lead effectively. A visionary and articulated competent leader is needed in Nigeria and in Africa. A clear example is Ibrahim Traore of Burkina Faso- despite being a military leader; his developmental strides in just two years across sectors of economy have posed a significant challenge to many of Africa's corrupt democratic regimes.³³

Finally, this paper does not advocate for military rule in Nigeria or Africa. Rather, it calls for accountability, self-reliant development, and prosperity across all sectors through the genuine practice of democracy. Achieving this vision requires the establishment of strong democratic institutions capable of holding leaders accountable and collaborating effectively with government. Only through such partnership can Nigeria- and Africa as a whole- realize sustainable development and enjoy the full dividends of democracy

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