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## Leadership Crises and Implications for Sustainable Development in Nigeria

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### Abstract

Nigeria has indeed struggled with socio-economic growth and development since its emancipation from colonial domination, trundling within a cycle of rent-booms, recessions, and even economic collapse. This study argues that the root cause of these socio-economic problems is poor leadership, marked by oppression, exploitation, nepotistic governance structure, electoral violence, and pervasive and systemic corruption. These negative indices have plunged the nation into a state of protracted violent conflicts, extreme poverty, weak infrastructure, rising youth unemployment and restlessness, untimely deaths, and multifaceted humanitarian crises. The paper examines the nature of political leadership and its burgeoning effects on the development of Nigeria, using the predatory state paradigm as a guide. Relying on secondary data, the study asserts that the Nigerian ruling elites are aware of the dire situation of the country but keep aloof in order to maintain their corrupt grip on power. The study maintains that visionary leadership needs to be strategically harmonised with the abundant resources of the nation for it to get back on the track of development and instill confidence in a disenchanting populace.

**Keywords:** Corruption, Development, Leadership, Nigeria, Sustainable Development.

### Introduction

Since the dawn of civilisation and to date, the subject of leadership has been deeply debated. The ancient Holy Scriptures and a host of classical and contemporary philosophers, such as Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Machiavelli and Karl Marx, among others, have contributed critical ideas to the subject of leadership, which essentially

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centres on the issues of values, ethics, law and order, resource allocation, and justice in the society. Thus, Gary (2016) opines that these classical elements constitute good leadership, and evidence from the past suggests that good leadership is *sine qua non* to development, since good policies and public accountability pave the way for socio-economic growth and development. Therefore, western and eastern countries like Norway, Switzerland, Ireland, Germany, Hong Kong, China, and a host of others are often called ‘developed’ because they line up squarely with the various index measures of development (Ethrige and Handleman, 2010). This is mostly because their governments have clear developmental trajectories that are fervently and patriotically pursued through good leadership.

In Africa, there have been different problems since the era of decolonisation and independence that could be attributed to leadership deficit. The political system has been characterised by electoral malfeasance and violence, elitism, primordialism, prebendalism, corruption, violent conflicts, and military incursions into politics. In fact, it seems that the typical African mentality is one of looting available public resources and ‘sharing the national cake’ rather than baking one for national development. To this extent, scholarly debates over the years have been centred on understanding the developmental disparity between fast growing East Asian countries and the seemingly stagnant African economies. Most of these scholarly debates have resulted in two major theoretical discourses: developmental states and predatory states. While the former has contractual and progressive leadership, the latter has predatory and repressive ones, which is ultimately reflected in the political and economic policies being pursued.

For instance, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, General Mobutu Sese Seko looted the country’s economy until he became richer than the entire country (Abiodun, 2018). Similarly, in Nigeria, where the outrageous loots of General Sani Abacha are still being recovered, the total amount looted out of Nigeria by the Abacha government remains uncertain. Transparency International (TI) reports that Abacha might have stolen up to \$5 billion between 1993 and 1998, when he governed (Nwabughio, 2020). To this end, Ethrige and Handleman (2010) emphatically conclude that most African leaders suffer from the HGMC syndrome - hunger, greed, manipulation, and corruption syndrome.

The crisis of leadership in Nigeria has resulted in socio-economic underdevelopment. Sen (1999) argues that famine-stricken nations such as Sudan and Somalia are in crisis due to a lack of governance. Similarly, countries plagued by food crises, wars, marginalisation, poor education, weak institutions, and other challenges are in crisis due to a lack of governance. However, this is not to say that there are no few exceptions to this quagmire. For instance, late President Musa Yar’Adua of

Nigeria, who was derogatorily termed a “go-slow” achiever, remains renowned as one of Nigeria’s best leaders. The same can be said fairly of Murtala Mohammed and Olusegun Obasanjo due to their contributions to economic development, political stability, and robust African relations. Still, the leaders mentioned above are like needles in a haystack. Thus, it is pertinent to take a cursory look at the nature of leadership crises in Nigeria and the concomitant challenges of sustainable political and socio-economic development, using the predatory state paradigm as a theoretical tool in its narrative.

## Conceptual Considerations

### *Leadership*

It is imperative to emphasise that the whole essence of state politics is to authoritatively allocate scarce values (Easton, 1975). This implies that politics is necessary if every member of society is to enjoy equal opportunities. Like a coin with two sides, politics could be the undoing of a society; yet, it has become unavoidable for any society. These assertions reflect the fact that every society is faced with (scarce) values and therefore, the critical need for authoritative distribution of available resources. Maslow (1967) hierarchised these scarce values using a pyramid to highlight them in the order of priority. The first are physiological needs, followed by needs for security, property, affection, esteem, and self-actualisation. Therefore, the form in which these values are authoritatively allocated could be despotic, oligarchic, monarchical, aristocratic, or democratic. This authoritative distribution mechanism is the essence of leadership, specifically political leadership, which is frequently synonymous with governance.

From the foregoing, it is apparent that political leadership ought to ensure that resources are evenly distributed and in a way that guarantees the ‘happiness of the greatest number.’ This utilitarian philosophy as propounded by Jeremy Bentham (1748–1832) and John Stuart Mill (1806–1873) has become a classical framework for assessing leadership performance. Bentham and Mill agree that all men seek happiness, which may be considered the surplus of pleasure over pain, and that this should be the aim of government actions (cited in Appadorai, 2004). Classical thinkers like Plato (423–347 BC) conceived the leader as a philosopher, the ‘gold’ of society, whose virtue is knowledge. Similarly, Thomas Hobbes (1558–1679) uses the ‘Leviathan’ to emphasise the need for quality leadership in society to keep off ‘the state of nature,’ which is lawless and unorganized (Appadorai, 2004).

Several modern scholars actually conceive leadership within the purview of democratic governance and sustainable development, which enshrine accountability, transparency, and a strong civil participatory society, all under the rule of law (Siddique

and Ghosh, 2015). It is quite difficult to make explicit the requirements or characteristics of a good leader. For example, Obasanjo, Sankara, Nkrumah, Mandela, and Ghaddafi all performed distinctively in their executive functions but had little in common. This suggests that every leader is unique and each faces distinctive challenges, thus making it difficult to generalise the requirements of leadership or its qualities.

Modern scholars such as Yukl (2010), Newport and Harter (2016), and Manzoor, Maqbool, Sudong, and Rashid (2017) suggest that there are about 12 fundamental universal leadership traits that are vital for distinguishing leadership styles and in differentiating successful from unsuccessful leaders, namely: whether they are reliable, intense, audacious, competitive, inspiring, prepared, enthusiastic, caring about individuals, success-oriented, analytical, focused, and visionary. There are also certain influences on leadership quality and style that must be considered in understanding the dynamics of leadership. They include the political culture of the country, the personality and ideology of the leader, and the means through which political power is attained. These, by and large, produce five major categories of leadership: charismatic, traditional, rational-legal, representative, and coercive (Ethridge and Handleman, 2010:231-236).

From a corporate and political perspective, Manzoor, Maqbool, Sudong, and Rashid (2017) define leadership as the art of inspiring followers through the operative motivational tools employed by the leader in a political or corporate space. To them, a good leader creates a culture of harmony, coordination, and cooperation. Similarly, Yukl (2010:7) defines leadership as “the process of influencing others to understand and agree about what needs to be done and how to do it, and the process of facilitating individuals and collective efforts to accomplish shared objectives.” These definitions highlight the importance of proactive leadership and expert coordination of state institutions toward positive public action.

In this study, the concept of leadership refers to the ability to consistently and tactfully simulate interactions and actions that aim to solve mutual and moral problems within a given political system. Interestingly, most political inquiries into the issues of leadership prefer to focus on behaviour, that is, the idiosyncrasies of leaders, rather than structures and institutions, as an empirical approach to understanding government policies, actions, and outcomes. In recent decades, the hallmarks of leadership have come to involve sustainability and effectiveness, which ultimately hinge on accountability and transparency, which are fundamental tenets of democracy (Manzoor, Maqbool, Sudong, and Rashid, 2017).

Indeed, successful leaders specify their vision, essentially in their campaign mandates, and doggedly pursue those visions to the letter for the sake of integrity. Failed leaders give excuses and play the blame game for failing to deliver on their promises to the citizens. Consequently, poor leadership leads to poor governance and creates huge challenges, particularly in national development. In fact, it is a harbinger of failing or failed states, as seen in many developing nations in the world. So good leadership is a necessary condition for national development, or even better, sustainable development.

### *Development and Sustainable Development*

It is said that humanity shares one planet; however, it is a planet consisting of two worlds: the world of the rich and the world of the poor (Weltz, 1986). In the same vein, Todaro (1989) supports the idea that the world is divided into economically rich and poor countries, with significant disparities in wealth, resources, and opportunities between them. To this end, scholars and policymakers like Todaro (1989), Seers (1989), the United Nations, among others have proffered several explanations, frameworks, and strategies for economic growth and poverty reduction over the years. This is in a bid to meet heightened concerns about development in the post-Cold War era, especially since the emergence of new states after colonialism and apartheid. However, the question ever so controversially posed is: What really is development?

Before now, modernisation theorists such as Robert Gilpin, Deepal Lal, Misère, and Bergesten centre economic growth and development on per capita savings and investments. As a result, traditional measurements for development bother on increased Gross Domestic Product (GDP); industrialisation and urbanisation, westernisation, and democratic principles (Todaro, 1989: 167-177; Ethridge and Handleman, 2010: 471-474). This focus invariably avoids the real problems of development; therefore, there is the need to redefine how development is to be measured.

In contrast, the process of development should be considered many-sided, such that at individual levels, it indicates capacity, increased skills, self-discipline, responsibility, greater freedom, creativity, and material well-being (Rodney, 1972). This multidimensional perspective on development entails radical changes in institutional, social, and administrative structures, as well as in the general attitude of the people, including customs and beliefs (Todaro, 1989). Seers (1969:3-4) takes this perspective further by asserting, that:

What has been happening to poverty? What has been happening to unemployment? What has been happening to inequality? If all three of

these have become less severe, then beyond doubt this has been a period of development for the country concerned. If one or two of these central problems have been growing worse, especially if all have, it would be strange to call the result ‘development’, even if per capita income has soared.

Seers’ (1969) definition introduces a more practical and individualistic consideration to the concept of development and the yardstick with which to measure it. This perception has become a game changer in the discourse of development and a lens through which governments and agencies define development and strategic policies with which to achieve it. This notion perhaps informs the definition of the UNDP that development is a multidimensional set of activities aimed at achieving a higher quality of life for all people, which involves economic and social development as well as environmental protection (United Nations, 2020).

Consequently, in today’s world, there are more concerns about social-political measures than mere statistics of gross earnings for determining development. Measures of development have become more all-encompassing, individualistic, and objective. They include economic distribution, good governance, GDP, Purchasing Power Parity (PPP), Human Development Index (HDI), mortality and literacy rates, corruption index, and several other indices (UN, 2020). On the other hand, underdevelopment has its very conspicuous features: poor living standards, urban congestion with slums, high unemployment, high importation, poor industrialisation, and a non-diversified economy, to name a few.

More recently, there have been arguments for sustainable development in the world. According to Rogers, KaziJala, and Boyd (2008:20), the intellectual debates between the Malthusian and Cornucopian schools of thought unequivocally produced an eclectic approach to sustainable development wherein they consider the objective assertions of both schools of thought and conclude that nations must exercise environmental responsibility and adaptive survival strategies such that the development of today’s generation does not hinder that of future generations. This resolution ultimately produced the clamour for global action in 2015, embedded in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations for 2023.

Subsequently, many developmental strategies have been fabricated and peddled in third world countries, Africa in particular, and many of such ambitiously launched strategies have come and gone, from the choking Bretton Woods policies forced on African states to even uninspiring indigenous strategies. Yet Africa’s economy, and indeed Nigeria’s, remains relatively stunted and her people perpetually impoverished. Indeed, several impediments to socio-economic development have



been identified, including first and foremost, the predatory nature of African states which largely depend on poor leadership and corruption, while other impediments include protracted violent conflicts and weak institutions, to mention but a few. At this point, it is imperative to shed a light on the nature of predatory states and the consequent challenges of bad leadership and slow growth on the continent.

### **Predatory State: A Paradigmatic Framework**

This study is built on the predatory state paradigm. The predatory state paradigm can be traced back to Sophist classical thought, specifically Plato's (429-347 BCE) distinction between 'extractive' and 'productive' statecraft. To him, productive statecraft creates its appropriate objects, while extractive statecraft seizes what others have produced. This implies that while one leader maximises productivity through the provision of appropriate policies and necessary infrastructure, the other primarily plunders the immediately available resources (Vahabi, 2019). This assertion thus informs the violent-hunting patterns in state-citizen relations hitherto conceived as "predatory state." The major thrusts of the paradigm are thus highlighted.

The predatory state framework states that all humans and, indeed, all states are (potential) predators. Whether a revolutionary, a rebel, or a tyrant, everyone is a predator, and only the losers in the competition are considered as preys (Vahabi, 2019). Murtazashvili and Murtazashvili (2019) make the distinction between predatory states as: wealth-creating and wealth-destroying. Whereas, Leeson et al. (2019) consider them 'passive' and 'active.' Both scholarly distinctions have similar connotations. The passive predators are often regulatory, liberal democracies that control market competition and encourage productivity for wider extractive gains; while an active predatory state employs coercion to repress and exploit brazenly. Depending on the leadership, the Nigerian state over the years has ranged from active, blatant pillaging in the Abacha regime to passive extractions in subsequent regimes.

Furthermore, there is a prevalence of 'positive rent-seeking' in predatory states. Rent seeking in this context refers to 'the idea that transfers are converted into social costs when individuals expend real resources and efforts to capture them' (Tolliso, 2012:73 cited in Akinola, 2019). Here it is argued that the contractual state is not always free of predation. It believes that predators frequently transform into protectors when they realise significant protection gains from resource rents. This implies that predatory violence can be domesticated in return for rent as long as the bureaucrats and entrepreneurs are cooperative in the "contractual predation" (North et al., 2013). Thus, in this kind of rent-seeking predation, the predator employs violence only as a means to an end; that is, the state protects just to prey. For instance, oil-well racketeering is a major occupation for Nigerian elites, so much so that a large

percentage of the state apparatus is devoted to protecting crude oil interests, which are essentially the country's rent. Therefore, the predator must secure its prey from the potential threat of other predators (Vahabi, 2019).

Additionally, the predatory state paradigm emphasises “contractual rationale for predation.” In this thrust, state predation is considered from the perspective of a transaction, a coercive bargaining relationship in which the state and the people enter into an involuntary contract that systematically translates into a voluntary contract (Munger, 2019). This explains the fact that the state exerts its monopoly on violence, which could be advantageous or otherwise. Violence, after all, is a double-faced coin—protective and predatory. This perspective is likened to a robber-victim relationship, whereby the victim involuntarily chooses his life over his property. The major focus of this argument is to establish the fact that coercive power is wielded by leaders primarily to serve self-interests, which are often disguised as protection for the prey—the non-powerful citizens (Munger, 2019).

These assertions are not far-fetched in the context of Nigeria's political system. The framework espouses the aggressive use of state powers and public wealth extraction in Nigeria as a clear predatory state that is repressive and exploitative. To this end, Benson (2019) argues that although the state does provide public goods, the ultimate aim of politicians, however, seems to be the accumulation of public wealth for themselves and their primordial enclaves.

### **The Dynamics of Predatory Leadership in Nigeria**

Several indicators suggest that there is a high level of leadership predation in Nigeria's political system, such as political and bureaucratic corruption, repressive rulership, and violent and fraudulent elections, to name just a few. The challenge of corruption in Nigeria's leadership seems to stand out among other problems. Corruption, particularly pervasive corruption, is indisputably antithetical to sustainable development (Benson, 2019). Many Nigerian leaders are undeniably ridden with pervasive corruption. Under the present Buhari administration alone, at least N881 billion has been allegedly stolen under the various ministries, departments, and agencies of government (Premium Times, January 21, 2023). Not to mention the recent revelations of a long-term undetected siphoning of crude oil through illegal oil vessels at over 58 illegal oil points right under the watch of the federal government (Gloria Ume-Ezeoke, October 25, 2022). Despite this, there has been no significant progress in the prosecution of apprehended economic thieves. The anti-corruption campaign in Nigeria seems webbed in corruption itself and calls for critical analysis.



In the country today, there is a considerable lack of faith in elected and appointed public servants across all levels of government. The level of corruption in the public sector is blatantly higher compared to the private sector, and this is largely due to the rentier nature of the economy. The predatory state in Nigeria is extractive and active. It serves two major purposes: to extort rents from the state, which includes several corrupt practices such as bribery, nepotism, and embezzlement; and to preserve power, which includes acts like judicial corruption, political patronage, and electoral corruption. Bribery, electoral fraud, ghost workers, budgeting corruption, nepotism, forgery and theft, procurement scams, and many other forms of corruption are common in the Nigerian public sector (TI, 2014).

In Nigeria, the Minister of Information, Lai Mohammed, revealed that some government ministers and other officials had looted a sum of about N1.34 trillion as of 2016 (US \$6.8 billion) (Onyema et al., 2018). Indeed, there have been countless cases of corruption allegations and counter-allegations leveled against high-ranking government officials from 1999 to 2022, including some of the most recent allegations against Rochas Okorocha, the immediate past governor of Imo State; Dame Patience Jonathan, wife of the immediate past president; Abdullahi Umar Ganduje, the Kano State governor, who was secretly filmed stuffing bundles of dollars into his robes; the recent N40 billion corruption allegation against the acting managing director of the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), Prof. Kemebradikumo Pondei; and more absurdly, the fraud allegation against the erstwhile chairman of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), Ibrahim Magu, and a host of other officials (Reuters, February 6, 2015; Sahara Reporters, July 20, 2020).

Other recent high-profile cases were those levied against the former National Security Advisor to President Goodluck Jonathan, Sambo Dasuki, who was accused of embezzling US \$2 billion meant for the purchase of arms for the fight against the Boko Haram terrorist group and was consequently sentenced to seven years in prison. Also, the former governor of Taraba State, Jolly Nyame was convicted for the misappropriation of N1.64 billion belonging to the state and sentenced to a fourteen-year jail term on May 30, 2018. However, the jail term was subsequently reduced by another court (Onochie, 2018; Nnochiri, 2018).

The EFCC under the current administration of President Buhari has recorded a total of 603 convictions between 2015 and May 29, 2018. In 2015, 2016, and 2017, there were 103, 195, and 189 convictions respectively, with 115 in the first months of 2018. Many of the convictions were secured within three years of filing the cases in court. However, most of the convictions can be largely categorised as low-profile economic and financial crimes such as advance fee fraud, criminal conspiracy, forgery, employment scams, impersonation, and currency counterfeiting, rather than “grand”

crimes arising from the embezzlement of public funds, illegal dealings in petroleum products, money laundering, etc. Thus, cases involving large sums of public money and prosecutions involving politically exposed people are rarely concluded within three years, and in most cases, they are never concluded. In fact, out of those 603 convictions, only 103 are high-profile cases (The Nation, May 29, 2018).

### **Implications of Leadership Crises on Nigeria's Security and Sustainable Development**

It is evident from the foregoing that predatory leadership has implications for security and socio-economic development. In Nigeria's political system, electoral violence, violent conflicts, youth restiveness, poverty, unemployment, deaths, internal displacements, and a variety of other consequences are prevalent. In October 2020, Nigerian youths took to the streets in peaceful, passionate protests. They demanded the disbanding of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS), a unit of the Nigerian Police Force with a long record of extortion, ill-treatment, torture, and extra-judicial killings. Not surprisingly, the protest hashtags evolved to "end bad leadership in Nigeria" shortly after the protests became more intense. Apparently, the frustration with police injustices is a reflection of the frustration with the Nigerian leadership. Therefore, the protests provided a platform for the tumultuous youths who have been deeply dissatisfied, disenchanted and disillusioned.

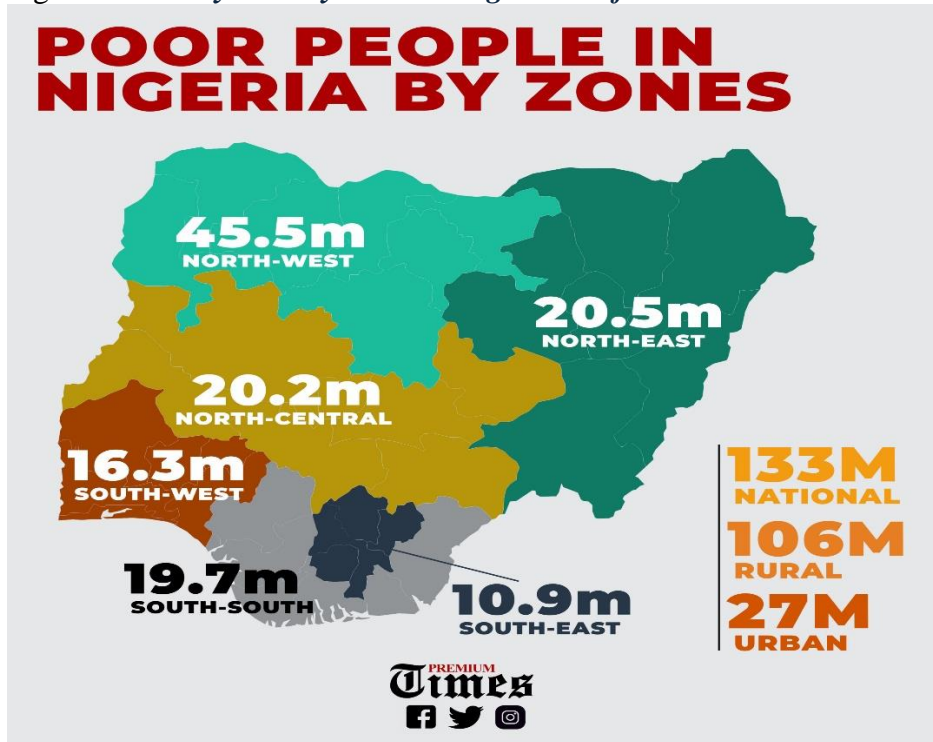
Taking a retrospective look at Nigeria in the last four years of the current administration of President Muhammadu Buhari, there remains so much to be done to preserve lives and properties and improve the living conditions of the people. In the northeastern region, where less than half of the girl population attends primary school, 276 government secondary school girls were kidnapped from their school hostels in Chibok, by Boko Haram insurgents in April 2014 (Punch, October 5, 2019). After six years of public outcry with the "bring back our girls" hashtags going viral and global, 112 Chibok girls remain unaccounted for till date. In the same way, 110 Dapchi school girls were abducted from Yobe State. 104 of them were rescued, but six (including Leah Sharibu) are still missing and seem to have been forgotten (Punch, October 5, 2019).

Despite the N241.4 billion expended on security votes and all sorts of arms procurements in 2017 alone, Boko Haram continues its vicious attacks, overrunning military bases and killing military personnel and countless civilians (Eji, 2016). The activities of the jihadist sect reached such unprecedented proportions that Nigeria's ranking in the Global Terrorism Index jumped from 16th in 2008 to third in 2015 and second in 2021, with Boko Haram emerging as the third deadliest terrorist group in the world (Reliefweb, 2022). More so, the security vacuum has paved way for other forms of criminality and social unrests across the geographical length of the country -

farmer-herder conflicts, banditry, kidnapping, piracy, multiple (violent) protests, secessionist activities, to name just a few.

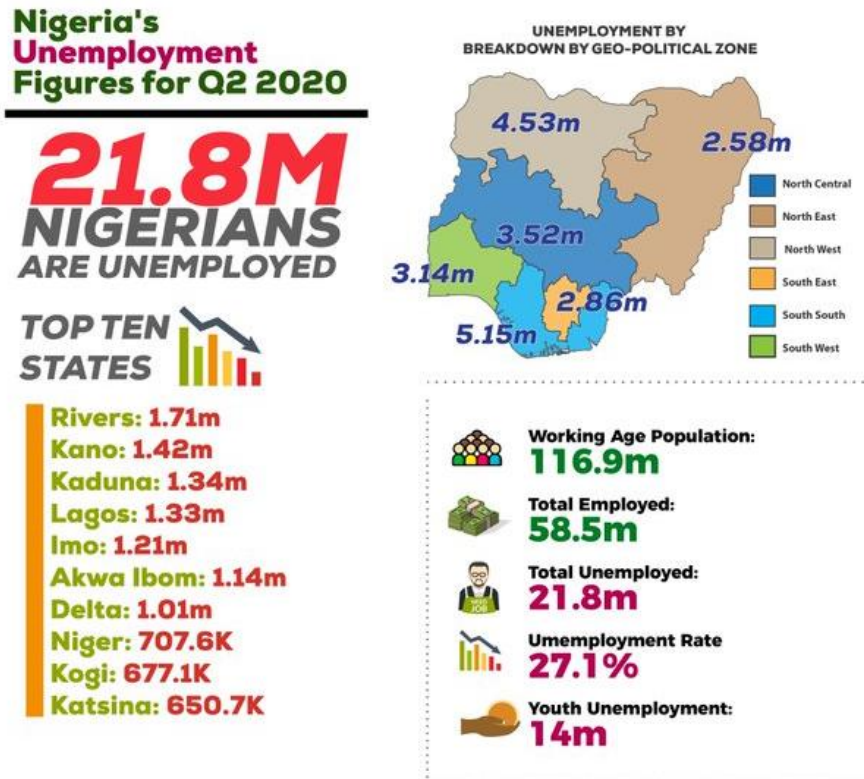
There is no doubt that poverty is a critical consequence of poor leadership and a harbinger of violence and insecurity. According to the International Labour Organisation, only about 10% of the Nigerian population is gainfully employed, with a poverty estimate of 53.3%, the poorest half of the population's living standard, and the figures appear to be worsening by the year (World Bank, 2020). Nigeria's unemployment problem has become complex and affects all ages, levels of education, and geographic regions. Agba and Ushie (2014) opine that high unemployment has become a major social problem that could have catastrophic consequences for all sectors of society.

Figure 1: *Poverty Rate by Zone in Nigeria as of 2022*



Source: *Premium Times* (2022).

Figure II: Nigeria: Unemployment Rate by State 2020



Source: Cited in Adeniyi (August 14, 2020).

The preceding figures I and II indicate a national poverty rate of 133 million Nigerians out of over 200 million people as of 2022, indicating a nearly 70% poverty rate and an unemployment rate of half the size of the total population (gainfully and non-gainfully employed) as of 2022, with an outstanding 27.1% unemployment rate. The current administration of President Buhari was elected on a “change” mantra, which was the pedestal on which people voted en masse for good leadership and socio-economic development. The administration has no doubt made concerted efforts to provide some strategic empowerment initiatives such as N-Power, Tradermoni, and Farmermoni, etc., to combat poverty. However, these have had little sustainable impact on the vast population of the nation. More so, the youth population, which accounts for well over 60% of the total population, bears much of the brunt of unemployment (Adeniyi, August 14, 2020). It is therefore not surprising that the youths took to the streets across the country in the #EndSARS protests to demand a better life.

Even more consequential is the loss of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), which has been estimated at \$188.29 billion in 2021, a sharp decline from the previous years. According to Yinka Kolawole (August 20, 2021), the total investment announcements captured by NIPC for the year 2021 amounted to \$203.89 billion, whereas only an

inflow of \$15.6 billion was realised, representing 7.65 percent. The reasons for this fall in FDI are not far-fetched: an exhausting corruption-ridden business environment together with wanton violence and insecurity threats indicate that Nigeria's leadership is nothing short of predatory.

### **The Role of Leadership in Driving Change**

From the foregoing, it is evident that there is a symbiosis between good leadership, or at least passive predation, and sustainable development. Indeed, leadership plays a critical role in combating corruption and promoting sustainable development anywhere in the world. However, several factors contribute to the weak and predatory nature of leadership in Nigeria; and corruption is clearly at the top of the chain. Nigerian leaders often prioritise their own interests over those of the people they are supposed to serve, leading to a lack of accountability and transparency.

More so, there is also the issue of ethno-religious divisions in a country with over 250 ethnic groups, and people who share different religious beliefs. These divisions often lead to political polarisation, which makes it difficult to achieve national unity and sustainable development. Furthermore, Nigeria lacks the political will to implement needed reforms, particularly in the areas of education, healthcare, and infrastructure. Meanwhile the institutions that are meant to hold leaders accountable are often ineffective.

To address these burgeoning issues, Nigeria needs to promote transparency and accountability. Leaders should be held accountable for their actions and must be transparent about their decisions and how they are made. This can be achieved by granting significant autonomy to the judiciary, the EFCC and its sister commission, Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Crimes Commission (ICPC), and other relevant institutions to oversee the actions of leaders. Moreover, efforts should be made to promote unity and reduce ethnic and religious divisions. The leaders should seek to bridge the gaps between different groups and work towards a shared vision for the nation. Additionally, there should be rapid investments in the development of infrastructure, education, and healthcare to promote good governance. By addressing these issues, Nigeria can begin to build stronger, more effective leadership that is better prepared and committed to addressing the needs and aspirations of its people.

Furthermore, the role of active citizen participation in good governance is worthy of note. This is the capacity of a nation's citizens to participate in the judicial processes, implementation, and monitoring of government policies and programmes, as well as awareness of happenings in their country. Citizens' knowledge of their



human and individual rights is necessary for national development and, in fact, sustainable development. When the time to elect leaders come, citizens must be aware and informed such that they know their serving and prospective leaders and have an idea of what the leaders want to do for the country's growth and development in order to promote sustainable national development. Thus, the nexus between active citizen participation and active leadership must not be underemphasised. The responsibility of any society, according to Adeniji (2003), is to keep regenerating and restructuring itself by building its own capabilities by educating, organizing, and mobilizing its citizens in order to ensure that good governance is expanded to enhance democracy, deepen democratic culture, and for democracy to be consolidated and sustained.

From a global policy perspective, United Nations' SDGs provide a framework for promoting accountable leadership and good governance in Nigeria. The SDGs are a set of 17 goals aimed at ending poverty, protecting the planet, and promoting peace and prosperity for all (UN, 2020). Goal 16 specifically focuses on promoting peaceful and inclusive societies, providing access to justice for all, and building effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions (UN, 2020). Achieving this goal would require Nigeria to promote good governance, increase transparency and accountability, and reduce corruption in its political and social systems. By working towards the SDGs, Nigeria can enhance its democratic governance and create an enabling environment for accountable leadership.

Several steps can be taken to actualise the SDG's promise of promoting accountable leadership and good governance in Nigeria. Firstly, Nigeria needs to strengthen its institutions and ensure their effectiveness in delivering public services. This can be achieved by promoting transparency and accountability in the management of public resources, as well as by providing access to information and participation for citizens. Secondly, Nigeria should prioritise the fight against corruption beyond political lip-service and rhetoric, which has been a significant challenge for the country. This can be achieved by strengthening anti-corruption institutions and enforcing strict penalties for corrupt practices. Thirdly, Nigeria needs to promote citizen engagement and participation in governance processes by creating channels for dialogue and consultation with citizens, civil society organisations, and other stakeholders. Finally, Nigeria should prioritise the development of human capital through investments in education, healthcare, and skills training to build a competent and effective public service. By implementing these actions, Nigeria can actualise the promise of the SDGs by promoting accountable leadership and good governance.

The role of leadership in driving change cannot be overemphasised in the twenty-first century, where nations are building strong economies, technologies, high



levels of education and innovation, well-developed social and political systems, high standards of living, and playing leading roles in global affairs. Therefore, Nigeria desperately needs to reposition itself from a predatory state to a developmental state, with the idea that the state should be actively involved in guiding and promoting economic growth, using various policy tools and strategies to achieve specific goals. This involves a combination of government intervention, strategic planning, and coordination with the private sector (Munger, 2019).

Developmental leadership thus emphasises the importance of establishing strong and capable state institutions capable of effectively implementing development policies and strategies. It also emphasises the importance of creating a stable and predictable business environment that can provide incentives for private investment and entrepreneurship (Vahabi, 2019). Should Nigeria assume this posture, it will be able to manage corruption to a minimal level, harness her many resources, and attain rapid, sustainable development.

## Conclusion

The paper has examined the nature and dynamics of predatory leadership and its implications for sustainable development in Nigeria. It notes that Nigeria is currently below world poverty lines and grappling with youth employment, incessant conflicts, and inequalities, among others, which are due to power tussles among the ruling elites in their vicious predation on power and economic resources. As a result, state resources are extracted, rented, and plundered without regard for citizens or national sustainable development.

The study describes the predatory nature of leadership in Nigeria's public administration, which is characterised by vicious public looting of funds, a lack of significant high-profile corruption prosecutions, repression, and inequalities. These problems have had dire ripple effects on national security and socioeconomic development, resulting in poverty, unemployment, multidimensional security threats, and a general lack of faith in government. The study demonstrates that there is a more dire need than ever before for effective, systemic, and sustainable leadership development in Nigeria. Since resources are abundant and the population is increasing geometrically without any concrete synergy between the latter and the former, it is necessary to prevent a huge national humanitarian catastrophe, which could occur if the status quo remains.

In conclusion, it is clear that corruption has a significant negative impact on sustainable development in Nigeria. However, strong leadership can play a critical role in driving change and promoting sustainable development. This can be achieved

through a sincere commitment to fighting corruption, strengthening the EFCC and ICPC, promoting transparency and accountability, engaging citizens, and seeking international cooperation and support. By taking these actions, Nigeria can reduce the negative impact of corruption on sustainable development and create a more prosperous and sustainable future for its citizens. Ultimately, it is up to the government and its leaders to take the necessary steps to combat corruption and promote sustainable development, which is critical for the long-term success and prosperity of the country.

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