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Democracy or Political Leadership: Who Is Failing the Nigerian People?

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Abstract:

With the commencement of the Fourth Republic democratic dispensation in 1999, it was the expectation of majority of Nigerians that democracy would have delivered the much expected socio-economic and political benefits to the people. On the contrary, more than seventeen years into democratic governance, Nigeria is still grappling with the delivery of socio-economic and political benefits of democracy with a governance system that is characterized by widespread impunity among public officials, electoral fraud, brazen corruption, prevalence of the rule of men instead of the rule of law, abuse of judicial process, inability or the unwillingness of the governance class to meet the welfare needs of Nigerians and several other socio-economic and political ills that has bedeviled governance at all levels of government. The persistent crisis of governance has made several scholars and commentators to question the appropriateness of representative democracy towards engaging the Nigerian conundrum. The question the paper interrogates is: has Nigeria really practiced democracy? Has the political class allowed democratic principles and rules to guide their conduct in their political relationship as well as in governance? Is it not possible that it is the Nigerian political leadership that has failed Nigerians by refusing to play the game of politics and governance according to democratic rules and principles? After careful examination of the above questions, the paper concluded that the crisis of governance in Nigeria is attributable to failed leadership and not necessarily democracy as a governance system.

Keywords: Democracy, democratic governance, political leadership, governance deficit, Nigerian state

1. Introduction

Democracy is arguably the most popular and preferred political system of government in our contemporary world within the last three decades or so. Although it is indisputable that democracy cannot solve all mankind's problems, we must admit that we cannot solve many of societal problems without democracy (Babawale, 2007:8). One of the strongest reasons for the global acceptance of democracy is that it is a governance system that is hinged on the active involvement of the people in the governance process; as such, it is a government that is expected to be transparent, inclusive, accountable, responsible and responsive to the needs and expectations of generality of the citizenry. According to Ake (1996; 1993) democratic government promotes development better than any other form of government; enhancing development through the promotion of good governance, peace and stability, economic freedom, political participation, predictability, competition, mobilization and rule of law. It was with this in mind that majority of Nigerians expected so much from the civilian government as the Nigerian State commenced the Fourth Republic democratic dispensation in 1999.

However, the enthronement of democracy in Nigeria since 1999 is presenting a contradictory scenario. Two decades now, democratic government is being afflicted with several maladies. These include widespread impunity among political office holders, electoral fraud and crimes, brazen corruption, prevalence of the rule of men instead of the rule of law, abuse of judicial processes, inability (or unwillingness) of the governing class to meet the welfare needs of Nigerians, infrastructural deficit, and lack of socio-economic and political equity and justice. The persistence of undemocratic politics and low social capital of governance had made scholars to severally describe, Nigeria's brand of democracy as "ailing" "fledgling", "nascent", "illiberal", "elitist", "plutocratic" "failing" "hobbled" "failed" among several other derogatory terms (Kalagbor& Inokoba, 2016).

This inability of active players in politics to address the welfare and developmental needs of Nigerians has made some scholars and commentators to question the appropriateness of democracy as a platform to engage the Nigerian conundrum. They argue that democracy has failed because several years of democratic governance has only achieved meagre results in the area of poverty reduction, infrastructural deficit and development (Ibaba, 2008). But the central questions this article poses are if Nigeria is genuinely practicing democracy in the true sense of the word? Has the political class in Nigeria allowed democratic values, norms and principles to guide, their conduct in politics and as well as in governance? Is it not possible that it is the Nigerian political leadership that have failed Nigerians by refusing to play the

game of politics and governance according to globally accept democratic rules and principles? In an attempt to answer these questions, the discourse is built on the preposition that the Fourth Republic democracy is not delivering the much expected socio-economic and political deliverables of governance as largely as a result of the undemocratic attitudes, values and behaviour pattern exhibited by the political leadership in the course of managing the affairs of the Nigerian State. Our argument here is that there are certain requisite political norms, orientation and attitudes that the players of the politics must inculcate and demonstrate in order to grow, deepen and make democracy relevant to the needs and aspiration of the citizenry. Of course, these are lacking in the Nigerian politics and governmental process.

In attempt to explain the crisis of democracy and governance in Fourth Republic Nigeria, the article adopted the descriptive and analytical methods of investigation. To achieve the study objective, the work is divided into the following sections: the introduction, followed by conceptual discourse of the central variables. The next section is examination of the challenges to democratic governance in Nigeria. This is followed by the impact of leadership crisis on democratic governance in Nigeria. The discourse ends with a closing remark summarizing the study.

2. Conceptual Discourse

This section involves the review of literature on the central variables of the study and their interrelationship. Two concepts namely democracy and political leadership are key to the discourse. We are not oblivious of the controversy and contention among scholars on the central variable of our study. However, for the purpose of giving our study scope and direction, we will only present and examine viewpoints of scholars that help us achieve the purpose here. Generically, democracy as a system of political organisation entails a situation of broad based and active participation of all those who are defined as citizens in the conduct of their public affairs in the society (Jega, 2007). This means that in democratic society, the people decide what is to be done and in deciding, they take their destiny firmly into their hands (Omenka & Akpan, 2013). Simply put, democracy denotes that form of government in which the governing power of the state as a whole is largely vested in the people. Practically speaking however, in a democracy while political power is vested in the people, the exercise of power is vested in the representatives chosen and made accountable to them (Tsuwa, Gaavson & Againgbe, 2013:195). What this means is that democracy repudiates arbitrariness, impunity and authoritarianism. It extols the consents of the governed and protects human personality and values.

Invariably, democracy, irrespective of its brand, entails fundamental recognition of popular sovereignty, equal opportunities for all, majority rule, representativeness, minority rights, law-based governance, right of choice between alternative programmes, popular consultation, consensus on fundamental issues and more essentially periodic elections (Oyadiran & Nweke, 2013; Oke, 2005). In similar vein, Elaigwu (2009) defines democracy as:

A system of government based on the acquisition of authority from the people; the institutionalization of the rule of law; the emphasis on the legitimacy of rulers; the availability of choices and cherished values (including freedoms and accountability in governance) (Elaigwu (2009).

From the above definition, we can identify some indispensable principles and tenets of democracy. This includes authority which emanates from the people and any authority which does not emerge from the consent of the people is not and cannot be seen as democratic. Secondly, a democratic polity must be based on the rule of law. Power in all its meanings and usage under a democratic dispensation is regulated by law. No one not even the governing class is above the law; the system does not permit arbitrariness and impunity. The third attribute is that the government or political leaders must enjoy legitimacy. This could be achieved through two means: firstly, the process of ascension to political offices must be based on the generally accepted electoral laws and procedures of the polity. Secondly, for the government to be legitimate, it must govern the people according to the laws of the land as well as being able to respond effectively to the needs of the people. The third element is choice. The people should have options and freely take it, including the right to effect changes in leadership or the government of their country. It is not only limited to choosing leadership, it also includes all other basic human freedoms and rights. Fourthly, democracy also entails transparency and accountability. Under a democratic system, people, especially leaders must be held liable for whatever action they take, including their inactions as the representatives and custodians of the people trust and mandate. Hence, they ought to and must account for such actions periodically (Nwanegbo, 2016:51). Thus, the sustainability and consolidation of democracy in any society rest on the existence and operationalization of these indispensable tenets and attributes, barring the fact that the institutional framework for their operation may differ from one polity to the other.

Just like no democracy can flourish without the involvement of the mass of the people, the place of the political leadership in democratic governance and sustenance can never be overemphasized. Leadership constitutes a critical element of any society's political life. It is fundamental in all human activities; be it social, economic, cultural, religious or political life. According to Albert (2003) "leadership is one of the fundamental currents of the human experience most especially when viewed as a process through which groups, organisations and societies attempt to achieve common goals" (p.5).

Again, according to Omenka and Jev (2013) and Aluko (2012), one cannot discuss the idea of leadership with all seriousness, in isolation of the concept of followership. This is understandable because no definition and discourse of leadership will make any sense until it is connected to the whole idea of followership. In respect of this perspective, Bennis (cited in Albert, 2003) defines leadership as "the process by which an agent induces a subordinate to behave in a desired manner" (5). Similarly, Koontz (1982) says it is the process of influencing people so that they will strive willingly and enthusiastically towards the achievement of group goals. Following the same leadership – followership matrix, Cuilla (2003) conceives leadership in the following way:

...the ability to impose the will of the leader on those led and induced obedience, respect, loyalty, and cooperation.... Is a process in which the activities of many are organised more in a specific direction by one...means to inspire others to undertake some form of purposeful actions as determined by the leaders.

What is apparent is that all the above definitions connote a non-coercive, participatory and democratic relationship between leaders and followers. There are two appealing elements of these definitions. First, rather than induce, these leaders influence, which in moral terms implies that leaders recognise the autonomy of their followers (Inokoba & Nwabueze, 2015:4). This is the agreement with Rost (1991) conceptualization. He stated that "the leadership process is ethical if the people in the relationship (the leader and followers) freely agree that the intended changes fairly reflect their mutual purposes". Since followers are the leader's partner in shaping and achieving the goals and purposes of the group (in this case, the state) the voluntary compliance of the followers, that is the citizenry, becomes very imperative. For Rost, consensus is an important part of what makes leadership. The second morally attractive part of the above definitions is that they imply recognition of the beliefs, values and needs of the followers. It is these leaders' recognition and acknowledgment of the beliefs, values and needs of the citizenry that forms the basis of legitimacy enjoyed by any government. Under this kind of situation, the citizens willingly obey the laws of the state or support the state without being induced or coerced to do so (Inokoba & Nwabueze, 2015).

From the foregoing, we can conveniently aver that leadership is a mechanism or process of influencing and mobilizing human and material resources towards attaining a common (or societal) goal. Accordingly, Omolayo (2006) describes leadership as an essential oil that keeps the wheel of government working towards addressing the needs of the citizenry. According to this scholar, leadership makes the difference between success and failure of the governance process in a country. Leadership as such is imperative in any human community because not everybody can be involved in the process of decision making for the society. Every society is organised, directed and given a sense of purpose by its leaders.

For leadership to be effective, impactful and people oriented, it must have the following attributes: exemplary, propriety, knowledgeable, altruistic, vision, courage, participatory, responsive, responsible, imaginative, patriotic, decisive and accountable (Osah, Ireunmi, Eti and Amakihe, 2015). They hold that true leadership should be people-centred and not driven by self-interest and must be committed to responsively drive the leadership wheel of the political class. However, it is important to point out that without sound ethical values and standards, it will become almost impossible for leadership to demonstrate any of the above vital ingredients. It is this intersection between leadership and ethics that translates to the concept of "ethical leadership". Brown and Trevino (2005) define ethical leadership as: "The demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationship and the promotion of such conduct to followers through two-way communication, reinforcement, and decision – making".

Ethical leadership is a relational concept in the sense that it is constructed in and through social interaction, with followers. Furthermore, being an ethical leader is all about being both a moral person as well as moral leader. The "moral person" part of ethical leader can be viewed as the personal traits and characteristics of a leader such as probity, honesty, trustworthiness, other centeredness, and integrity – and the moral nature of that leaders' conduct (Van den Akker, Heres, Lasthuizen and Six, 2009).

The role of ethical and moral principles and obligations on leadership especially on the political realm cannot be over emphasised. For one, ethics enables the political leader to governance according to the constitutional requirements and limits. It makes it easy for the public officer especially the elected one to lead the people according to the dictates or provisions of the laws of the land that are equally and generally applicable to the citizenry. Every citizen wants to see their political leaders conduct their public affairs and duties according to the dictates of the law. And if there is any political system that need ethical and law-abiding leaders to survival, the answer definitely is democracy (Inokoba & Nwabueze, 2015).

No political system can achieve much for the people if its governance is not managed by democratic and transformational leadership. Again, this form of leadership can only come about when the leaders are guided by ethical and moral principles, values and standards in both their private and public lives. Transformational leadership according to Aluko (2012:372) is a form of leadership whose overriding goal is to effect change in multidimensional ways with a view to achieving the stated objectives or goals of the group or the nation. This may involve change in the governance process, change in the socio-economic content and change in the attitude of both the leadership and followership, for the realization of societal goals. In the same vein, Albert (2003:48) contends that transformational leadership "requires that leaders transform followers in such a way that both would work together towards attaining a desired course of attitudinal and physical change suggested by leaders". The defining feature of this form of leadership is its commitment to change. This perhaps explains why it is usually the form of leadership prescribed for a society whose defining principles are repugnant to the accomplishment of the desire goals and aspiration of the society. Moreover, a transformational leadership is one that is committed to the satisfaction of the well-being of the generality of the people, rather than to the satisfaction of personal interests and desires (Omenka & Jev, 2013:45). This form of leadership enjoys a lot of trust and support from the followership because the leaders exhibit strong values and are able to satisfy the yearning of the generality of the people by their performances in office.

Akin to transformational leadership is democratic leadership. Democratic leadership accordingly to Dahl (1989) is the behaviour that influences people in a manner with and or conducive to basic democratic principles and processes, such as self-determination, inclusiveness, equal participation, and deliberation. In general terms, democratic leadership could be seen as the actual management or use of democratic authority in the exercise of governmental responsibilities within the ambit of democratic principles of authority such as the rule of law, legitimacy, freedom, transparency and

accountability. It is the demonstration of these indispensable and universal values and principles of democracy by an appreciable number of the political leadership that leads to the consolidation and sustenance of democracy in any nation. No nation's democracy can survive or even serve as an effective platform for social provisioning to the people, where its political leaders (or state managers) are not guided and constrained by these constitutional and democratic prerequisites. In other words, the democratic system and processes could be corrupted and made ineffective if the political class engaged the system with anti-democratic values and attitudes. Thus, the article argues that there are certain requisite political norms, orientations and values that the political elites are expected to exhibit in their engagements of the political system in order to sustain and deepen democracy.

3. The Challenges of Democratic Governance in Fourth Republic Nigeria

Democratic governance which the paper equates with good governance is seen both as a broad strategy and a particular set of initiatives to strengthen the institutions of civil society with the objective of making government more accountable, more open and transparent and more responsive to the needs of the people (Inokoba & Nwobueze, 2012:8). Essentially, democratic governance is characterized by the following attributes: citizens' participation and respect for the rule of law; transparent and accountable governmental institutions and processes; consensus and all-inclusive government; government that promotes equity and sound effective and efficient public policies that is responsive to the expectations and needs of majority of the citizen (Kalagbor & Inokoba, 2016:9)

It was with this perception of the virtues of democracy that Nigerians welcomed the Fourth Republic with a lot of expectations in 1999. Two decades of formalistic democracy, successive governments have failed to address the socio-economic and political maladies that exist, such as inadequate, failing and decaying infrastructure, skyrocketing inflation and unemployment, depreciating real income of workers, failed elections, violent and intolerant politics, insecurity, governmental abuse of citizens' rights, brazen impunity among public officials, political marginalization, suppression and injustice (Kalagbor & Inokoba, 2016:10). And by June 2018, Nigeria overtook India to become the poverty of the world with 86.9 million people living in extreme poverty (QuartzAfrica, 2018). In the political realm as regards constitutionalism, respect for the rule of law and protection of the fundamental rights of the citizens, successive administrations and tiers of government are all found wanting. Like their military progenitor, the governments in the Fourth Republic Nigeria have not shown respect for the rule of law especially with respect to the judicial decisions and due process in governance as well as the protection and safe guard of the rights and freedom of majority of powerless Nigerians. Since the emergence of the present civilian dispensation, all tiers and arm of government have found it difficult to carry out governance according to the provisions and dictates of the laws of the land. The disrespect and abuse of laws of the land take several forms: the criminal usurpation of the inalienable rights of Nigerians to elect their leaders by powerful political figures; brazen corruption such as the looting of the common wealth by political leaders and spending of public money with legislative backing and spending far and above approved budgets by the executive; award of contract without regards to due process; violation of the principle of separation of powers mainly by the executive; disrespect for unfavourable judicial decisions; fighting political corruption and economic crime without due regard to rules and laws of the land; misuse of security and military personnel as private security guards for the protection of highly connected individuals and several other forms of violation of the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (Inokoba & Nwobueze, 2015; Civil Liberties Organisation, 2001).

Corruption in governance engendered fraudulent electoral process and has also produced too much bad politics into the Nigerian political system. This has its consequence on the performances of the different organs of government. All arms of government have so far failed to deliver the much-expected democratic deliverables. For instance, according to Inokoba & Kumokor, (2011:145) the eight years of Obasanjo civilian administration (1999-2007) was characterized by anti-people and undemocratic attributes such as: disrespect for the rule of law and court decisions; dictatorial tendencies like the clamping down opposition groups as well as some segment of the press; selective and sometimes illegal anti-corruption measures carried out by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and Independent and Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC); meddling and creating political crisis in states that have opposition and unfriendly governors; his inordinate quest to hang on to power as demonstrated by his botched third term agenda; and his unwarranted and unwholesome interference in the affairs of the National Assembly, especially its leadership.

Twenty years of civilian regime has also exposed the legislative - the National Assembly and State Houses of Assembly as chambers of fraud, greed, controversies, rascality and corruption (these are well catalogued in The National Newspaper, May 29, 2009). The legislature, both at the national and state levels, have been involved in series of bribery scandals that are inimical to their growth. The general perspective is that the legislature is interested in making money than laws. Apparently, there is no way the executive can be checked and made responsible and accountable to the people, if the lawmakers are only guided by their pecuniary interest.

The undemocratic, unethical (corrupt) and lawless nature of governance at all levels in the Fourth Republic Nigeria has concomitantly manifested in its inability (or unwillingness) to deliver the much-expected socio-economic benefits of democratic governance. It is quite regrettable that in spite of the huge and unprecedented oils receipts since the emergency of the Fourth Republic, the states and federal governments have so far been unable to fix collapsing and decaying infrastructures. The health sector has been in comatose as a result of the endless list of anomalies such as shortage of medical staff and drugs, hospital-to-patient infection, obsolete equipment, low morale among health workers, dilapidated and inadequate infrastructure among others. Another neglected infrastructure and forgotten sector are the educational system and it seems deliberate. Poor governance reigns where ignorance is rampant and rather than clean up

our educational system, government is gradually washing its hands-off funding. Rather they have chosen to create endless private schools (Inokoba & Kumokor, 2011:145).

Another area of inhuman neglect by government over the years is the road and transportation sector. Though billions of Naira have gone into road rehabilitation and maintenance, Nigerian roads are a nightmare, causing untimely deaths and reducing the lifespan of motor vehicles. Years of epileptic democracy and with billions of hard currencies from oil to boost agriculture have failed to produce the much-expected increase in food production. Nigerians are still bitter that food is scarce and expensive despite the large arable land in the country.

One other critical sector that corruption and irresponsible governance has caused so much dislocation is the energy sector. Despite injection of several billions of dollars power supply across the country is still epileptic. The crisis in the energy sector has dovetailed into the economy causing so much havoc: increased cost of production, low capacity utilisation, retrenchment and shut down. The worse hit by the crisis in the power sector are informal and small-scale businesses and manufacturing firms such as textile and tyre industries (Inokoba & Kumokor, 2011:145).

The years of mis-governance and corruption eventually resulted in economic recession, high-rate of poverty and socio-economic inequality. Brazen corruption has rendered state institutions prostrate, dysfunctional and some moribund. As a result of these institutions that were established to provide socio-economic services to the populace, become weak and ineffective resulting in slow socio-economic growth and development. The end result of all these are infrastructural deficit, high incidence of poverty, lower standard of living and reduced life expectancy of Nigerians (Inokoba, 2016:16). It is on record that despite the fact that between 2000 and 2008 alone, Nigeria earned roughly US\$370 billion from oil and gas export, the average life expectancy stands at 48 years and over half of Nigerians do not have access to clean drinkable water (UNDP, 2009 Report, cited in Omenka, 2013:42). According to the July 2016 Report of the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) the Consumer Price Index (CPI) measuring inflation rose to its highest point of 16.5 percent since 2005 (cited in Niyi, 2016). In the same vein, there is also the issue of frightening youth unemployment; according to the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) sources, 70 percent of 80 million youths in Nigeria are either unemployed or underemployed (cited in Daniel, 2014). With all these unpleasant statistics, it is no wonder that the National Human Development (NHD) 2015 Report recorded that about 112 Million Nigerians are living below the poverty line of less than a US\$1 a day (NDH 2015 Report). The 2018 Human Development Index revealed that the recalculated HDIs was 0.532 from 1990 to 2017. This positions Nigeria at 157 out of 189 countries and territories. Similar figures on poverty was also abysmally low in the World Bank's 2017 Atlas of Sustainable Development Goals which indicated that more 35 million were living in extreme poverty in 2013 than in 1990 as these live on less than \$1.90 a day. These figures are painstakingly presented to demonstrate the level of poverty that Nigeria has fallen to and the role of that mis-governance and massive looting and mismanagement of the public assets may have played in the whole process.

The Fourth Republic governance has also failed to provide adequate security and protection for the lives and property of Nigerians. Evidence of the crisis of security is seen in the reoccurring cases of unstoppable, sporadic and spontaneous overflow of armed robbery attacks, kidnapping, bombings, assassinations, shooting, militancy, human trafficking, piracy and all kinds of violent and terrorist activities. Scholars have severally identified corruption as one of the greatest challenges to security of Nigeria. The connection between maladministration, corruption and insecurity is not farfetched (Inokoba, 2016:19; Ajodo- Adebajoko & Okorie, 2014:13). According to these scholars, corruption fans the embers of poverty, armed robbery, cultism, terrorism, diseases, unemployment and other factors which lead to insecurity are directly or indirectly related to mis-governance and political corruption. The advent of militancy, quest for self-determination, kidnapping and terrorism in Nigeria associated with the activities of Niger Delta insurgent groups, the unyielding Boko Haram terrorism, the relentless agitations of Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), the marauding and murderous activities of Fulani herdsmen, and all other violent groups - can be traced in one way or the other to maladministration and corruption in the Nigerian State. Lack of security in the Nigerian Fourth Republic is also evidenced in the large number of unresolved murder and assassination cases; at least 38 high profile unresolved murders recorded between 1999 and 2007 (Inokoba & Kumokor, 2011:43; Agbo 2009:56). The most embarrassing of them all is the killing of the number one law officer of the Federation under President Obasanjo's regime, Chief Bola Ige. It is widely believed that all these murders were politically motivated because none of the killers have been arrested and prosecuted to reassure the citizenry that there is a competent government in place.

Thus, it is our position that the above challenges to democratic governance in Fourth Republic Nigeria could have been avoided if governance at all levels had been inclusive, rule-based, transparent, accountable, effective and responsive to the basic socio-economic needs of Nigerian populace.

4. Political Leadership: The Bane of Democratic Governance in Nigeria

From the above catalogue of the maladies of democratic governance, one might be tempted to draw the conclusion that democracy has failed Nigerians; that it has not been able to bring about better socio-economic and political benefits to generality of Nigerians. This is in line with Ross' (2006, cited in Ibaba, 2008:3) position; that democracy is hollow, that it only preaches civil liberties to the poor without backing it up with material well-being. This suggests that democracy does not benefit the generality of the populace.

This is not a fair assessment of democracy as a system of governance. The ability of democracy to act as a platform for political and socio-economic provisioning largely depends on the values, orientations and norms the operators (that is, the political class) carry into the political system and processes. Our main argument is that Nigerian democracy is going through this trial and crisis as a result of the near absence and/or absence of the indispensable ingredients of democracy in the politics (that is the political conduct of the elites) and governance system of the Fourth Republic. Practicing

democracy without the requisite principles, values and attitude has turned democracy in Nigeria into a sham (Kalagbor & Inokoba, 2016:10).

The undemocratic and unethical attitudes and conduct of the political leadership in Fourth Republic Nigeria has hindered the smooth operation of democratic governance in the country. Some of the reasons why the conduct of the political class is considered unethical and injurious to democratic deepening include the following:

- They are aberration and perversion of the general citizen's view, perception and expectations of the conduct of their political leaders.
- These attitudes and behaviour of the political elites are considered unethical and undemocratic because they amount to the abuse of public trust placed on them.

In similar vein, the attitudes and conduct of the Nigerian political leaders are considered unethical because they compromise the general interest and expectations of Nigerians on the altar of private interest, greed and ambition for the political class. And more importantly, these conducts of the Nigerian political class are seen as unethical and morally repugnant because they violate and make nonsense of the provisions of the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, that defines the rules of engagement in a democratic setting between the leaders (the governors) and the governed (the generality of the citizenries) (Inokoba & Nwobueze, 2015:8).

Apparently, the low quality of democracy according to Diamond (1996) is as result of leadership failure. Buttressing this assertion, Achebe (1983:11) posits:

The trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership. There is nothing basically wrong with the Nigerian character. There is nothing wrong with the Nigeria land or climate or water or air or anything else. The Nigerian problem is the unwillingness or inability of its leaders to rise to the responsibility, to the challenge of personal example, which are the hallmarks of true leadership.

Effective leadership has been the Nigerian tragedy right from the First Republic through several military juntas, failed democratic experiments to the present day Fourth Republic. What is glaringly evident is that throughout the political history of the Nigerian State, the nation has been cursed with mainly leaders devoid of ethical and moral values and discipline; so it is not surprising even with the country's present democratic dispensation, the Nigerian political system is still experiencing leadership failure which has dovetailed into crisis of governance at all tiers of government (Inokoba & Nwobueze, 2015:3).

There are several attributes of the Nigerian political leadership that have over the years frustrated and constrained democratic governance and consolidation. One major identifiable attribute of the Nigerian political class is its altruistic, parochial and unpatriotic nature. It is common knowledge that the Nigerian political elites do not engaged in the politics of the state with an altruistic and nationalistic motive. Unlike what obtains in developed democracies where politics is seen as a call to stewardship and service of the state in Nigeria like other ailing democracies, the political class see politics as an avenue to capture and control the instrument of the state for the sole purpose of acquiring political power and personal aggrandisement. Ake and Onogo (1995:53) also pointed out that:

Political leadership is parochial rather than national; and corruptly converts national resources into its project of primitive accumulation. Ethnic diversity is manipulated to stay afloat to the detriment of national cohesion. There is an embarrassing lack of national heroes.

Apparently, public interest and purpose is never part of the orientation and motive of Nigeria political elites in the quest and control of political offices. This in a lot of ways explains why public interest is always sacrificed on the altar of private interest and primordial considerations (Inokoba & Kalagbor, 2016:7). It is for this reason scholars like Ibaba (2008); Aaron (2002); Ekekwe (1991); and Ake (1996) argued that the Nigerian State is privatized- meaning that it is personalised and therefore, used by the custodians of political power to pursue private interests as against the public interest. The Fourth Republic political class like their predecessors embraces democracy not because they believe in it, but because it enhances the pursuit of their private interests. Democracy is thus a means to power, and not a vehicle to serve the needs of the populace as well as drive the developmental aspirations of the larger society (Ibaba, 2008; Ake, 1993).

Another character of the political class that has hindered democratic governance is its corrupt nature. Like other post-colonial states, the political class is associated with the culture of using political power for primitive accumulation of wealth. It is an acknowledged fact that the wealthiest people in Nigeria are generally people who have acquired wealth through the mismanagement and unlawful use of the state power and resources (Inokoba & Kalagbor, 2016:8). Although corruption is a global phenomenon, Nigeria appears to have suffered severely from this malaise especially its political manifestation. Since 1999, the practice of democracy in Nigeria has been that for massive, scandalous and reckless looting of the public treasury by the political elites at all levels of government (Inokoba & Kumokor, 2011:143). What is more worrisome is the magnitude and degree of this manifestation among political leadership in the Fourth Republic. With regards to the depth of corruption in Nigeria, Professor Adeyeye (quoted in Omoyibo, 2013:33) said that: "what we have in Nigeria is ... a corruptocracy; a government of the corrupt by the corrupt and for the corrupt. And in that kind of government, there are no rules because anything goes". He also maintained that government in Nigeria is "a cesspool of corruption, an oasis of immorality" (quoted in Omoyibo, 2013:33). In October 2006, the then President of the World Bank, Paul Wolfowitz disclosed that Nigerian officials have stolen more than \$300 billion of the nation's wealth over the last forty years (Omoyibo, 2013:33). One can only imagine how much this amount of money would have contributed in lifting millions of Nigerians out of the cocoon of deprivation and want.

Corruption among public officials (or political leadership) take several forms: looting of the common wealth by political leaders and spending of public money without legislative approvals and spending far and above approved budget; award of contract without regards to due process; embezzlement of fund allocated for special projects; applying and

receiving contract from government with fictitious names and non-existing companies; the inflation of the value of contracts by public functionaries; the embezzlement of unspent budgetary allocations to government ministries, department and agencies (MDAs); the abuse of the oversight functions of the legislature by law makers; squandering of public fund and allocations to state governments from the Federal Accounts and several other manifestations of political corruption (Inokoba & Nwobueze 2015; Agboso & Duke, 2012). There is no doubting the contribution of the culture of institutionalised corruption among the political class to the ailing condition of Nigeria's democracy. Nothing enfeebles democracy more than corruption among public officials. It has distorted governance, provided perverse incentives for dysfunctional behaviour, and ultimately diminished the quality of life by diverting funds for social services into private pockets.

Notably, democratic institutions like the legislature, judiciary, INEC and EFCC are all facing crisis of credibility because corruption has tampered with their ability to act independently. Corruption has weakened Fourth Republic democratic institutions by compromising their independence and capacity to effectively check the excesses of government officials especially in their management of public resources as well as their relationship with the generality of the governed. As a way of emphasis, we can assert that corruption among the political leadership has undermined democracy and good governance in the Fourth Republic by flouting and subverting formal processes. Corruption among legislators has reduced accountability and distorted representation in policy making; corruption in the judiciary has compromised the rule of law and corruption in public administration has resulted in the unfair and inefficient provision of socio-economic benefits and services to Nigerians (Inokoba & Nwobueze, 2015:19).

Brazen and uncontrollable corruption among members of the political class has also dovetailed to unethical, unlawful, and undemocratic practices and conducts such as: electoral fraud and violence; political godfatherism; flagrant disrespect and abuse of the rule of law and human rights. Like previous republics, conducting free, fair and credible elections has been a major challenge to the democratization process in the Fourth Republic Nigeria; this is largely a result of the unethical and lawless conduct of Nigerian politicians and their corrupting impact on the electoral process and institutions (Inokoba & Kumokor, 2011:144). Though, the Fourth Republic has experienced the orderly and successful transition from one civilian government to another, the same cannot be said about the integrity of the elections that brought these administrations to power. Like previous Republics, elections in the Fourth Republic have been characterized by serious and blatant cases and practice of electoral corruption such as stuffing of ballot boxes; manipulation of voters register; buying of voters cards by politician; financial and material inducement of voters, electoral and security personnel; underage voting; disappearance or destruction of electoral materials; distortion of results; intimidation and harassment of political opponents by security and thugs as well as electoral related violence, killing and arson (Kalagbor & Inokoba, 2016:11). All the undemocratic, criminal and illegal electoral acts are not mere fallout of administrative lapses of electoral administration, rather they are measures deliberately designed and orchestrated by unscrupulous politicians especially political godfathers to illegally capture political power (or sway electoral victory to a desired and unpopular direction). The adverse impact of electoral corruption on participatory democracy and governance in Nigeria is not farfetched. Electoral corruption especially its violent manifestation has disenfranchised and deprived the Nigerian people their democratic rights to freely, without fear or favour elect those that will govern them. It is a common knowledge in Nigeria that politicians and their political patrons in an attempt to achieve their personal ambitions, capture and monopolizes the political space through massive commercialization and monetization as well as aggressive militarization of the electoral processes thereby encumbering scrupulous Nigerians from taking part in the electoral process. As a result of the commercialized, combative and exclusionary nature of elective politics in Fourth Republic democracy in Nigeria successive civilian governments have come on stream without the consent and mandate of majority of Nigerian people. It is therefore not surprising that the Human Rights Watch asserted in its world survey that the greatest form of human rights abuse going on in Nigeria is that Nigerians have been continually denied the right to choose their leaders through a credible, free and fair election. Rather most of the so-called political leaders are selected and imposed on the people by political strongmen (or godfathers) with the consequence that those in power are not considered true representatives of the Nigerian people (Kalagbor & Inokoba, 2016:12; Agbo, 2009:54).

One immediate adverse effect of elections devoid of popular participation and mandate is that its by-product, that is, the government will be deprived of a social contract with the people. And because most governments in Fourth Republic Nigeria were midwived through fraudulent and undemocratic elections devoid of social contracts with the people, they have been distinctively exclusive, dictatorial, lawless, corrupt, predatory and unresponsive to the needs and yearnings of the Nigerian people. Again, because these governments are bereft of social contract with the Nigerian people, they have found it difficult in most instances to exercise hegemonic authority over the people they govern. This crisis of legitimacy is characterized by unending industrial disharmony, discontented civil society, ever-present ethnic nationalities dissatisfaction and quest for political autonomy and the ever-increasing number of ethno-religious militia groups such as Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), Niger Delta Avengers (NDA), Independent People of Biafra (IPOB), Boko Harm and several others. All these challenges to the Nigerian state are evidences that the several governments are disconnected from the people as a result of the lack of requisite mandate to govern (Osah, 2016).

The desperate and corrupt nature of the political leadership in Nigeria has led to the domination and hijacking of the political landscape by political godfathers. Most political commentators and scholars, view political Godfatherism as a major albatross to the smooth and fruitful democratization of the Nigeria's Fourth Republic (Inokoba & Nwobueze, 2016; Oke, 2010; Albert, 2005). For one, it is the major instigator and incubator of electoral fraud and violence (otherwise known as electoral corruption). According to UNDP (1997, cited in Inokoba & Nwobueze, 2016), Godfatherism is one of the most important factors responsible for electoral corruption in Nigeria which pertinently leads to misgovernance (or non-

governance), subversion of democracy, political corruption, political dictatorship and governmental instability, among others. Invariably, political godfathers (patrons) and their godsons (clients) have been identified as the principal perpetrators as well as beneficiaries of warped and corrupt electoral processes tainted with violence (Inokoba & Nwobueze, 2015). This unethical practice of desperate godfathers and godsons has hindered political harmony and stability, compromised security and peace as it torpedoes the consolidation of democracy in Nigeria; a situation whereby the political strong man hijacks the fundamental rights of the citizens to decide who their political leaders should be.

The contributions of the undemocratic phenomenon of Godfatherism to institutionalized corruption can never be overemphasized. It is an acknowledged fact that patron-client politics is initiated and sustained by corruption (Inokoba & Nwobueze, 2016:19; Albert, 2005:93). Godfathers are political gatekeepers; they dictate who participate in politics and under what conditions. Godfathers of the Fourth Republic are not philanthropists; they always put their money where their mouths are. Chris Uba was quoted to have declared that in Anambra state "*politics is played as a business deal. And as a businessman and not a philanthropist, I single-handedly sponsored all the elected office holders in the state*" (Inokoba & Nwobueze, 2016; 19). Obviously, in return for sponsorship, he expected profit. This confirms the perception that the Nigeria godfather is not altruistic; he has no interest in developing democracy and the society. Personal aggrandizement is the guiding principle for the present breed of godfathers in Nigeria; as such they understand nothing else other than the maximization of profit and other leverages.

The lawless and anti-democratic nature of political leadership in Nigeria is also demonstrated by the culture of human rights abuse and flagrant disrespect of the rule of law by the ruling class. Since the emergence of the present democratic dispensation, all tiers and arms of government have found it difficult to carry out governance according to the dictates and provisions of the laws of the land. The disrespect and abuse of the laws of the land takes several forms: violations of the principles of the separation of power mainly by the executive; disrespect for unfavourable judicial decisions; fighting political corruption and economic crime through extrajudicial means; and several forms of violation of the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

From our examination of the undemocratic culture of disrespect for the rule of law, one can confidently assert that governance in the Fourth Republic has been based more on the whims and caprices of powerful individuals than the rule of law. The consequence of this is that it has empowered the political managers while it has weakened the capacity of the democratic institutions to check the excesses of the political leadership. As a result, Nigerian citizens are short changed as they lack the constitutional wherewithal to restrain the political office holders who are now above the law and seem to be stronger than the democratic institutions they manage.

5. Conclusion

From the foregoing argument it is evidently clear that the crisis of democratic governance cannot appropriately be attributed to the failure of democracy in Nigeria. Rather it is largely a product of failed leadership; a leadership that does not have the discipline, moral strength and political will to do what is right and lawful. A leadership that cannot rise above personal and primordial considerations and sentiments cannot in any meaningful way drive and sustain a democratic system. The paper was also able to identify the several unethical and anti-democratic values, norms and conduct of the political leadership that has corrupted and constrained democratic deepening and governance in the Fourth Republic Nigeria. The discourse therefore concludes that until the nation is able to put in place credible and effective legal framework to strengthen the institutions of governance that will have the capacity to check and curtail the unethical excesses of the powerful political elites, Nigeria will continue to be described as a frail and ineffective democracy.

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