Development Goals and the Leadership Question in Nigeria

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Many questions have followed President Jonathan’s request for prayers on Nigeria’s myriad of problems, since the eve of the country’s 52nd independence celebration when the request was made. The president wishes that through God’s intervention Nigeria’s legion of deep rooted and endemic problems like the age long ethno-religious and sectarian clashes, corruption as well as corruptive tendencies will end; particularly as the country prepares for the 2014 centenary anniversary of its formation by Britain. This paper argues that rather than focus on the spiritual (prayers and requests from God), which seem to have been answered long before asking; in view of the favourable climatic conditions and abundant natural endowments, greater emphasis should be placed on the need for effective leadership in the country’s public sector. Therefore, for the huge deficits in infrastructure, education, health care and governance in general, the paper attempts to address the leadership question in Nigeria. Its main focus is political and bureaucratic leadership and its effects on the dismal performance of successive administrations in the country’s relatively recent history. The research methodology is both descriptive and analytical. It adopts an eclectic framework of analysis, which combines past and relatively recent explanations on the colonial origin of the Nigerian state and its effects on politics and public policy processes in general. Finally, it draws examples of best practices, in respect of transformational or effective leadership and development-oriented programmes, from across the world to support its suggestions for Nigeria.

Keywords: Development Goals, Underdevelopment, Leadership, Transformation.

Introduction

What are development goals? Are there universal benchmarks for qualifying the attainment of these goals? Why are some countries classified as advanced, developing or less developed? How relevant, for instance, are the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which Nigeria and several other countries jointly approved since the year 2000? Do individuals and groups, for example, citizens, governmental institutions and non-governmental organizations or civil society have specific roles in all of these? What happens if the government and its institutions that are generally known across the world for their important moderating roles in society abdicate their responsibilities, as exemplified by successive administrations in Nigeria’s relatively recent history? In other words, what are the consequences of the personalization of the functions of government or the modern state? Is there any nexus between the
leadership, followership and the actualization of sustainable development in a political system? These and other similar questions will define the focus of this paper. However, in addressing these questions, attempt will also be made to explain the probable relationships between the deficits in the country’s leadership and the rot in most of its institutions directly saddled with the responsibility of actualizing development goals. What, for instance, in this relationship accounted for the three international reports in 2012, which I list as follows? The 2012 Failed States Index published by the United States of America based Foreign Policy Journal in its annual ranking of “177 countries placed Nigeria in the 144th position” and only a step away from the worst cases of state failure; Transparency International rated the country, in the same 2012, as the “139th most corrupt country out of a sample of 176 countries” confirming a bottom league showing, which dated several years back. Finally, the United Nations Human Development Index, which measures quality of life as expressed in access to safe water, life expectancy, health and education infrastructure, rated Nigeria as “159th out of 172 countries polled” (Olukotun, 2013: 64).

Are all of these as well as similar others, which many professional bodies and civil society organizations made available locally, conspiracies or misinformation as some prominent cabinet members and few other political appointees of the Jonathan administration claimed? Are they mere coincidences or an actual indication of the dysfunctionality of institutions of modern government and leadership failure to ensure security, provide good roads, health and educational facilities as well as improve mobile telephone services among several others, which majority of the ordinary citizens have over the years lamented on?

In view of the great transformations, in relatively recent times, in Malaysia, Brazil, Indonesia and Singapore among other countries that are generally regarded as Nigeria’s peers, or even in less endowed ones like Botswana; which was about two decades ago one of the world’s poorest, but ranked as one of the fastest growing economies of the world and the least corrupt country in Africa, by Transparency International in the year 2012, it may not be out of place to critically examine the role of Nigeria’s political leadership in the country’s unenviable position among the comity of nations.

The paper is structured into five main sections with the foregoing introductory remarks as the first. Therefore, there are four other sections. These are namely, conceptual prologue; leadership in Nigeria; overview of the Fourth Republic; and concluding remarks.

Conceptual Prologue

Development and leadership are the two basic terms that will be conceptualized in this section of the paper. Meanwhile, as it is common with most concepts in the social sciences or humanities in general, development as a socio-economic and political term does not enjoy a universal definition. However, in its etymological form, development can simply be defined as bringing out to a more advanced or highly organized level. In other words, this can be interpreted as a process of making the latent or hidden potentials of a particular individual or object available for more or higher useful purposes. It can also be defined as laying open in degrees such that the object is freed from integuments or anything that envelopes it.

...Process of actualizing man’s inherent capacity to live a better and more rewarding life. It implies increased skill and capacity to do things; greater freedom, self confidence, creativity, self discipline, responsibility and material well being (Nnoli, 1981).

In more concrete terms, especially in line with this paper’s focus, development will be examined with particular emphasis on the socio-cultural, economic and political dimensions as contained in the writings of prominent scholars like Emile Durkheim (1959), Talcot Parsons (1951) and Max Weber (1978), among several others. The main thesis in most of these studies is that the “value system is central to the changes and fundamental transformation” which, according to the etymological interpretation given above, brings about development (Onuoha 2007:58). In clearer terms, development as characterized by the transformation from the traditional and mechanical modes of
production to the organic form, which emphasizes
division of labour, ensures higher productivity and
prosperity, is essentially all about change in the value
system (Yagboyaju, 2012:58). Meanwhile, the value
system consists of the norms, beliefs, attributes and
habits, which help to define what is good or bad,
important, worthwhile, desirable and worth striving for
in any particular society. Therefore, in this sense, it
may be appropriate to define development as the:
For further clarification, it may be useful to x-ray the
foregoing definition of the concept of development. It
is, for instance, important to note that while elements
of economic and physical growth are inherent in this
conceptualization, it will amount to a misnomer to
equate growth with development.

While both are interrelated, and at times
wrongly interchangeably used, it must be made clear
that growth may not necessarily lead to development.
Growth is about numbers, which may include “tangible,
quantitative macro-economic development in terms of
economic indices such as increase in income per capita,
increase in output and GDP, increase in external
reserves, increased trade revenue, and balance of
payments surplus, etc” (Oluwa, 2012:16). On the other
hand, development is about qualitative improvement in
the living conditions of the citizenry in terms of basic
human needs and necessities, which make life
comfortable for the people and enhance their standard
of living. These basic necessities include food,
drinkable water, shelter, health care, public sanitation,
education, job opportunities and infrastructure. In simple
terms, while growth emphasizes increase in the amount
of money and physical facilities, development is more
concerned with the number of people who are directly
affected, in positive terms, by this increase.

Quite importantly, it should be noted that at
the core of these enumerated provisions by any modern
government or state is its most primary and fundamental
purpose, the security of lives and properties of the
citizens and other legal residents. In other words, there
must be a minimum level of assurance for safety from
any form of attack or unnecessary injury. In Nigeria,
for instance, this objective has always formed a
substantial part of the opening of its constitution, while
it was also part of the inaugural pronouncements made
by successive military regimes in the country. In
relatively more recent times, especially since the
reintroduction of civil rule in 1999, the safety of human
lives and properties also formed the core components
of the National Economic Empowerment and
Development Strategy (NEEDS), the “Seven Point
Agenda”, and the “Transformation Agenda” under the
Obasanjo, Yar’Adua and Jonathan administrations
respectively.

Obviously, it is also in tandem with the eight
Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that were set
at the 2000 UN Millennium Summit. Basically, these
goals are designed to:

...Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger; achieve
universal primary education; promote gender equality
and empower women; reduce child mortality; improve
maternal health; combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other
diseases; ensure environmental sustainability; and
develop a global partnership for development (UN,
2000).

A careful appraisal of these goals shows that
they are essentially targeted at ensuring a more secured
environment, with particular focus on the most
vulnerable groups—women and children, whose
condition also have the most telling effects on the
continuity of any human society. However, beyond
safety and mere subsistence, there are some “feel good
factors” of development that are also in line with the
MDGs, which I will like to pinpoint. These include such
intrinsic issues as happiness, stable democracy, good
governance, peace, prosperity, human dignity, respect
for the rule of law, human rights, fair play, justice and
opportunities for self actualization among several
others. This is because, even as the attainments of
these goals vary from place to place, they constitute
the major “barometers and fundamental dynamics for
measuring meaningful development” (Oluwa, 2012:16).

Therefore, in the light of the immediate
foregoing, it is apt to note that although economic growth
is a fundamental aspect of development, a country or
society that is experiencing the former may not
necessarily have the latter. In other words, economic growth, which encompasses gross domestic product (GDP), per capita income and increased national wealth in general, can only lead to development when it is instrumental to greater access to the good things of life. These include such basic needs as food, shelter, education, affordable health services, political and economic freedom, and personal self-esteem, which come from “an individual's capacity to participate in meaningful and socially productive interactions with other members of the community” (Olopoenia, 1998:3).

Remarkably, this idea on the concept of development and access, by a large population of people in a particular community, to certain essentials of life, which also conforms to the utilitarian concept of “the greatest happiness for the greatest number” by Jeremy Bentham (see Leeds, 1981:74), is a profound statement on the deep and broad interface between economics and politics. Take for example, certain characteristics of democracy like the effective participation in the choice of representatives and leaders, transparency and accountability make it a governmental or political system with a higher probability of development. In more practical terms, in view of the fact that it contributes to the reduction of corruption, poverty and general deprivation, while it also enhances human capacity building, higher literacy level and a generally conducive environment, “democracy or whatever title is given to any form of participatory and open government is a desideratum for development” (Mimiko, 2012:2). With specific examples from Nigeria’s relatively recent experience (1999-2012), I will discuss more about the correlation between democracy, meritocracy and development in a subsequent section of this paper.

However, it is also pertinent to discuss underdevelopment because it has, over the years, been an albatross for Nigeria. Obviously, underdevelopment is not the absence of development because each society has developed in one way or the other, and to a greater or lesser extent. Thus, underdevelopment makes a lot of sense only “as a means of comparing levels of development” (Rodney, 1972:21). It is very much tied to the “fact that human social development has been uneven and from a strictly economic viewpoint some human groups have advanced further by producing more” (Rodney, ibid), becoming wealthier. Disturbingly, in spite of Nigeria’s huge population of more than 155 million people (2011 official estimate), its phenomenal earnings from the sale of crude oil, extensive arable land and favourable climatic conditions, and the commercial availability of natural resources like tin, columbite, iron ore, lead, zinc, natural gas and limestone among others, which the Federal Government admits (Government Year Book 2012), the country is still for instance, classified as less developed than Botswana and South Africa among other less endowed countries on the African continent. Take, for example, while Nigeria’s “GDP per capita is $260, with a real GDP per capita at purchasing power parity estimated at $1,351” (Otobo, 2005:292), Botswana as at the same time had a GDP per capita that stood at “$2,600-the third highest in Africa” (Ayeni, 2005:193). For South Africa, the GDP per capita stood at #2,141, while life expectancy, according to the UNDP human development index was 63.7 years as against Nigeria’s 50 years.

Although Nigeria has a far higher population figure than Botswana and South Africa, with 1.5 million and 42.5 million people (2001 official estimates) respectively, it can be argued that even if the situation is reversed, both countries will probably still be more developed than Nigeria in view of their purposive efforts on human capital and physical infrastructural development. This, for instance, is exemplified by their modern systems of roads, motorways and substantial budgetary provisions for education which, unlike in Nigeria, must have accounted for the regular good ranking of universities in these countries and the rare occurrence of disruption of academic activities by workers’ strikes among other factors. Meanwhile, this paper’s choice of figures for the year 2005 is quite instructive. This is mainly because the year not only coincided with the phenomenal increase in Nigeria’s external reserves, but also marked the much-publicized settlement of the country’s foreign debts, to the Paris
Clubs of creditors, by the Obasanjo administration. Yet, all of these did not significantly translate to development. Obviously, this is largely because Nigeria’s economic riches and endowments have not positively affected the living conditions of the vast majority of the ordinary citizens. Dimensions of deprivation and lack of widespread access to governance as well as participation in public affairs that are generally traceable to official corruption and abuse of privileges will be analyzed in details in a subsequent section of the paper.

Meanwhile, what is leadership all about and how is it related to the actualization of development goals? To begin with, it is necessary to note that leadership is a concept with a very wide applicability. Therefore, in order not to embark on a futile exercise, I will not attempt to construct an ultimate or universal definition. Nonetheless, it is pertinent to offer some fundamental explanations that can deepen our understanding of the concept of leadership. To start with, leadership is applicable to all forms of human assemblage or collectivities. In this sense, whether formally or informally, leadership must involve other people—subordinates or followers. By their willingness to accept directions from the leader, “group members help define the leader’s status and make the leadership process possible” (Stoner and Wankel, 1986:445). In other words, without subordinates, all the leadership qualities of a particular individual—administrator, politician, president, governor or manager, who wears the title of leader at a point in time, would be irrelevant.

Drawing from this, leadership can be described as one of the “intrinsic elements for efficient and effective management and administration and it is very important in setting and attaining organizational goals” (Okunade, 2008b:14). By inference, if leadership is important to administration and administrative goals, then it must also be important to the progress of civilization because “a break-down of civilization is said to be the product of administrative break-down” (Beard, 1941). To this extent, leadership is therefore important in development and problem solving.

In the light of the immediate foregoing, it may not be totally correct to postulate that leadership has no precise or accurate definition, even with the general consensus that the concept lacks an ultimate delineation. This is mainly because of the existence of some generalized attributes, which may be collated and used in the operationalization of the concept of leadership. In this sense, in my own opinion, the term can be used to refer to life experiences and life chances that:

(i) Imbue a person with a vision and a set of goals;
(ii) Endow that person with the skill to articulate the vision and the goals in such a way as to attract a significant following;
(iii) Provide the person with the skill to specify the means and to organize and mobilize the followers towards the realization of the vision and goals; and
(iv) Give that person sufficient understanding of the followers in order to devise and pursue goals that are rewarding to both the leader and followers (Adebayo, 2007:9-10).

In addition, experiences across the ancient, medieval and contemporary ages clearly showed that a leader must also have some personal attributes, which make set goals, especially in terms of sustainability or reforms and transformation, attainable. These include imaginativeness (active mind and wisdom), firm character, clear conscience, disciplined personal lifestyle and stewardship (Opua, 1995:9-10). All or most of these have, over the years, been repeatedly mentioned in the cases of leaders like Winston Churchill, Franklin Roosevelt, Joseph Stalin, Adolf Hitler, Abdel Nasser, Lee Kwan Yee, Mao Tse Tung and several others who turned the fortunes of their countries around at different points in time. On Nigeria’s home front, names like Murtala Muhammed, Muhammadu Buhari, Nuhu Ribadu and Dora Akunyili are, for example, also frequently mentioned in connection with the restoration of discipline, in the country, as Head of State or head of a particular agency.
However, with special reference to the famous Accra, Ghana, speech by President Barack Obama of the United States of America, during his first presidential trip to Africa, in 2009, there may be a need for further clarifications especially in respect of what a single individual is capable of doing. On the other hand, it also may be looked at from the angle of the dangers associated with concentrating powers in a single individual. Supposedly, that was why Obama stated clearly that “Africa does not need strong men, it needs strong institutions”. Obviously, this statement is logical against the background of the several ills associated with the many examples of “Strong Men” and “One man” regimes in Africa’s relatively recent past.

In the light of this, it may be appropriate to ask whether a tree can make a forest. Similarly, we may ask whether the dichotomy between the emphasis on leadership and emphasis on institutions, is an example of a clash of civilizations. In my opinion, while a tree cannot make a forest, the latter can actually start with a proper and effective nurturing of the former. This assertion can help in addressing the second question because functional institutions are often built around assertive, progressive and result-oriented individuals, who lead by examples. In other words, the examples of Nuhu Ribadu and Dora Akunyili as heads of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and the National Agency for Food and Drugs Administration and Control (NAFDAC) respectively, and a host of others who have successfully managed public and private institutions in Nigeria’s relatively recent history are clear manifestations that strong individuals make institutions work. Therefore, it is the absence of this kind of personalities, especially at top government levels, and the scant regard for due process and diligence that would have ensured capability and effectiveness for institutions in Nigeria that I will now attempt to discuss in the next section. Also, I will attempt to examine why some regimes that were generally proclaimed to be relatively better had the shortest stay in power. In all, efforts will be made to critically examine leadership in Nigeria as well as the casualness and criminal negligence that have, over the years, crept into governance in the country.

Leadership in Nigeria

Documentations on Nigeria’s socio-economic and political attainments, on one hand, and predicaments, on the other, especially in respect of political leadership are fairly extensive. However, the 1983 study by Chinua Achebe, *The Trouble with Nigeria*, in which the author singled out poor and ineffective leadership as the country’s most obvious obstacle to development, stands out. Obviously, this is not to say that the other numerous scholarly works, some of which I will highlight in a subsequent part of the paper and in which serious problems like the manipulation and politicization of ethnicity, political corruption, violence, instability as well as other socio-economic and political ills are analyzed, are less relevant to the fortune and misfortune of Nigeria. Rather, earlier scholarly efforts like Schwarz (1965), Nicolson (1969), Coleman (1958), Crowder (1962), Dudley (1973), Mackintosh (1966) Ekeh (1975) and Nnoli (1978) among several others are in my opinion, the platform on which Achebe’s efforts (1983) as well as several prominent ones were built.

It should be noted that the combination of colonialism, ethnicization of politics and politicization of ethnicity, political corruption as well as the subsequent discovery of oil and the poor management of the phenomenal earnings from the sale of crude oil, which many of the enumerated publications advanced, accounted for poor governance and the evident underdevelopment in Nigeria. Take for example, the factors of colonialism, the forceful coming together of the country’s diverse ethnic nationalities, as well as its large and rapidly growing population, which inhabited an environment within elusive and difficult to police borders, cannot be overemphasized. Indeed, governing such a country would task the most “auspicious governance clime to its very wits” (Olukotun, 2012: 20). It was, therefore, not surprising that Britain merely administered Nigeria, through a remotely controlled arrangement of indirect rule system, leaving the “natives” to worry about the hard grind of constituting political order” (Olukotun, ibid).
However, in spite of this, great emphasis was still placed on competence in the recruitment of office holders and leaders in general. This, to a large extent, was quite obvious in the level of infrastructural development, educational advancement, relative comfort and general well being of the citizens across the then regional governments. Indeed, it must be noted that the combination of all these factors account for the description of the First Republic as Nigeria’s golden era, even almost fifty years after its collapse. Nevertheless, the coup against the government of the First Republic indicated something fundamental about the country. In my view, this fundamental issue is both simple and complex in character. For ease of reference, I will adopt the statement, which succinctly describes the fundamental issue as “arriving least prepared at every critical juncture in the country’s political history” (Tinubu, 2010: xxiv). Juxtaposing this assertion on ill-preparedness with the popular aphorism, which equates failure to plan with planning to fail, it becomes necessary to draw out certain salient points, especially in respect of the imperatives of leadership during some political milestones in the life of Nigeria. Also, in view of the fact that the “quality of leadership in any society is a mirror of the led” (Olokode, 2012: 20), it is equally important to ask some questions on the type of followership, which has for more than five decades refused to openly oppose a rudderless government or strongly support a progressive regime in the country.

This simple but complex problem plagued the country at independence. This was mainly because, in spite of the prominence of leading political figures like Sir Ahmadu Bello, Dr. Nnamidi Azikwe and Chief Obafemi Awolowo, who contributed immensely to the relative development in the then Northern, Eastern and Western regions as I articulated earlier, there was unhealthy rivalry and intolerance, especially in respect of the control of the central government. And, to the extent that personal ambitions, which sometimes led to failure to play according to the rule of the game, seemed to have overshadowed the politics of national integration and development at that point in time, it may be appropriate to aver that the entire process was reduced to “a narrow conception of politics” (Okunade, 2008a:20). By this, rather than apply politics for the altruistic purpose of public good and overall development of the people, it was reduced to a mere contest for political office and the competition for its spoils.

The same problem plagued the country at the advent of military rule in 1966. With the revolutionary ideals espoused by Major Chukwuma Kaduna Nzeogwu, leader of the coup, which terminated the First Republic, especially in respect of the alleged corruption and general abuse of official positions by the leading political figures in that dispensation, it momentarily appeared as if Nigeria’s promising beginning would be restored. However, the coup only led to the killing of some prominent political figures and not to the take over of power by the coup planners. So, those who staged the coup did not take power; and those who took power did not share the supposed revolutionary and ideological fervor of the coup plotters. In a way, Major-General J.T.U Aguiyi-Ironsi who emerged at that historic juncture, as Nigeria’s first military Head of State was not prepared for the leadership position that he assumed. The result included the counter-coup of July 1966 and the revenge ethnic killings of Igbos in the North, springing from allegations that the killings from the first coup deliberately targeted some sections of the country. Apparently, the counter-coup also led to a breakdown of the command chain in the military, as the then Lt. Colonel Chukwuemeka Odumegwu-Ojukwu, military governor of the defunct Eastern Region, refused to recognize Colonel Yakubu Gowon and his administration, which emanated from the counter-coup.

Subsequent coups and counter-coups, from Generals Murtala Muhammed, Olusegun Obasanjo, Muhammadu Buhari, Ibrahim Babangida and Sani Abacha, to General Abdulsalami Abubakar, who handed over to the civilian administration, which commenced the Fourth Republic in 1999, were generally nothing but dissatisfaction with leadership. However, it should be noted that the Murtala
Muhammed and Muhammadu Buhari regimes are often singled out to have performed better, in terms of the restoration of discipline and relative orderliness in Nigeria's public life, while the others are rated either below average or totally poor. Meanwhile, a critical examination of the short tenures of the Murtala Muhammed and Buhari regimes, 1975-1976 and 1983-1985 respectively, as well as the failure of Nzeogwu to form a government may evoke a question. Would Nigeria have fared better under a longer reign by any of these three?

In my own opinion, although all the procedures that led to the emergence of these military officers were defective, they could have laid the proper foundation for Nigeria's developmental take-off. Indeed, from the United States of America, Western Europe and up to the relatively recent history of countries like Malaysia, Singapore and some others that are described as the “Asian Tigers”, the world’s history is replete with examples of “effective leadership under the regimes of strongmen produced by the military” (Akinyemi, 2012: 17). These include Franklin Roosevelt (USA), Winston Churchill (UK), Adolf Hitler (Germany), Joseph Stalin (Russia) and Lee Kwan Yee (Singapore). Nigeria could have also been a success story if it is allowed to be ruled by a directional strongman. Paradoxically, the Murtala Muhammed and Muhammadu Buhari regimes, the two most prominent examples of strongmen regimes that could have probably served the purpose were shortened abruptly. Several reasons could have accounted for this. In the first instance, it could be because of the fact that the generality of the followers who had been let down repeatedly by their leaders lacked the patriotic zeal to endure when the agenda of a transformational leader brings some initial pains. Therefore, they regarded the administrative and leadership style of the Buhari regime, in particular, as too harsh to be supported. Secondly, some internal contradictions that were largely based on ethno-religious and other similar considerations, in the military itself, could also have been responsible. Thirdly, and quite importantly, the lack of sustainable effective leadership, which had over the years hampered the functionality of institutions in the country, also fuelled the lack of control and checks on the part of competitors. Thus, the military’s most devastating socio-economic legacies in the country, corruption and impunity, have continued; even in spite of the reintroduction of civil rule, to confront Nigeria’s developmental aspirations. Indeed, Stepan (1994), Diamond (2004) and Chang and Hill (2010) as well as a host of others have made insightful submissions on the effects of the absence of horizontal and vertical accountability checks in most parts of the less developed countries across the world. In a way, this also points to the many problems that could be caused by the permanency of strongmen in office. Therefore, once order is established, institutional capacity building should be the ultimate.

Looking back, the 1979 reintroduction of civil rule and the commencement of the defunct Second Republic could be taken as an example of another historic juncture where the aloofness, casualness and negligence of political leadership plagued Nigeria. It should, for instance, be noted that having commenced thirteen years after the collapse of the First Republic, the democratic experiment was accompanied by high hope of a fresh beginning and the restoration of the country’s path to development. However, the lack of readiness, particularly on the part of the leaders, manifested again in so many ways. These included the controversial nature of the general elections, but more importantly, the presidential aspect of the exercise, and the equally controversial judicial resolution of the latter. In addition to this foundation, which in my opinion exemplified “legalistic morality”, and the legitimacy crisis that characterized the entire process, the lacklustre performance by the Shehu Shagari administration and the massively rigged 1983 general elections combined to further erode the capacity of the government to develop Nigeria. Although disturbing, all of these appeared sufficient for the 1983 coup, which once again derailed the developmental aspirations of a country that appeared so unready to imbibe the values of good governance.
Another great opportunity that was squandered was the 1993 electoral mandate given to Bashorun Moshood Abiola. For different reasons which, in my opinion, included general dissatisfaction with military rule, evident drop in the standard of living of the ordinary citizens and the overwhelming affection for Abiola’s personality, the latter secured an unprecedented pan-Nigeria mandate. Once again, Nigeria’s albatross, the unreadiness of its leaders to act decisively at critical moments, reared its head when General Babangida, for reasons generally regarded personal, cancelled the results of an election widely reported as the freest in the history of the country. Similarly, although the generality of the ordinary citizens and the civil society in the South West of the country rose stoutly to condemn the annulment, the failure of the followers in the other parts of Nigeria; particularly in the North, was a kind of indictment for the leadership of this segment of the country’s social structure failed to act decisively at that critical juncture.

Meanwhile, the tumultuous aftermath of the annulment left very few in doubt as to the difficulty of actualizing developmental goals and aspirations at that point in time. However, may be like in some other environments, where mass protests during periods of political decay were seized to lay the foundation for development, the opportunity could have served a profoundly useful purpose for Nigeria. Incidentally, this was not so in the case of Nigeria as the coup, in which General Sani Abacha replaced Chief Ernest Shonekan, Head of the Interim National Government (ING), further drove the country into a praetorian situation. That experience did not merely refer to the predominance of the military in politics but, to “the absence of effective political institutions capable of mediating, refining and moderating group political actions” (Huntington, 1968; Diamond, 1997). This evident descent into anarchy and drift towards the abyss, which could have effected a fundamental change in some other climes, did not abate until Abacha’s death in 1998. With his death and the short transition programme of the Abdulsalami Abubakar military regime, the stage was set for another great opportunity in Nigeria’s socio-economic and political life. Although the programme was also criticized for its many flaws, particularly in respect of the alleged “designed agenda of bringing to power a particular candidate or a candidate from a particular group or zone” (Onuoha, 2004: 34), and the not so transparent funding of party activities and elections, many of which are well documented, it still had great potentials that could have been harnessed for a break-through in the country’s developmental aspirations.

These potentials, which I will attempt to analyze more deeply in the next section of the paper, included the evidently battered image of the military, both as a profession and a ruling class, and the subsequent emergence of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, who is presumably respected for his possession of vast knowledge and experience in governance, as the first President of Nigeria’s Fourth Republic.

Overview of the Fourth Republic
In what particular ways did the problem of leadership ill-preparedness affect the Fourth Republic between 1999 and 2012? In order to prevent this from spreading further into the year 2013 and, possibly, beyond, what could be done? In the attempt to address these pertinent questions, I will adopt the collaborative and complementary roles, which are supposed to exist between three key sectors of any society-government, business and citizens, for my analysis. In other words, the supposed civic engagement between these three sectors, which should engender economic productivity, progressive competitiveness and, ultimately, human development is quite adaptable for the analysis here. However, out of these three sectors that interact to crystallize the productivity and competitiveness of societies; it is the combination of the political class and the public sector leadership, according to Ezekwesili (2011:19) that “is ultimately most responsible for how well the country performs”.

In accordance with the assertion in the immediate foregoing, which appears logical to me, I will concentrate on the public sector while also drawing relevant inferences from the private sector and the civil society as a whole. It may be necessary to note
that the rationale behind the assertion on the pivotal role of the public sector is basically hinged on the fact that it is made up of two critical layers, the political leaders "who are subject to more frequent turnover based on constitutionally-mandated electoral processes" that promote democratic competition on the one hand, and the tenure-track civil service with a considerably longer mandate "to manage the bureaucracy that helps translate the vision of the former into concrete deliverables in the form of services to the citizens" (Ezekwesili, ibid).

Whereas the political actors and the government they head derive their legitimacy from the electorate, the civil or public servants comprising officials of the ministries, departments, agencies and, parastatals derive their legitimacy from a competitive professional process, in which they are recruited based on a conviction that they are capable of implementing policies and executing projects as decided by the political class for the benefit of the generality of the citizens. Another important aspect of this process is that the political leadership can to a very large extent "determine the quality of the technocratic leadership of the public service through the appointments it makes regarding the heads of public institutions" (Ezekwesili, ibid). The importance of this assertion, particularly in respect of the possible abuse by the political leadership and its effects on the actualization of developmental goals will be analyzed in the course of this paper.

Having highlighted key aspects of contemporary public sector leadership which, incidentally, constitute the core of the enabling factors for the attainment of development in many parts of the world, it becomes necessary to inquire why Nigeria’s thirteen-year old democratization is yet to significantly impact on its developmental aspirations? In my opinion, it may be appropriate to address this issue; first, by critically looking at the enthronement of the political leadership from 1999. It should be recalled that the conduct and outcome of the 1999, 2003, 2007 and, to a lesser extent, the 2011 elections were characterized by violence and controversies. In the case of the 1999 electoral exercise, there was the widespread allegation that the Abubakar regime, in collaboration with the military High Command, established or constituted the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in a manner to implement “an already designed agenda of bringing to power a particular group or zone” (Onuoha, op cit: 34). The immediate implication of this agenda to install a predetermined candidate is far-reaching, in that it suggests that INEC was remotely controlled and could neither have been independent nor unbiased in its overall conduct. Incidentally, just as Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, PDP’s presidential candidate and eventual winner in the election enjoyed the overwhelming support of retired Army Generals, in terms of finance and logistics, most other candidates of the party, who also won in subsequent contests in several other lower levels, benefited from a patronage system, which made the ruling party the most attractive to different shades of office seekers. Obviously, in Nigeria’s political game that is rarely played according to widely acceptable rules in the advanced and even developing democracies, the party has, so far, been accused of offences capable of thwarting the process of actualizing development goals.

Meanwhile, in the final report on the 1999 elections, issued by the Carter Center and the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, it was succinctly noted that:

*There was wide disparity between the number of voters observed at the polling stations and the final results that have been reported from several states. Regrettably, therefore, it is not possible for us to make an accurate judgment about the outcome of the presidential election* (Alao, 2004:V).

The seriousness of this observation, which should not be diminished by remarks such as “vote rigging is commonplace in developed democracies too”, can help in explaining why electoral fraud fuelled the legitimacy crisis, which confronted the government between 1999 and 2003 as well as its impact on the overall ability to attain development goals then and in many subsequent years.
Disturbingly, subsequent electoral processes and the actual conduct of the 2003 and 2007 general elections were more characterized by irregularities, controversies and violence. Take, for example, the initial refusal of INEC to register more political parties; in addition to the three that participated in the 1999 exercise, was only resolved by a court verdict in 2002. In addition, there was a gale of impeachment threats and the actual impeachment of Governors Alamieyeseigha, Dariye, Ladoja and Fayose of Bayelsa, Plateau, Oyo and Ekiti States respectively; all of which were widely criticized in view of the handling. Although this is not to say that all the allegations of abuse against the then governors were unfounded. Similarly, the number of electoral victories that were determined by court orders increased. These, for instance, included the governorship election cases in Ondo, Edo, Osun and Ekiti, which favoured Governors Mimiko, Oshiomhole, Aregbesola and Fayemi respectively. All of these caused unnecessary waste of resources, distractions and generally heated up the polity.

Obviously, the more partisan interest of the then Obasanjo administration, which unsurprisingly was higher than that of its predecessor and the resentment against the ruling PDP that was accused of attempting to destabilize other parties as well as other related factors like internal wranglings within the ruling party itself contributed to the increase in the observed negative activities. However, in another vein, the registration and participation of more political parties, in a way, helped in “redirecting the venom, anger and the internecine blood letting, which disappointments with party nominations could have resulted in” (Ogunsanwo, 2003:14). Nonetheless, there were still reported cases of manipulated party lists, wherein new names, especially those of disqualified candidates during primaries, replaced the already submitted ones even after INEC’s deadline for submission (Ogunsanwo, 2003:16). At the end of these two major electoral exercises, there were unassailable evidences that they did not measure up to the universal standards for free and fair elections upon which legitimacy is often anchored (Ugochukwu, 2009:1). In 2003, for instance, the evidence provided at the Election Tribunal in Anambra State led to the nullification of the victory earlier handed to senators elected on the platform of PDP and the subsequent declaration of electoral success for candidates from the same party who had actually won the primary elections; while the effects of the various damning reports after the 2007 exercise cannot be underestimated. While Nigeria’s own independent Observers Group called the 2007 elections “a sham”, the European Union as well as other observers were very critical of the role of INEC. According to the latter body, INEC “usurped the role of Nigerians in determining the legitimacy of the outcome of the election; therefore, the whole electoral process cannot be considered to have been credible” (Okunade, 2008a:11) Above all, the setting aside of several results like the governorship in Ondo, Edo, Ekiti and Osun States as well as many legislative positions, by the Election Tribunals, appellate Courts and Supreme Court, clearly showed that so many things were wrong with the 2007 elections. Similarly, this position was further strengthened by the open declaration by the then President Yar’Adua that the process, through which he and several others were elected, was largely flawed and, therefore, his attempt at electoral reform with the Muhammadu Uwais Reform Committee (see Ugochukwu, 2009).

Meanwhile, at some other points in time, it should be noted that President Obasanjo’s aborted attempt at term extension, “third term agenda”, as well as other acts that constituted executive lawlessness and impunity, or “imperial dispositions of the executive branch and the unnecessary distractions by the legislatures” (Gboyega, 2003), combined to adversely affect service delivery and the attainment of development goals in general. Disturbingly, except for Lagos State and, perhaps, a few others, the story is not significantly different in most of the federating states. They are probably worse at the local council levels where, for instance, as at 2012, preventable diseases like cholera, malaria and others still killed thousands of rural and urban-slum dwellers; just as
flood destroyed homes and farmlands, and displaced thousand families across the country (Adebiyi, 2012:20)

Again, although the 2011 presidential election, in which Dr. Goodluck Jonathan was elected, and almost all the other electoral contests under Professor Attahiru Jega’s leadership of INEC1ave, so far, helped in reducing “the arranged election abracadabra” (Olukotun, 2012:64), the conduct and results of elections are yet to significantly prove that they are formidable sources of legitimacy for leaders or avenues through which the culture of silence and docility among the led could effectively be broken.

For the second aspect of the broad classification of leadership in the public sector, which was highlighted in a preceding section – the civil service, I will start by looking critically at the probable abuses in the process of appointing heads of ministries or other sensitive departments by the leadership of the political class, as well as the possible adverse effects on development. In the first place, my analysis of the poor conduct of INEC, particularly in terms of the compromise of the agency’s umpire status may not be totally unconnected with the mode of appointment of its successive leadership and the filling of other sensitive positions within the institution. In other words, cronyism and its features like mediocrity and sycophancy were most probably at play. Although, patronage and clientelism as well as similar other features that are antithetical to development had all along been part of Nigeria’s socio-economic and political life, it was expected that as part of the renewed hope of a fresh beginning brought about by the Fourth Republic, recruitment and appointments into the public bureaucracy will largely be on merit and encouraged to be assertive in its pursuit of development goals.

Therefore, the public service reforms, which included the vociferous campaign for due process, banking reform, education reform, pension reform, commercialization and privatization of many public corporations, as well as the establishment of anti-graft commissions like the Independent Corrupt Practices and allied offences Commission (ICPC) and the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) by the Obasanjo administration and the promise for their continuation by the subsequent Yar’Adua and Jonathan administrations were seen as steps in the right direction and generally applauded both within and outside Nigeria. However, soon after the initial applause, it became apparent that there were several non-altruistic and anti-development agenda behind the facade of the policy moves and institutional arrangements. Take, for example, despite the reforms and even the subsequent Review of the Reform Processes by the Jonathan administration, wastages and financial imprudence that are neither attributes of good leaders nor part of development aspirations still characterize the Nigerian system.

In this connection, the jumbo salaries and allowances collected by the legislators, most senior political office holders and similar others and their effects on budgetary provisions for the recurrent and capital sectors of the economy can be cited as specific examples. At a public forum in August 2013, Mrs. Obiageli Ezekwesili, one-time member of the Obasanjo administration’s national economic team; for instance, noted that for 8 years up to 2013, the National Assembly alone received “N1trillion for salaries, allowances and other expenses” that largely fell under the recurrent sector (The Punch, August 20, 2013, p.2). In the light of this, recurrent expenditure for allowances which, when added up, will shoot up the “total annual pay of a House of Representatives member to an estimated sum of as much as N146.4 million” (Sunday Punch, August 4, 2013). Even with the basic pay of $189,000, the Nigerian lawmaker is second only to his Australian counterpart, who earns “$201,200 per annum” (Sunday Punch, ibid). This is quite outrageous and antithetical to the development of Nigeria because while $201,200 is just three times Australia’s Gross Domestic Product per person, the $189,000 earned by a Nigerian legislator is “16 times Nigeria’s GDP per person” (Sunday Punch, ibid).

Granted that Nigeria is the sixth largest producer of crude oil in the world, it is curious that the country also “harbours one of the largest populations of the poor in the world” (Sunday Punch, ibid). With a minimum wage of N18,000 (less than $120) a month,
for the privileged few who are engaged in the formal sector, as against a greater fraction of the population largely constituted by those in the informal sectors and several others who are unemployed, this indirectly confirms the general opinion that up to 70 per cent of the entire population still live on less than the United Nations poverty threshold of $2 per day. How can a country justify paying a class of public servants $189,000 per annum, while it cannot pay several others less than $120 per month? This is part of the incongruities that can lead to “serious distortions in the social structure” (Sunday Punch, ibid), and as well impede development in the country. It also explains why, as at 2012, “70 per cent of the annual budget” (Nwachukwu, 2012:20), went to recurrent expenditure, with 30 per cent left for capital projects. With such arrangement, it should not be difficult to explain why the country lags behind in the provision of basic amenities for the generality of its citizens and it is, in contemporary times, regularly classified by the United Nations Development Programme and many other similar international agencies as an abysmal performer and an underdeveloped country.

In view of the adverse effects of this system, particularly in terms of infrastructural decay and deficit, its negativity on the living conditions of the generality of the people and the long term impact on the actualization of development goals, several suggestions have over the years been made to address the obviously bloated public sector. Out of these, the intervention by Mr. Sanusi Lamido of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN). “ canvassing a 50 per cent cut in the public sector workforce, a drastic pruning down of the legislature, the 36-state structure as well as the number of local government areas” (Boyo, 2012:96), appeared quite radical, thought provoking and, probably, controversial.

No doubt, downsizing or retrenchment, as it is often called in Nigeria, is one of the necessary steps to take in view of the huge burden of cost of governance. However, as past experiences, for instance in the era of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) and similar others (see Forrest 1995; Dibie 2000; etc); showed, such reductions were often followed by backdoor swellings of the workforce through several unmanned entry points. This, in my view, is essentially traceable to Nigeria’s clientele and patronage politics, and the need to address the general “distributive concerns”, which draw a huge population of the people towards the government. Nonetheless, there is obviously a need to redirect a system, which gives so much to recurrent expenditure and frivolities at the expense of capital and infrastructural development. Also, this calls for a proper scrutiny of the extent of damage by the age long problem of “ghost workers”, which also exacerbates the challenge of imprudence and wastefulness that have over years accompanied huge public wages in the country. Incidentally, this major problem, which is often either a deliberate creation of the overall leader in an organization or unit heads, remains a drain pipe on scarce developmental funds in spite of the acclaimed public service reforms since the beginning of the Fourth Republic.

Apart from the foregoing, the privatization and anti-graft aspects of the reform programme have, over the years, also exposed the leadership of the public bureaucracy to a lot of criticisms. While the Bureau of Public Enterprises (BPE), which coordinated the sale of several government enterprises as well as partnered with the Committee on the concessioning of public infrastructure, for the Private-Public Partnership programme, was severally criticized for sloppiness that led to the revocation of agreements like the re-construction of the Lagos – Ibadan Expressway and some others, especially in the power, telecommunications and building sectors; the anti-graft commissions were often faulted for their selective approach, which saw to the investigation, prosecution and punishment of many critics and ex-friends of the presidency at different points in time. However, this is not to say that any of the offenders were punished unjustly because they often could not prove their innocence.

In short, the thirteen-year old democratization in Nigeria (1999-2012) has, so far, performed
abysmally in term of meaningful actualization of development goals, which ordinarily should be the enhancement of the quality of lives of the generality of the citizenry by meeting their basic needs within the shortest possible time. In all of these, my position is that leadership in the public (political and technocratic), business and the civil society has not connected will with the ordinary citizens by fulfilling their wishes, yearnings, aspirations and needs. Surprisingly, this is also yet to propel the followership into some long awaited decisive actions that will break its silence and docility.

Concluding Remarks.
The actualization of development goals in Nigeria's more than five decades history of political independence is evidently dismal. Whether in terms of physical infrastructure and economic growth that are often mistaken for development, in many parts of the world, or the more universally acceptable goals like the provision of drinkable water, shelter, food, healthcare, public sanitation, education and job opportunities among others, which enhance qualitative improvement in the living conditions of the generality of people in a particular society and which incidentally, are largely in tandem with the relatively recent United Nations adopted, MDGs, the statistics of performance in Nigeria are dismal. The paper observed that this is in spite of the numerous programmes under successive civilian and military administrations in the country. In more specific terms, particularly because of the high hope and aspirations for development, which accompanied the reintroduction of civil rule in 1999, it critically examined some probable factors and offered plausible explanations that could have accounted for the abysmal performance of such programmes as NEEDS, “Seven-Point” Agenda and Transformation Agenda under the Obasanjo, Yar’Adua and Jonathan administrations respectively.

In all, the paper pinpointed ineffective leadership, especially at critical junctures in the country’s political history, as the most pungent factor in its evident inability to actualize development goals.

More disturbingly, it noted the trivial approach by President Jonathan who, on the eve of Nigeria’s 52nd independence anniversary, in October 2012, launched a one year national prayer session. This programme, in which the ordinary citizens and followers in general were requested to offer prayers as well as intercede for the government; in a way, portrays the government and its leadership as unserious. It must be noted that the ordinary Nigerians that are mostly hungry, angry and pilloried into poverty and general deprivation, apparently by the inadequacies of successive leaders in the country, will most probably pray for the success of a leader who, first and foremost, provides effective direction for the rectification of the existing order. More so, there is hardly any evidence of a society in the ancient, medieval or contemporary age, where development goals and aspirations were actualized through prayers alone.

Rather than emphasize prayers and spirituality, the focus, in my opinion, should first and foremost be the emergence of strong leadership at all levels of government. No doubt, effective public sector emerges where there is strong leadership capacity for it, particularly at the highest level of political authority. The criticality of the public sector’s role in “national vision and strategy formulation, oversight and implementation” (Ezekwesili, 2011: op cit), cannot be overemphasized. Therefore, it compels every nation aspiring to be productive, competitive and among the developed, to endeavour to have strong and dynamic leadership in its public space and in all its institutions. In this connection, Nigeria needs both good leaders and good institutions. With good leaders, the present weak state institutions would be strengthened and made more effective. Thereafter, these institutions would mould the behaviour and performance of subsequent leaders, even when weak and non-performers emerge. In the light of this, it is the primary responsibility of politicians and bureaucrats to set rules and practices that enable the productivity and efficiency of their national economies and, in particular, for the actualization of development goals in Nigeria. However,
such a leader, leaders or leadership cannot just emerge out of the “blues”, its process of emergence must involve the followers who will either stoutly support a purposeful leadership or cause the replacement of the one, which they dislike for its dismal performance in the actualization of development aspirations and goals. Examples of these are replete in Singapore, Malaysia, Brazil, Indonesia, South Korea, Taiwan and, even Botswana among several others.

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