

**A REVIEW OF CHARLES NWEKE'S "DEMOCRACY, LEADERSHIP AND  
NATION BUILDING IN NIGERIA"**

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**Introduction**

What should constitute the ideal social or political order remains the bane in social and political philosophy. Aware that the thrust of democracy anywhere is determined hugely by the manner and style of leadership by which the system of government is run, any democracy driven by bad leadership not only stunts nation building but engenders expedition for political alternatives. Democracy has been adjudged as one form of socio-political system of leadership that provides an enabling environment for man to achieve all of his aspirations. This dogma over time has failed its adherents on the grounds of certain impediments to the exercise of true freedom. From a philosophical stance, this paper critically examines Nigerian democracy and identifies major leadership problems bedeviling Nigerian nation building. It proposes attitudinal-change based orientation of leadership for service as more dignifying and rewarding which in turn enhances progressive and sustainable development of Nigeria and indeed Africa.

Plato was proposing for good governance when he said, "There will be no end to the troubles of the state or indeed of humanity until philosophers become kings or until those we now call kings really and truly become philosophers." There is no doubt that democracy has been acclaimed to be the best system of government across the globe because of its principle of freedom. It has also been widely criticized by many writers to contain two nagging principles; namely, liberty and equality. However, leprosy eating democracy in Nigeria does not only involve the abuse of these twin principles (liberty and equality), but also that of leadership, hence John Odey said in his attempt to describe Nigeria's democratic situation unmistakably "it is the governors and ministers who are now earnestly asking Obasanjo to continue to rule us without our consent" a statement that denies the justice to the freedom and the true spirit of leadership which are the hall-mark of democracy. The contemporary popularity of

democracy with much emphasis on rule of law, freedom and rights tends to have evolved from the Lockean social contract thesis with its stipulations of the prevalent democratic arms of government- the executive, legislative and judicial. Locke thought that the natural rights to life, liberty and property are to be best preserved in a democratic system of government and this is the thrust of this paper; to prescribe the best form of Democracy where altruistic leadership can aid nation building.

### **Democracy, Leadership and Nation building in Nigeria**

In his article, "Democracy, Leadership and Nation Building in Nigeria", Charles C. Nweke in his assessment of Leadership within Nigerian Democracy opined that Certain existential circumstances turn out concomitant to leadership features as leadership tends to strongly equate ruler ship, hence various systems of government embody appropriate ruler. No wonder Kimberly Pendergrass in his article "Leadership Philosophies" (2013), adumbrated nine leadership traits one of which is the democratic (participatory) leadership philosophy. He maintained that: "A leader who practices this leadership philosophy offers guidance to organization members while still being a part of the group. This type of leadership is democratic, considerate, participative, and consultative...it focuses on creating and maintaining good working relationships that are supportive and interactive. Followers are encouraged to participate and engage with the decision making process and their input is considered. This results in the group being more motivated and creative as a whole". Thus, from the above argument Charles C. Nweke posits that the leadership in Nigeria still lacks the satisfactory civility of Democratic governance. For him:

The thrust of democracy anywhere is determined hugely by the manner and style of leadership by which the system of government is run. Any democracy driven by bad leadership not only stunts nation building but engenders expedition for political alternatives (Nweke, 2015)

Nigeria is still in a subtle Military regime in her Democracy, this is evident from the of 'Leadership Challenges of Nigeria Democracy Military-in-Civilian Garb' when he stated that; Obasanjo's military approach to democratic rule popularized presidential arbitrary imposition of elective candidates with sheer impunity, a situation from which the citizenry developed the slogan 'selection' in place of election. The Odi military massacre of November 20, 1999 remains one of

the most undemocratic and ignoble actions of that administration. The military-styled democratic rule of the government which was nothing much short of despotism and dictatorship institutionalized the cankerworm of Nigerian democratic leadership- corruption. This I consent to giving the historic and incessant despotic tendencies in our democracy till date not denying also the high level of corruption in our public service especially with the age long recovery of the loots of General Sani Abacha even as we speak. On corruption he asserts that one of the greatest manifestations of corruption in Nigerian democratic leadership is the inability to ensconce a free and fair election as the judiciary considered the last hope of the common man is equally ensnared in collaborative corruption with the political bigwigs. Nigeria's Ethnic and Religious problem is blamed to the 1914 Lugardian amalgamation given that stable sovereignties are anchored on homogeneity and natural sense of indigenship without prejudice to certain multi-cultural polities that support the one Nigeria Spirit even though it remain a mirage of history.

Accruing to these problems, Philosophy becomes the universal remedy to good Leadership as a Parameter for Nigeria Nation Building as it basically beams its rational searchlight and providing socio-political theories and consequently foundational about the thesis of leadership as in the case of the forms of government in the works of Plato and Aristotle and especially those of Lockean social contract thesis. For such kind to be feasible in Nigeria democracy, philosophy would prescribe adequate capacity building for prospective leaders. We also blame the designers of the 1999 Nigerian constitution which the current democracy operates for making politics too open for people of low education to vie for political offices. As a solution, amendments to make stipulations for quality leadership based on some level of academic height will be laudable as no one is able to give what they don't have as many of them are simply and basically ignorant of the principles of democracy they are suppose to defend and uphold.

Plato placing high intellectual capacity as the greatest parameter for quality leadership which of course is found within the class of philosophers said, unless philosophers become kings, the society cannot progress developmentally. Plato philosopher king postulation signifies the import of critical thinking as a requisite for quality leadership even in a democratic setting and this paper recommends that for her political leaders as well the establishment of some institutions like Nigerian Institute of Peace and Strategic Studies (NIPS) together with other activities designed for leadership capacity building. Nevertheless,

critical thinking studies, with emphasis on leadership for service, are highly recommended as pre-requisite for any leadership position. Importantly, there ought to be legislation for constant compulsory leadership training for occupants of leadership offices in Nigerian democracy with pragmatic and sustainable policy implementation mechanisms.

### **Conclusion**

For Nigerian's democracy to thrive and enjoy stability, a service driven leadership and critical thinking orientation is required as this paper noticed corruption and ethno-religious politics as the major problems of leadership in Nigerian polity. Nigerian leadership must have Philosophers as their rulers as Plato recommended in his Republic.

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