

# POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: THE WORLD VIEW AND NIGERIA PERSPECTIVE

BY  
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## **Abstract**

*Political leadership and economic development are two sides of a coin. The success of one is a function of the success of the other. Political leadership worldwide is directed towards economic development (macro-economy) thereafter other types/forms of development set in. Political leadership in this regard is the constitutional leadership set up by the power of the constitution through the instrument and agency of democracy characterized by a functional rule of law. The world view of political leadership is based on the constitutional democratic system and application of the rule of law. Countries such as America, Britain, France, Germany and their respective leaders such as Obama, Theresa May, Angela Merkel etc. are examples of world leaders who have taken sides on democratic stance. Also, the world view of economic development is based on the system of Government in operation e.g. capitalism, fascism, socialism, totalitarianism etc. The above system is what guides the political leader on the direction to follow towards economic development. There are certain parameters used to know a good political leader and a healthy or good economic development. These include; true democracy, rule of law, high level of investment, industrialization, equality of income, low poverty rate, high level of independence, self-reliance etc. In Nigeria, successive governments since 1999 under democratic rule have different economic plans. Unfortunately, these plans have not led Nigeria to the state of economic and political independence. This can be attributed to poor leadership, unrealistic economic plans, corruption, terrorism, militancy, tribalism, etc. The democratic system and political leadership in Nigeria are still shaky and as such economic plans have not been realized. To be independent as a country, Nigeria has to practise true democracy and governance by of the rule of law.*

## **Introduction**

Leadership and development are two sides of the same coin, otherwise peripassu by nature. One cannot function without the other. The success of one is a function of the success of the other. There are difficult kinds of leadership ranging from traditional, religious, secular/charismatic, to constitutional leadership. Same goes to development which takes different dimensions such as political, economic, social etc. In both leaderships and development, one is the determinant factor of the other.

## **Types of Leadership**

Leadership with regard to this article is focused on political constitutional leadership with basic ingredients such as strong democratic values, rule of law, political stability etc. The focus here is on economic development which is the bed rock of the other kinds of development.

Therefore the leadership in the context is constitutional-political leadership based on sound democratic system as rated by global standard. Any economy that is independent, industrial, high human development index, current technological standard etc is developed or trying to break out of underdevelopment. This is what every political leader seeks to achieve.

## **The World View of Leadership**

As stated earlier, the focus of the work is on political leadership which is constitutionally embedded in democracy. Policies that lead to economic development are greatly influenced by the ideology of the leader (Sharma, Sadana and kaur 2011). Political leadership and personalities of the leaders are some of the several factors influencing policy. The world views every leader with the side of his ideology. Ideology is the basic or principle guiding the action of any leader Sharma (2011) “as a self containing and self justifying belief system that incorporates an over all world view and provides a basis for explaining all of reality” such ideologies include: liberalism, nationalism, fascism,

communism, capitalism, socialism etc. These ideologies are the basis which political leaders take sides hence policies that affect or give economic direction of a country.

### **Different World Leaders and their Ideologies**

The world by way of human activities i.e. active or inactive have polarized the world into two namely: Developed and developing or less developed world or countries. The political ideologies of leaders of these countries and how they shaped or formed their different economies that have distinguished them in the divide. An assessment of recent world leaders from the 20th century till date is the focus. This assessment comes along with their ideologies between the developed, developing and less developed countries.

A look at medieval political leaders through renaissance to modern political leaders who have shaped the economies of their respective countries to what it is today. Once again the focus is on modern political leaders who have embraced democracy and practised it to the later. Modern political leaders who have directed economic development in their respective countries include: Clinton, Obama of America, Margaret Thatcher, Tony Blair of Britain, Angela Merkel of Germany, Xi Jinping of China, etc.

The world view of a political leadership is viewed from the democratic stand point. How leaders have embraced democracy. Democracy dates back to the period of Greek philosophers and it is from the Greek words *demos* and *kratos* meaning power centered in the people. Peter and Joseph (2013) Joseph, W. et al (2004) summed up democracy thus “democracy may appeal to citizen in authoritarian setting’s because democratic regimes often ran among the world’s most stable, affluent, and cohesive countries”. They also stated that democracy is the bed rock of human desire for dignity and equality. In further explanation, democracy provides the enabling environment for investment as long as there is stability and security.

Various scholars look at democracy from different perspectives. Chand (2008) links democracy with economy. He states that no democracy will be complete without the democratization of industries with the strength of any nation (macro-economic). No society can development without industrialization and every political leader directs the economy towards economic development. No matter the system of government in existence whether socialism, capitalism, presidential or parliamentary system, the focus of government is on development which is a function of economy. The economic aspect of development is fundamental to any nations growth. As said earlier a nation is directed by policies formulated by political leader. Economic development range from industrialization, privatization, commercialization, self reliance, low level of importation over high level of exportation etc.

### **Indices of Economic Development**

Economic development is seen from the stand point of the welfare of the citizen, the consumption power and investment power are the yardsticks to measure economic development (Todaro 2011). As Todaro (2011) opined, “Economic development in the past has also been typically seen in terms of the planned alteration of the structure of production and employment so that agriculture share of declines and that of the manufacturing and service industry increases. Development strategies have therefore usually focused on rapid industrialization, often at the expense of agriculture and rural development”.

Economic development has indices such as: industrialization, investment, equality, multiple options, high per-capita income, employment, social services etc. the world view of economic development is embedded in the above indices of economic development. Therefore reduction in the level of poverty, inequality and employment leads to economic development of a system or society.

Advanced economic study ascribes economic growth to developed countries and economic development to developing or third world countries of the south that includes Nigeria. (Jningan, 2012). Therefore economic development in Nigeria is a conscious effort by the government to break away from underdevelopment to be termed developed nation.

## **Nigeria Perspective**

Nigeria political system can be termed to be developing. Democracy has been in existence in Nigeria for the past twelve years consecutively by counting from President Olusegun Obasanjo's era till date. Since President Obasanjo's era, democracy has continued to exist in Nigeria. This article is to give indication whether this is growth of democracy or decline. Elaigwu (2007) views democracy thus "as a system of government based on the acquisition of authority from the people, the institutionalization of rule of law, the emphasis on the legitimacy of rulers, the availability of choice and cherished values (including freedom), and accountability in governance" the above insight of democracy and more will give the guide to decide the growth and decline of democracy in Nigeria". Of course the bulk of the success or failure rest on the political leader. Inequality, investment, security, foreign policy, international relation, insurgency, poverty, literacy and infrastructure will assist in determining the level of growth of democracy.

Democracy came into existence after the military rule on May 29, 1999 led by President Olusegun Obasanjo termed the forth republic. The state of the economy before then was retrogressive. Obasanjo came up with economic development plans such as (NEED), National Economic Empowerment Development, Strategy Economic Empowerment Development, (SEED) and Local Economic Empowerment Development (LEED) amongst others (Folade, 2010). The questions therefore are: were the policies achieved or successful? was he able to keep to his campaign promises? did the poverty level reduce etc?

Then came President Shehu Musa Yar'adua who came into the presidency through the first democratically transited government. Yar'Adua became the first president to take over power from a civilian president in Nigeria. He came up with 7 point agenda on economic policies as he assumed office on May 29, 2007. The seven point agenda consisted of power and energy, food security and agriculture, wealth creation and employment, mass transportation, land reform, security, qualitative and functional education and pursuance of the rule of law. Yar'Adua added that his administration will focus on accelerating economic and other reforms in a way that makes a concentrate and visible difference to ordinary people (Ochiama, 2008). The proposed plan looked lofly and perfect to enhance economic development that will take Nigeria to the global stage. Unfortunately he did not live to see the conclusion of the program.

President Goodluck Jonathan's 9 point agenda include; rebuilding the North, ridding the region of boko haram, the inclusion of best materials from the North in his government, completion of power projects that will lift the power supply, the commercialization of the Nigeria National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC), reducing the number of out-of-school children in the North and across the country and strengthening the health sector, as well as move the strategic appointment of women in the cabinet (Nigeria tribunal). The plan or agenda was however supposed to be in second term plan should he have succeeded.

## **Related Issues**

Since the recent democratic governments of twelve years there are basic national issues that each government or political leader tries to tackle. Such include; failed public enterprise, deplorable state of infrastructure, poor power situation, obsolete educational facilities, instability of the currency, abject poverty, high cost of living, income inequality, high rise in insurgency, tribal killing, religious violence, insecurity, poor health facilities etc.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **Modernization Theory**

This theory explains how a nation moves from a traditional underdeveloped state to a modern developed state. Though the theory has not been attributed to anybody, notable scholars have contributed to it. The Maxist and capitalist have therefore contributed to the theory. The Maxist are of the opinion that as nations develops they will adopt the socialist approach to development while the capitalist are of the view that development comes through capitalism. Samuel Huntington (1971)

a modernization theorist opines “social mobilization and economic development were driving forces behind modernization”. He argues that societal change should be led by democracy.

Modernization is the transformation from uncivilized traditional system to modern developed world. This transformation is measured by western developed countries standards in area of economy, politics and social cultural behaviors.

Eisenstadt (1996) opines that “historically, modernization is the process of change towards those types of social, economic and political systems that have developed in western Europe and North America from the seventeenth century to the nineteenth and have spread to other European countries in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to South America, Asia and African continent”.

Every policy is directed towards utmost benefit of its citizens which is development. Policies are formulated by political leaders which affect the macro-economy. Therefore development is a function of political development. Every country plans and projects towards development which is likened to countries of the West such as America, Britain, France, Germany etc. Nigeria’s political leadership and economic plan is directed towards transformation from the traditional system to the modern.

### **Summary**

It is on record that the past political leaders in the present day democracy in Nigeria have all had economic development plans in Nigeria. The aims of these plans were to move Nigerian forward towards development by international standards. Each administration overlapped into the successive one without achieving the plans.

### **Conclusion**

The present day democracy in Nigeria has had political leaders who have focused on economic development as part of their plans to move the nation forward. However, these plans have not still changed the position of Nigeria from what it used to be from a dependent nation to a developed state. Such indices of economic underdevelopment still prevails such as lack of rule of law, poor level of investment and industrialization, brain drain, poor infrastructure, insecurity, poverty, illiteracy etc.

### **Recommendations**

No economy can grow without the political will of the leader to birth and implement ideas/policies that will engineer growth and development. Therefore the following recommendations are given:

- i. There should be absolute practices of the rule of law according to international standards without prejudice.
- ii. Political leaders should see themselves as servants and not masters.
- iii. Economic development plan should be void of sentiments and should not be politicized rather professionalism and merit should lead the way to economic development.
- iv. Security challenges should be handled professionally and tactfully to boost the confidence of investors.

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