

Towards a Paradigm Shift in Orientation of Nigeria Political Leaders

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ABSTRACT: Experiences, evidences, researches, etc, have shown that overwhelming majority of Nigeria leaders are bad and actually unpatriotic partly as a result of bad leadership orientation inherent in the foundation of the country's leadership system. As rightly pointed out by late professor Chinua Achebe, in his popular book titled "The Trouble with Nigeria", Nigeria leaders have been negatively oriented to deeply believe in corruption, indiscipline, social injustice, cult of mediocrity, false self image, selfishness, materialism and the likes. Mentality of most Nigeria leaders have been wrongly programmed through bad leadership education, wrong information, disappointing examples and other negative environmental factors. Due to the wrong mentality of our leaders, positions of leadership in the country have been commonly taken for many years now as golden opportunities to embezzle public fund, mismanage public resources, selfishly enjoy the "national cake", and do other things that are contrary to the principles of unwritten social contract which guides the tripartite relationship existing among Nigeria electorates, their leaders and their states. Result of all these have been various forms of suffering especially among the masses in the country. This ugly condition calls for positive change. As change agents, mass media are expected to play some roles toward such change. In this study, those roles have been critically and comparatively discussed.

Keywords: Paradigm Shift, Orientation, Nigeria leaders, Mass Media Roles

I. INTRODUCTION

The major causes of Nigeria problems are the failure of our leaders to offer patriotic leadership in reality. Since independence, Nigeria has mostly been under the control of corrupt leaders who are only after what the country can do for them instead of what they can do for the country [1,2,3,4]. As we know, Nigeria is one of the most blessed countries in the world in terms of human resources, natural resources, etc. But in terms of governance, the country is one of the unluckiest in the globe. Up till moment, vast majority of people in the country are finding life very difficult not mainly because of disadvantages placed on the country environment by nature but because of leadership failure. In view of this, Professor Achebe of the blessed memory stated that "the trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership [5,6]. There is nothing basically wrong with the Nigerian 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 (patriotism) leadership". This problem started many years ago under the administrations of some founding fathers of the country. High level of materialism and lusts for power did not start today among Nigeria leaders. The first set of the nation's indigenous leaders demonstrated them [7,8]. Some of the foundational leaders of the independent Nigeria consciously or unconsciously transferred bad leadership mentality to their successors who in turn extended it to subsequent sets. This unfortunate situation continued for years in the country in a chain manner, till the current period when bad leaders have dominated our society [9,10]. Our leaders at most have been spoilt by the effects of ethnicity/tribalism, mediocrity, social inequalities and injustices, corruption in high places, inter-meddling of foreign powers, etc. Due to bad influence of the above factors, most Nigeria leaders have over the years developed and maintained negative leadership principles with their subjective individual justifications. To the leaders, political leadership is all about selfish accumulation of wealth; violation of people's rights for personal benefits, living above the laws of the land, imposing personal choice on the masses among others. This is orientation they have received through bad examples of some past leaders. Their actions and inactions based on wrong understanding of leadership have resulted to failure of real democracy in Nigeria [11,12]. However, through some functional roles mass media can' contribute a lot towards re-orientation of our leaders. All hope is not lost in producing good leaders in Nigeria. With the help of media, they may be positive change in orientation of our leaders. Perhaps, such change will in turn bring about change in the people's social behaviour for the betterment of our society. By then, what late Professor Achebe Describe as "social miracle" will occur in Nigeria as a situation of surprising positive change in the ways things are done in our society [13,14].

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Majority of Nigeria political leaders have bad stereotypes and attitudes toward leadership. Their negative mind sets over governance have resulted to many problems in the, country including failures of almost all the post independence government regimes. Experiences and empirical studies have shown that most of our leaders are crude because of bad orientations they received coupled with wrong 'decision they made by themselves., As a matter of fact, our' leadership system for years has been dominated by corrupt personalities who ironically understand leadership of public institutions as a game of lies, robbery, favoritism, selfishness and the likes. Therefore, it is the intention of this study to examine the situation and roles mass media can play to help change bad orientation of our leaders to good sides.

Purpose of Study

Below are them:

- (a) To critically examine already existing orientation of Nigeria leaders;
- (b) To X-ray sources of and reasons behind the orientation;
- (c) To identify effects of the orientation in our society;
- (d) To examine roles' mass media can play towards change in the old orientation.

Research methodology

In the process of this study, the researcher relied on historical' research which involves wide- review of secondary sources of knowledge. Note that historical research according to [15], aims "...at establishing the validity or authenticity of past event for possible acceptance, reconstruction or outright rejection." Meanwhile .secondary sources of knowledge "refers to other materials from which information or data, is obtained", [16]. In the research world, such sources refer to other person's work, reports or events already documented which are most of the time more detailed and well organized than primary source [16].

Limitations of the Study

There are some factors inherent in the research situation which is likely to affect the result of this study but not in remarkable way, they are lack of time, data, secretive attitude of Nigeria leaders among others.

III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Every academic study is based or pegged on specific theory, depending on the subject and dimension of the study [7]. This study is based on the combine framework of **Social Responsibility Theory and Agenda-Setting Theory**.

(a) Social responsibility Theory: This theory originated from the work 'of the Hutchins commission initiated in America in 1942. The commission was on freedom and responsibility of the press. Social responsibility theory emphasizes "the public's right to know" and "the public responsibility of the press". The theory believes that, press freedom, especially under democracy, should carry concomitant responsibilities. Some how, the theory try to reconcile three divergent principles: freedom and choice of individual, media freedom and obligation of the media to the society [5].

As extracted from [7], the major principles of the social responsibility theory are summarized below: (a) that media should accept, and fulfill certain obligations to the society (b) that through professional standards of truth, accuracy, information, objectivity and balance, these obligations can' be fulfilled (c) that media should regulate itself within the framework of law and established institutions to be able to carry out its responsibilities (d) that whatever might lead to crime, violence, civil disorder or offence to minority groups, should be avoided by the media, (e) Accountability of media professionals should be to the society, employers and the market, (f) that society has the right to expect high standard of performance from the media and (g) that the media should reflect plurality of its society, giving access to various point of view and give all the right to reply.

(B) Agenda-Setting Theory. This is one of the powerful mass media effect theories posited in 1970s by Donald Shaw and Maxwell McCombs. Studying media coverage of political campaigns the two researchers found the main effect of media in political/electoral process to be agenda setting. To them, media tell us not what to think in the process, but what to think about. This implies that the rate of attention given to an issue in the press affects the level of relevance attached to that issue by the consumers of the media contents. The major stand of agenda setting theory is that media cannot change your view about a certain issue, but they will change your perception of what is vital [7].

This study is anchored on two frameworks of social responsibility theory, and agenda-setting theory of mass communication.

Significance of the Study

This has to do with benefits accruable from the study and those who stand to enjoy the benefits directly or indirectly hopefully. This study will be of benefits to:

- (a) National /Civic orientation agencies in Nigeria;
- (b) Research/Academic institutions established for leadership studies;
- (c) Members of mass media institutions;
- (d) Government policy makers, analysts and executives;
- (e) Nigeria leaders and the led, etc.

Conceptual Clarifications

According to Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (6th edition), the word "paradigm" means a typical example or pattern of something, "to copy. Then, orientation is the type of aims or interests that a person or an organization has; the act of directing your aims towards a particular thing; or a person's basic beliefs or feelings about a particular subject; or training or information that you are given before starting a new job, course, etc. Leaders are persons who lead or head a group of people within a particular period. Note: Modern mass media refer to western-oriented technological media of mass communication, mainly categorized into print and electronic media. The print media refer to books, newspapers, magazines etc whose communication are basically through printed words. Moreover, electronic media refer to all the mass media which depend on electronic power to communicate their messages to their audiences; examples are radio, TV, Satellite, etc. Then traditional media refer to mechanically operated local or indigenous means of rural mass communication which are verbal and non-verbal in nature. Examples of verbal ones are church visits, village square etc. and the examples of non verbal ones are objectifies (kolanut, White hen etc), music etc [9].

Assumption

This is a statement of facts presented as a guide to the research work. It is the guide which leads to the development of approaches that enable the researcher to address the research problem, [10]. Assumptions made in this study are listed below:

- (a) Nigeria political leaders have been polluted with bad orientation about leadership;
- (b) The bad orientation has produced bad leaders who have subjected the country to many problems;
- (c) Mass media can play some roles to change the bad orientation to good one for the betterment of Nigerian society.

IV. LITERATURE REVIEW

Nigeria Leaders and their Negative Leadership orientation

Based on history, our Colonial leaders led 'our people with selfish and exploitative mentality. They indirectly transferred the bad mentality to some people among the first set of our indigenous leaders immediately after independence. Late Prof. Achebe in his work "The trouble with Nigeria" quoted Late Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe as saying below once upon a time: "... henceforth/ (Azikiwe) shall utilize my earned income to secure my enjoyment of a high standard of living and also to give a helping hand to the needy." Achebe further quoted late Chief Obafemi Awolowo as similarly saying: "I was going to make myself formidable intellectually, not-ally invulnerable, to make all the money that is possible for a man with my brains and brawn to make in Nigeria." The above were reportedly statements from the two top most foundational leaders of our country who claimed that they were Nigeria patriots. A critical study of the statements above will show that they were perhaps negatively oriented in part to believe that leadership is mainly all about selfish accumulation of wealth from public purse. From their era to the current one, this belief has been on increase among Nigeria leaders. Late professor Achebe in his earlier mentioned book critically discussed results of this bad leadership and the result of this bad orientation are tribalism, materialism, corruption among others.

Reasons Behind the Negative Orientation/Beliefs

The reasons are otherwise those factors that have indirectly caused failure of real democracy in the country. According to [8], those factors are corruption in the high places, mediocrity, political instability, ethnicism, lust for power, materialism etc. These have combined over the years to establish wrong belief about leadership in the minds of Nigeria leaders.

How Nigeria Leaders Demonstrate their Negative Beliefs About Leadership

The following are ways the leaders-demonstrate the bad orientation they have already gotten from some of their predecessor.

(a) Subtle encouragement of tribalism: For practical purpose, Chinua Achebe defined tribalism as discrimination against a citizen because of his place of birth." To him, prejudice against "outsiders" or "strangers" is an attitude one finds everywhere across the country and such is being encouraged by leaders. Efforts made so far to stop it have failed. Our "...self-conscious wish to banish "tribe" has proved largely futile "because a word will stay around as long as there is work for it to do. In Nigeria, in spite of our protestations, there is plenty of work for tribe. Our threatening gestures against it have been premature, half-hearted or plain-deceitful," (Achebe). In allocation or distribution of national resources, most of our leaders consider tribal

interests first before considering national interests. High rate of tribalism among our leaders seems to have made them believe the rule that 'the devil from our tribe is better than the angel from the other tribe'⁵ (Odigbo in Nwosu (ed) 2003: 180).

(b) Lust for Power: Civilians and those in military struggles for political power with very bad mentality.

To most of them, power game is do or die affair. No matter their level of pretence, their main reason behind such lust is to take care of their selfish interests when the power is given to them, A thorough survey of the civilian and military administrations in the country since independence can confirm this observation.

(c) High Quest for material wealth: Most Nigeria leaders lack spirit of selfless service. They believe in materialism and are most of the time ready to do any thing possible in order to acquire wealth they will use for selfish purposes. In view of this, former President Olusegun Obasanjo said in September 12, 1977 that Nigeria "... is still a place where people are prepared to destroy anything or cover up any crime, .if doing so promotes their economic interest and might..." To Obasanjo, this strange and ugly situation is contrary to the moral beliefs of the traditional African society whose members are naturally helpful, hardworking, disciplinary, responsible/ honest, respectful, considerate and caring. Because of this he launched campaign on National Rebirth at the Eagle Square, Abuja on 10th September 1999. Dr. Aminu M. Gurin similarly noted in his paper on "The concept of honesty in Islam" that "the moral principles that prevail in our society today are those of utility, quest for material achievements and denial of God. All other ideals, whether of justice, honesty or truth are subordinated to these norms." All these and-others are causes of increasing materialism among our leaders.

(d) Promotion of social injustice, inequalities and the cult of mediocrity: According to Achebe, Nigeria is a nation where it would be difficult to find one vital job held by the most competent person we have. To him, "we have displayed a consistent inclination since we

assumed management of our own affairs to opt for mediocrity and comprise, pick a third and fourth eleven to play for us. And the result; we have always failed (especially in areas of leadership and development) and will always fail to make it to the world league." Achebe further said that we can hardly progress as a country until we follow rules of merit in distribution of works. For denial of merit is a form of social injustice which can hurt not-only the individuals indirectly concerned, but ultimately the entire society." Moreover, on the side of social inequalities, our leaders have done a lot to widen income distribution gap between them and the poor masses. They have made many political campaign promises to redress that, but all to no avail. According to [4], Nigeria political leaders "...remember the masses only when they are begging for their votes, but sooner they are voted into power, they use the same power to harass and intimidate these poor masses into total surrender to their abysmal socio-economic conditions. So, when they are overthrown, the masses rejoice, rather than rise to then-defence."

(e) Corruption in high places: Both military and civilian administrations in the country have been accused of corrupt practices. (Such indictments are numerous to cover within the scope of this -study. However, Odigbo (Ibid) rightly captured the situation this way: "Almost all military regimes that came into power in Nigeria accused those they overthrew of corruption, but when out office had always ended-up 100 times more corrupt. That is why retired military Generals are today the unrivalled "money-bags", money brokers; and 'power brokers' in the country. On the other hand, every civilian administration we have had; in Nigeria, put up one anti-corruption agency or the other, but ended up suffocated in the dirty waters of the same corruption. Hence corruption has the enviable record of being the only recurring reason in all the coups against civil administrations in the country."

In his inaugural speech on May 29, 1999 former president Olusegun Obasanjo lamented this bad situation saying that our govt. officials have, become too corrupt. He said that our political/govt. leaders have become "progressively indifferent to propriety of conduct and showed little commitment to promoting the general welfare of the people and public good. Government and all its agencies have- become thoroughly corrupt and reckless. Members of the public bribe their way through in ministries and parastatals to get attention and one govt. agency had to bribe another govt. agency to 'obtain the release of their statutory allocation of funds. The' impact of official corruption is so rampant and has earned Nigeria a very bad image at home and abroad. Beside it has distorted and retrogressed development..." Speaking further, the then president of Nigeria affirmed¹ resolutely that "corruption, the greatest single bane of our society today, will be tackled head-on at all levels. Corruption is incipient in all human societies and in most human activities, but it must not be condoned... The rampant corruption service and cynical contempt for integrity that pervades every level of the bureaucracy will be stamped." Obasanjo pointed out that the traditional Nigerian Society maintained high moral standard and that our modern society should return to the standard. Perhaps,, that was why he launched the "The Nigerian Declaration of Human (Civic) Responsibilities on September 10, 1999 and later launched anti-corruption agencies in his regime. Furthermore, in his consideration of high level of corruption in Nigeria, Nnimo Bassey stated that "Nigeria is a movie." According to him in the Guardian Newspaper December 25, 1983, page 8: "Nigeria is a movie: a saga in abandoned responsibilities, abandoned economy, abandoned you and me." This is as a result of corruption in high places across the country.

Consequences of the Negative Acts resulting from the negative orientation of our leaders

Outlined below are some of the consequences:

- (a) Socio-political crises in various parts of the country;
- (b) Weak/poor economy
- (c) National distrust and disunity
- (d) Weak federal system
- (e) Religious crises
- (f) Ethnic conflicts, etc.

Roles Mass Media are Expected to Play in order to Change Bad Orientation of Nigeria Leaders

As agents of socio-political engineering, mass media are expected by Nigeria people and constitution to properly play the following roles towards re-orientation of our political leaders for the improvement of our country. (1) Sincere promotion of right Attitudinal and behavioral changes in our leaders:

Mass media; according to [3], can positively influence Nigeria leaders' ways of lives to adopt good social courses and new positive life styles. Such media influence will make the leaders to drop ugly habits like corruption, gender discrimination, religious fanaticism, tribalism etc. Under national unity /integration:

Note "One of Nigeria's greatest needs is to promote sociopolitical integration that will make the nation amenable to national, rather than ethnic and parochial thinking (directly or indirectly encouraged by most of our leaders)", [9]. Our media system is expected to help in provision of the needs.

(2) Total improvement of our leaders on knowledge better leadership. According to [5], mass media can help in sourcing, storing, processing, dissemination and interpretation of information by individuals, groups, governments, etc, required in order to understand, act and relate well to personal, communal, environmental, national and international conditions and developments, as well as be in a better position to take good decisions on vital issues, especially as leaders of the society. Proper information of our leaders by the media can take care of the above.

(3) Watchdog function with more serious commitment: In 1948, Harold Lasswell opined that the media serve as mirror and binder of the society, showing social realities and directions for a members 'of the society. They watch over, guard and tell society potential problems and some times, suggest solutions. Through its watchdog role, the media can place search light on our leaders and make them' to change bad leadership orientations and habits.

(4) Better socialization and civilization of our leaders: As tools of social engineering, the media are expected by members of the society to provide our leaders with adequate exposures and learning which will motivate them to mix-up, cooperate and socialize with sound leaders within and outside the country. Note "with mass information, people (including their leaders) learn to unlearn all those fallacious and misleading negative of fabrications they were fed with, in the past about other people, places or things [7]. The media are equally expected to help in civilization of our leaders for "contemporary civilization for better or worse, so mass media orientation expect, that we learn almost everything we know through mass, communication, the newspapers, magazines, books, televisions, radio, films and others [10].

(5) Promote principles of democracy in the society with stronger courage: The media are also expected to help in changing bad mentality, of most Nigeria leaders by promoting good democratic philosophy, norms, ideas, interests, aspirations and goals. The media should properly service the democratic political system through provision of right information and debate in public life for the survival of Nigeria democracy, [5,7,9].

(6) Higher Motivation of 'good leaders and demotivation of bad leaders: This role requires the media to "ginger people (including their leaders) up to achieve the aims or goals promoted by the media which will stimulate and foster the aspirations and activities of individuals and activities of individuals and communities to achieve such goals," [6]. This role can be employed in motivation of our leaders to pursue good social, political, economic, technological and education courses.

(7) Better Mobilization of our Leaders to Work for the Development of Nigeria: This is more necessary for leaders of disadvantaged, marginalized or powerless groups in the country, [4]. This will help to bring out some of our leaders who have selfish related in their comfort zones, for the purpose of participatory and collaborative societal development.

(8) Promote better components of indigenous and foreign leadership culture: Media are expected to play this role as one of the means to positively change our leaders for better. Through continuous, wide and frequent emphases on the good culture components, our leaders on seeing good examples will change bad orientation to some extents.

(9) Real Gate-keeping Function: Media can do this by intelligently limiting the information received through: (a) proper editing before dissemination, (b) by wisely expanding the amount of information received by our leaders through increasing their informational environment; (c) and through proper reorganization of the

information given to our leaders: This is gate-keeping functions [7]. Note, gate-keeping concept was formulated in 1947 by Austrian psychologists called [4] stated that Lewin used "gate keeping" to describe the process i by which a news item, traveling through channels, gains clearance at certain checkpoints along the way." Therefore, proper media gate keeping will ensure proper information, education, enlightenment and orientation of our leaders for better performance.

(10) promote consciousness of real patriotism in our leaders: Mass media are expected to do this by emphasizing things that encourage peace, unity and progress of Nigeria. And in the other hands de-emphasize bad things that may further poison the minds of our leaders? Note, due to some factors our media have been consciously or unconsciously communicating some things that are against development and maintenance of sound patriotic spirit among most of leaders in Nigeria. So the media should go into what this researcher called integrated and comprehensive national leadership campaigns. This form of campaigns call for proper identification and analysis of our leadership problems, adoption of remedial communication strategies, selection of suitable media channels, harmonization of the channels and effective communication of our leadership problems following each solution measures. Through the- above functions and similar others mass media will compliment good efforts of other members of Nigerian society directed towards a paradigm shift in positive orientation of our leaders.

Integration of Media for Better Performance of Above Roles

For the above roles to be properly performed for positive orientation of Nigeria leaders, there will be need for careful integration of electronic, print and traditional media (Oramedia). The first two western-oriented media will be mainly used to communicate upper class and middles class leaders who are mostly educated and urban based. Note under this discussions, the upper class leaders refer basically to federal leaders while the middle class ones refer to' leaders at state government levels. Almost all the members of the two classes have all it takes to be effective audience of modern mass media. Meanwhile, at the grassroots level the modern mass media will be intelligently mixed with, traditional media to re-orient our grassroots leaders. The mixture will help to overcome grassroots communication barriers usually created by illiteracy, poverty, lack of electricity, linguistic barrier breakage, geographical limitation among others. In fact, paper integration of print, electronic and traditional media will provide effective means to effectively re-orient our leaders at the top and grassroots levels for better leadership.

V. CONCLUSION

If Nigerian mass media in collaboration with other concerned members of the society improve their current standards in the performance of all the above, discussed duties, there will be positive orientation of our leaders. Such orientation will in turn result to growth and development of all areas of human endeavor in Nigeria.

There will be a paradigm shift for a better in orientation of Nigeria leaders if the mass media improve the ways they play the above discussed roles in the country,

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the finding of this study, the following recommendations were made:

- (a) Owners/Managers of mass media establishments in Nigeria should equip their establishments better for expected improved, performance of the above roles;
- (b) With better equipment, members of our media institution-should re-structure our media contents to reflect more of the golden principles of sound political leadership;
- (c) Government of Nigeria should create a more favorable environment for sound political communication and also create more enabling environment for media institution to perform better;
- (d) Patriotic individuals, and non-governmental bodies should give better supports to the media to enable the system play the roles better;
- (e) Nigeria leaders are advised to listen and follow those media contents that are aimed at their positive orientation for the betterment of our country;
- (f) They should be improvement in the payment of Media workers in Nigeria to enable them apply the media better for improved performance of the media roles discussed.

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