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POLITICAL CLASS AND INSTITUTIONS AS INHIBITING FORCES TO DEMOCRATIC CONSOLIDATION AND SUSTAINABILITY IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Democracy is the process which allows for high level of peoples participation in decision-making and policy formulation through their chosen representatives. However, more than 15 years of democratic experience, it is a fact that in the Fourth Republic, governance at all levels in Nigeria has been characterized with lack of in-depth politicizing, inexperience and outright immaturity, so the much expected socio-economic and political dividends of democracy are not realizable. This persistent phenomenon of ineffective governance from 1999 to 2015 has effectively raised a generation of engendered and disillusioned citizenry. The development has inevitably heightened the fear on the possibility of consolidation and sustainability of democracy in Nigeria. The emphasis of this paper is on the myriads of challenges and problems which have inhibited the consolidation and sustainability of the country's democratic process. The process is

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presently inundated and marred by administrative and executive trials and errors. Established evidences abound that elections have been marred by unprecedented abuse of the electoral process in form of election rigging, ballot snatching, inadequate and late arrival of voting materials at polling centres, vote buying, connivance between the ruling party elites and INEC to manipulate and even declare false elections results. However, the towering giant issue is that of the political class and the various political institutions which have constantly failed to uphold the tenets of democracy in the real sense of the word. The methodology adopted to prosecute this paper is qualitative based on historical, institutional and comparative inquiry. The paper is of the opinion that for Nigeria to experience consolidated and sustainable democracy leading to socio-economic and political development, the political class must rise above party affiliations and personal pecuniary gains while the various institutions must become credible and also implant the act of good and selfless governance in the country.

Keywords: political class, institutions, political parties, electoral process, voting, citizens governance.

1. Introduction

Nigerian state after more than 16 years in experimenting with democracy through the American model of presidential system should be transiting to a more experienced nation, deepened in the art of democratic governance. In this trajectory, election or electoral process as the machinery for authenticating and testing the virility has not spectacularly evolved commensurably. The political space overtime has expanded with varieties of political parties attempting to satisfy the desire of the heterogeneity and complexities inherent in the nation-state but two critical factors remain Achilles' heel in the democratic march. Decidedly, two factors that have been limiting and hindering the nation's progress are the political class otherwise referred to as governing elite and the morbid institutions. Extant literature has attested to the fact that there can be no democracy without election. In fact, democracy is founded and propelled by credible free and fair election. In Nigeria, beside the three elections before independence (1922-46), (1951-54) and (1959) election that ushered in independence, umpired by colonial masters, the rest beginning from the post-independence general elections of 1964, has been marred by unprecedented irregularities due to the selfish and power mongering attitudes of the political class. The intolerance

engineered by ethnic and primordial interests of this so-called governing class coupled with the complicity of the institutions in place; the Independent Electoral Commission and the police that were instruments in the hand of the ruling/ governing elite to decimate the opposition by all manner just to remain in power. This process of subverting the will of the people in election periods has not abated more than fifty years after independence. In this perspective, it will be nonsensical to talk of consolidation of democracy not to talk of sustainability. The culprit which are the governing class and the institutions at all levels of governance remain a disturbing enigma in a country so much endowed in human and material resources but have persistently failed to have the right caliber of people at the helms of affairs as well as a robust institution as the hub of societal locomotive. This explanatory introduction was followed by equally a deepened statement of the problem in section one. Conceptual clarifications and theoretical diagnosis of this paradoxical scenario was the focus of section two. The political parties and political class as the bane of democratic process formed core analysis in section 3. The institutions as agents of compromise and corruption which has given rise to deepened culture of impunity, greed and kleptomania was being interrogated in section 4. The paper was rounded up in section 5 with concluding remarks and recommendations.

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The Nigerian state which became a reality through the amalgamation of the Northern and Southern protectorates in 1949; being a merger of two differently structured administrations however got independence in 1960 and acceded to a full republic in 1963. Interestingly, since the attainment of a republican status with the administration and management of the nation-state in the hands of Nigerians, she has been saddled or confronted with a recurrent decimal of bad leadership at every stratum of governance. In other words, since the formative years of self-determination, the culture of greed, intolerance, hatred, arson leading to outright killing of fellow Nigerian on the altar of wanting to lead by force, leading to demeaning extreme cases of kleptocracy, outright looting of treasury to electoral fraud of various dimensions have been the hallmark of the political/ governing class in collaboration with those entrusted with the management of the state, the civil servants.

The political parties which are the aggregating mechanism of the views of the citizens both majority or minority and the recruiting platform of leadership and promoter of progressive ideas

and programmes for societal progress in all democratic climes worldwide have not fared better. In Nigeria, the political parties are not more than factions or cliques in the hands of their leaders turned to weapons of hatred, loot, brigandage, political and ethnic warfare; a compromising instrument of siphoning public resources and enriching the political class. The political parties as instrument in the hands of governing elite with the complicity of the institutions has perfected the art of corruption such that politics or government is designed solely for the political/governing class, their cronies, friends associates and families.

Right from the first republic, governments in Nigeria have been administered to serve the interest of the political / governing class. It has always been a vehicle to enrich and siphon the wealth of the nation for selfish and primordial ends. In fact, the recklessness with which government resources was handled became a competitive enterprise such that those in power became exceedingly arrogant and full of hate, avarice, egocentrism, intolerance that the state was turned to a theatre of political warfare. This race of egocentrism and selfishness to control the state by all means perfectly defines the Machiavellian principle of the end justifies the means, completely somersaulted the political scene by the bastardisation of the 1st ever Federal elections to be conducted in 1964 and superintendent by Nigerians themselves. It ended in total chaos, rigging, intimidation, violence, killing and anarchy and general destruction bringing to abrupt, untimely death of the 1st Republic on that fateful day, January 16, 1966. And of course, the intervention of the military junta in the political scene mitigated the political fracas and wanton destruction and forced a new chapter on the young republic.

After about 30 years of the military in the saddle, the country remains a crawling giant, as the military only perfected the art of looting and the legitimization of defrauding the common pause. By this time, the polity has been militarized giving birth to another class of looters, the military heavy brass political class looters. The advent of military interregnum marked an economic watershed in the history of Nigeria. The period coincided with oil boom that Nigeria was awash with petrodollar; a time when all countries at the same level of development as Nigeria such as Indonesia, Malaysia, Taiwan etc... In fact, the tigers of Asian countries took momentous decisions that transformed their economies bringing them at par with developed countries of Europe and America. Hellas, Nigerian leadership missed it all, lack the foresight, temerity, sound economic policies and even the political will and more pertinently lack of care or concern for Nigerian people they were supposed to lead. They gallantly missed the beautiful and wonderful

opportunities to plan for tomorrow, the future of this great (but crawling) nation. What a missed opportunities with all the stupendous oil wealth that Nigeria was wallowing in absolute affluence and influence worldwide, yet, our leaders could not plan for the future of this country. Looking back, after 50 years in nation-building, it is simply a story of wasted years. More psychologically devastating is the facts that even the petroleum that we tenaciously depend upon, we did not master it either in the downstream, midstream or upper stream, and we remain Lilliputian, an ordinary rentier country. What a wasted year midwived by irresponsible, selfish and myopic political/ governing class.

In 1999, when the political elite with the elements of military metamorphosed into political juggernauts came back to the scene, Nigeria was only able to witness a more daunting, sophisticated class of political brigandage who had gone to perfect the art of looting, profligacy, kleptocracy, inflation and poor management of contract; all wrapped in egocentrism, selfishness, immaturity and shamelessness which ironically despite huge and mammoth resource at their disposal, had maintain the country as dwarf in the comity of nations. The resultant world economic meltdown due to collapse of the price of petroleum in world market has virtually brought the country on its knees. The Nigerian condition is complicated, jaundiced by the weakened and lethargic institutions which is designed to serve the governing elite to the detriment of the larger society. These moribund institutions because of weak foundation continued to proffer policies that continually contradict international best practices and robust socio-political and economic theory and practice.

The much expected change mantra after more than 16 years of civilian-militocracy has not produced the universal expectation of the people, the economic domain is thrown into the abyss, by the disorientation of the monetary policy as the Naira continued a free fall in exchange value vis-à-vis other world currencies. The situation is exacerbated by complete contradictory somersault policies that are now translated into net capital flight, gargantuan external debt that spiral upward, total collapse of infrastructure, cries of socio-economic violence, insurgency, and pervasive poverty.

The interrogation is beyond palliatives as it demands a surgical sort of back to the roots type of looking for solution. The problem is daunting because alluding to Yoruba adage: “*Kokoro t’ on je efo, inuefo l’ ongbe*” which a French diplomat was able to summarize tacitly. Nigerian problem is Nigeria itself (Shoremekun: 2013). The root cause of Nigerian problem translating

into retrogression, planning without result, complete summersaults of programmes and policies; the praetorian character of the political economy posit that the real problem militating against the progress, developments, economic virility, deepened democracy, and its consolidation and sustainability are the political class and all they represent as well as the institutions which have only succeeded in serving the interest of this parasitic, unproductive and insensitive group of Nigerians. The solution to the problem of Nigeria cannot be located within the present crop of leadership, except they turn a totally new leaf but better still a politico-economic revolution with completely new set of leadership with the love of this country in heart and fear of God. But how can the attitudes or character of the present lethargic leadership be conceptualized or theorized?

3. CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION AND THEORETICAL EXEGESIS

The Nigerian problem from the preceding section is squarely laid at the doorsteps of the political class or the governing elite, even those linked to institutions are equally caused by these classes of Nigerians as institutions are supposed to be made and be manned by man. The recurrent decimal of deepened culture of corruption, kleptomania and greed as the basis for the general praetorian and decadence society which has become a permanent force of hindrance. In exploring this weakness or inhibition, the key issue is political leadership wrapped up in a given political culture. To that extent, the concept of political culture needs elucidation to throw light on the characters of this non-patriotic, rogue leadership or to put it bluntly, a leadership or ruling elite that has held the country as a prisoner or hostage (Amuwo: 2015: 14). Political culture, like behaviouralism is a method of political analysis that became popularized in the 60s. It is a departure from the formal approach to institutional presentation whereby the personality or the individual's perception, attitude or orientations towards policies, can be appreciated. However, to situate Nigerian political elite, their penchant for corruption or obsession especially for kleptomania, there is need to first define culture; which according to Taylor (1891) quote by (Olaniyi, 1992) is the totality of man's acquisition of knowledge, morals, beliefs, assumptions, art, customs, technology which are shared and transmitted from generation to generation (Olaniyi, 1992). Culture defined this way can be categorized into moral or non-material objects such as values, beliefs, norms, customs, morals and assumptions (Pye; 1968: quoted by Okolie 204: 43) acquired by every member of a society and material or social products such as technology, arts and craft or things that can be learned. In other words, both material and non-

material thing form culture. For instance political culture is an aspect of non-material composition of culture which corresponds to the definition of Harris (1979, 311 quoted by Olaniyi op. cite) as set of beliefs values and standards even culture which are particular to a nation, a people or even society. Ball (1979:5) sees it as made up of attitudes, beliefs, emotions and values that relates to the political system. To that extent, ideology, rule of law, responsibilities, extent of structural and role differentiation are all expression of political culture. What must also be noted is that political culture is an aspect of the general culture of a society, but relates to political matter in particular (Olaniyi, 1992). It expresses the beliefs and values of state which are transferred or communicated from generation to generation such as democracy or even corruption. The point of emphasis is that political culture or national political culture like political legitimacy relates to time. As that attitudes or culture becomes habitual, persistence overtime, it becomes part and parcel, a custom or tradition and so such a society can add it to its qualifications. In analyzing political culture as a belief or behaviour that persists overtime, corruption for instance, though an anti-social behaviour, became the principal means of private accumulation by the Nigerian elite, especially the political class during decolonization and became entrenched that sharpened political activity and competition after independence (Osoba, 1966: 371) and in the fourth Republic since 1999, it has unquestionably become a way of life in Nigeria permeating all social strata. Like every bad attitude, corruption was not so pronounced among the leadership during the decolonization struggle but since independence, it has affirmed a staggering proportion becoming a national social malaise. Empirically, it can be said that it has taken a heightened dimension in every decade. In other words, corruption as a culture of the leadership became more pronounced in 80s than 70s and so forth. Right now it has even devastated the institution that nowhere is safe haven such that political leaders and institutions are the single limiting force to Nigeria's development. The situation is complicated by tribe, religion, association and language factor through which corruption as a political culture is easily condoned becoming a norm rather than aberration and thereby transmitted and assimilated. It is a cankerworm that has become an enigma larger than the state which no one has a concrete solution to eliminate or attenuate.

In this situation, everything suffers. For instance, democracy has remained stunted by the sheer greed of the political class who are self-serving, as elections or electoral process are perennially marred by intractability and inconclusiveness. The leaders are desperately myopic branding in

self-aggrandizement, lack right thinking, which has given rise to parties without ideology but are bounded by the philosophy of kleptomania, being the art of looting and emptying the treasury, the common wealth. As a result, with this kind of leadership everything goes. PDP or APC or any party for that matter, has no meaning to them. All they want is to be in power or belong to a party in power simply for the purpose of primitive accumulation and so after election, no leader wants to be in opposition. Even when they have been finally pronounced failed by the apex court, they are still not done until they find their way back to power through vagrancy by changing camp to the ruling party.

In this way, government has become a machinery of recycling same old politicians, lacking ideology and vision and thus blocking the chances of genuine Nigerians. This vicious political circle is translated in the quality of public policies that are badly executed, that is if they are ever done, but more often, inflated, abandoned after they had collected full payment. Those are the type of leaders Nigerian state of it has not been mortgaged is grappling with. In this sordid, a situation after more than 55 years of proclaiming a republic where the phenomenon called democracy is a mere sloganeering can one talk of consolidation not to think of sustainability.

4. The Political Parties and Political Class as the Bane of Democratic Process

(i) Lack of Political Ideology

Observers see the Nigeria's democratic journey thus far as compared to a ship on a high sea without a clearly defined destination and whose captain lacks the requisite knowledge of how to use the compass to navigate the sea, thereby moving round the maritime, waiting for an unforeseen circumstance that will wreck the vessel.

The pessimists query the destination Nigeria is headed in term of democratic progress. This group argue that unless the country imbibes certain tenets of democratic norms like obedience to rule of law; protection of fundamental human rights of citizens, especially free speech; adherence to defined political ideology on the part of the political parties, the country will continue to sail round the high sea without any hope of getting to the democratic promised land. They equally observed that undue interference of political actors on judicial decisions, muzzling of the press, harassment and intimidation of opposition by government forces are evil winds that will blow no one any good.

Nevertheless, contrary to this gloomy picture by this school of thought, the optimists believe that the nation is on the right track but quickly observed that a lot more needed to be done by the political class to navigate the turbulent times. This school of thought averred that development and advancement in life takes place in stages. They argued that advancement in all facets of life is likened to the ‘embryo’ which undergoes several stages in the process of developing into adult Homo sapiens (Aleke, 2016).

(ii) Problem of Corruption: Root of Many of Nigeria’s Problems.

Since 1999, events in Nigeria have shown that the tidal waves of reversal have been contending with Nigeria’s democratic project. The resultant development is that democracy has remained grossly unstable and the future seems to be very bleak because of rampant systemic bureaucratic and political corruption. Nigerians in all shades now possibly associates democracy with corruption because the cankerworm has reached a high crescendo. The aftermath effect of political corruption are patiently manifesting in cyclical crosses of legitimacy, fragile party structure, institutional decay, chronic economic problems, underdevelopment and above all general democratic volatility (Ogundiya, 2010).

Corruption takes many forms and infiltrates all political institutions and economic sectors. Virtually, all the successive ruling governments have not been performing their functions as promised, and officials are too busy enriching their pockets to govern effectively. In 2013, Transparency International deemed Nigeria one of the most corrupt nations in the world, ranking as 144th in Corruption Perception Index out of the 177 countries measured. With this result, it shows that Nigeria was the 33rd most corrupt country in 2013 mathematically. In the year 2012, a Gallup poll found that 94% of Nigerians thought corruption was widespread in their government. The spoils of political corruption-billions of U.S dollars-are stashed in several foreign bank accounts in Europe and Americas. For example, the Abacha administration in the 1990s notoriously looted upwards of \$3 billion. Since then, government institutions like the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and Independent Corrupt Practice Commission (ICPC). Interestingly, the various administrations have vowed to eradicate corruption. Yet regularly, the Central Bank of Nigeria would give a damning report that a large percentage of the country’s crude oil revenue intended for the Bank was unaccounted for.

In the 2015 which is the most currently released result on the level of corruption in Nigeria has improved when compared to that of 2013 and other years. In the 2014 result on corruption ranking, Nigeria was ranked 136 out 174 surveyed countries. Corruption Rank in Nigeria averaged 118.30 from 1996 until 2015, reaching an all-time high of 152.00 in 2005 and a record low of 52.00 in 1997 (Uzochukwu, 2015).

(iii). Election-Rigging is Always the Norm and Tradition.

It has assumed a normal uncontested development in Nigeria. The citizens of Nigeria are used to coming out to cast their votes on Election Day only to realize their votes did not count. In a report emanating from the investigation conducted by the Foreign Affairs Ministry on the 2007 general elections counted around 700 election-related violent acts in the year leading up to the elections, including a couple of assassinations. In addition, some International observers also reported rampant theft and snatching of ballot boxes. During elections, Nigerians and international watchdog groups tell stories of thugs hired by candidates to hijack the ballot boxes and intimidate voters. Many of these thugs are disgruntled and unemployed youths.

(iv). Problem of Intra-Party Politics and Party's Lack of Internal Democracy.

This aspect of political process has become a clog on the wheel of democratic consolidation in Nigeria since independence, 1960. Most research studies emphasize theories of democracy and political party and with little attention on party politics (intra-politics) and vis-à-vis democratic consolidation in Nigeria. However, the findings have shown that money and class were the major factors that undermined or determined the position of candidates in Nigerian election. In addition, many political analysts also agreed that the power of incumbency and god-fatherism greatly determined the emergence of party's candidates. Other political pundits agree with the notion that tribalism, ethnicity, nepotism and sectionalism were major factors that have caused party's lack of internal democracy in Nigeria. The general conclusion is that party politics in the area of nomination, selection and elections have negative implications on democratic consolidation in Nigeria. Among other things, the study also concluded that lack of internal

democracy within political parties as a limiting factor in Nigeria's attempt to deepen democracy (Onu, 2015).

It is fair to conclude that Nigeria political parties are incapable of conducting free and fair primary elections within their parties let alone conducting national election. Various state electoral commissions are shams hence they frequently conduct flawed local government elections where the oppositions hardly win any local government chairmanship or council position. It is curious that the aggrieved members of PDP who broke away did not join the main opposition party APC, but rather chose to form a faction before registering a new party assuming they have not already registered one. The reason is because they do not want to be a junior partner in APC or any other existing party. They want to be the lord of the new party they will eventually form and register with INEC. Former vice president Abubakar Atiku once broke away from PDP and formed Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) with little to show for his effort. He ended up rejoining PDP.

The way out of the disarray in Nigeria political parties is for them to adopt internal democracy. All elections including the party primaries should be handed over to the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). Enabling laws should be passed to effect the change. Screening by political parties should be outlawed since it has turned into a tool for party leaders to foist preferred candidates on party members. Party members should be allowed to make that choice in all primary elections. They should only be specified minimum national qualification for various elective offices.

(v). The Roles of the Elites and Party Politics.

Obah-Akpowoghaha has argued that the Elite Theory no doubt obviously explicates the Nigeria political system considering the fact that most political parties that exist in the country either be classified as cadre or elite parties which manipulates the sentiments of the masses for the selfish objective of acquiring economic base (Varma, 2006). At this point what constitute political power varies from one society to the other but the difference may be minimal. In Nigeria, political power can be viewed from the perspective of those who have occupied one political office or the other, especially retired military and other public officials such as top civil servant, past ministers and so on. These are the group of persons that have been circulating themselves in

governance since the country's independence in 1960 (Dike, 2003). One of the advocates of elitism, Pareto believes that elite in different occupations and strata generally come from the same class: those who are wealthy are also intelligent; they have an aptitude for mathematics and moral character. He submits that the society consists of two classes which are, the first, a higher stratum, the elites, which are divided into governing elite, and non-governing elite, and the second, a lower stratum, the non-elite. Pareto's focus of inquiry was the governing elite which, he believed, rules by a mixture of force and cunning (Varma, 2006). This last analysis unveils the traits of some Nigerian politicians; particularly the band of retired military Generals and top government officials that have entered the political scene. In his analysis, Obah-Akpowoghaha attributes his position to that of Roberto Michels's "Iron Law of Oligarchy". He argues that from all available indications, these individuals have been on top of their professions but still cling very tight to the ruler-ship of the country using the party platform as well as their professional title for intimidating others. The point here is that political parties no longer functions as expected, precisely because decision and information are made and circulated by the few. This has really paralyzed the growth of the democratic process in the country.

(vi). Godfatherism Politics

A dominant feature of the Nigeria's party system is the issue of Godfatherism. According to Ayoade (2008: 85), godfatherism is "... a benign political accretion of the position of either political notables or dreaded political rascals who are recalcitrant to the deterrence of the legal regime". It is "an ideology which is constructed on the belief that certain individuals possess considerable means to unilaterally determine who gets party ticket to run for an election and who wins in an electoral contest" (Ogundiya, 2009: 286).

Ayoade (2006) has attempted, a distinction of the variant of godfathers. The two are, first, those who wield influence within the party and secondly, those who wield influence in their constituencies. Both types of Godfathers key attribute is that they are sought after because they sway political support using their position in nominating candidates or winning votes, during elections. He equally differentiates between good and bad Godfathers, the first is subject to party discipline and rules of the game, and merely uses his/her reputation and good will to influence votes and support, however, the second violates all known rules to secure votes or political office for their candidate(s). Ayoade is of the strong belief that many of the current political parties are unable to curtail, contain and punish "aberrant behaviour" of members, including godfathers and

all this have had negative impact on party system. Further, he argues that the character of godfatherism is not philanthropy, but is often marked by devious and undemocratic acts such as violence, bribery and corruption all for the sake of perpetuating the wishes of the Godfather.

Ojo and Lawal (2013: 187) are of the opinion that there is a symbiotic relationship between the Godfather and the Godson: the Godfather “invests” his resources in the Godson and the Godson must, or at least should, on getting into office reciprocate by reimbursing his Godfather in kind and keeping absolute loyalty to the Godfather in all respects, including decision making whilst in public office. In reality, the key goal of all Godfathers is to rule by proxy or rule through protégés. Godfathers often plays electoral politics with little or no respect for the established rules of conduct governing the process, and does not display any sense of moral restraint in its appreciation of what constitutes appropriate behavior in a democratic political order. Godfather politics typically ensures that results are declared even when there is no evidence that voting actually took place. Little wonder, therefore that elections results, whether at the intra-party level or at the level of general elections are always disputed by those who are declared losers.

According to Abutudu (2013:10-11), all three presidential elections starting from the beginning of the current fourth republic in 1999 have been the subject of judicial intervention. The roles of Godfathers in the hijack of political parties has virtually choked off the party system as channel for the aggregation of local or constituency interests robbing off the potentials and stamp of national outlook of the party concerned and their candidates during elections.

Based on this analogy, Momoh (2013:17) posited that, because Godfathers have significant influence on the internal workings of political parties, they are inadvertently or deliberately involved in the stability or otherwise of these parties.

In the same vein, Abutudu (2013:12) argues that the preferences expressed by the party typically turn out to be the personal interests of the Godfather. According to him, the sustainability of the control of the political niche by the Godfather cannot be left to the uncertainty of being subjected to the preferences of the voters in a free and fair election. This desperation has typically led to the explicit, crude criminalization of the electoral process.

(vii). Incessant Intra-Parties and Inter-Parties Political Violence

Virtually, all elections conducted in Nigeria since 1960 and in particular the 1964, 1983, 2003 and 2007 elections were plagued by violence and crises. Nweke and Ibeanu have posited that

elections in Nigeria since 2003 have been plagued with irregularities and violence (Nweke 2005:386, Ibeanu, 2013:13).

The 2007 elections could be said to be particularly plagued by incidents of violence that included theft and snatching of election materials, killings, arson, abductions, assault, intimidation, destruction of properties and election materials, rioting, looting, violent clashes and protests, mayhem and chaos. More specifically incidents of electoral violence have included assault on electoral officials and voters, hijack and seizure of election materials, attacks on security officials and violent clashes between rival thugs and sympathizers of political parties (Nweke, 2005:386). Ikelegbe has argued that the major parties in Nigeria are to varying degrees involved in the formation, mobilization and deployment of armed groups during party registrations, primaries and general elections. Some parties have loyal armed groups that are fairly known in some States and communities, that are deployed to protect their interests (Ikelegbe, 2013:20). The breeding and use of thugs has assumed a new dimension during the Fourth Republic. The situation has since assumed a more frightening dimension as both the opposition and the ruling parties now raised, breed and deployed thugs. Contributing to the debate Abdul-Jelil submits that even within various parties, leading figures and aspirants now maintain hordes of people mostly jobless youths who perform sundry acts such as errands, guards and harassment of political opponents (Abdul-Jelil, 2009:11).

Another emerging trend is the crops of individual thugs, cult groups and armed gangs who regularly hire out their services to willing party leaders, who arm and pay them for specific violent roles during intra-primaries and inter-party elections. The resultant effects are numerous politically motivated assassinations which have become a major feature of the struggles for power and resources within and between political parties. Other forms of violence are violent attacks are brazen arson attacks on the properties, campaign and party offices and supporters of perceived opponents (Ikelegbe, 2013:20).

Sad still, the Nigerian political parties rather than being a platform for reconciling and mediating conflicts and preventing violent eruptions through democratic procedures, the political parties in Nigeria have become a major institutional formation for the brewing and accentuation of conflicts. Party involvements in violence and violent conflicts have inflamed existing identity and communal conflicts over land, chieftaincy and community leadership. The involvement of

party chieftains in the arming and funding of armed groups have led to the proliferation of arms, armed groups, cultists and militias (Ikelegbe, 2013:31).

5. Institutions as the Bane of Democratic Consolidation.

Scholars and policy makers are of the view that the major obstacle to the growth of democracy in Nigeria has to do with the existence of weak institutions. Even in Africa as a whole, it is believed that the weakness of Institutions has become a significant issue primarily because the difficulty of realizing the benefits of development programmes and projects, especially those funded by bilateral and multi-lateral donors, has been blamed on undeveloped and inefficient institutions in most African countries. In order for African countries to succeed in the development process appropriate institutions based on democratic values need to be established in their countries that will contribute to the development and improved governance. In addition to a country's constitution and its crucial provisions such as freedom expression, freedom of association, and rule of law, governance-related institutions such as the civil service, the judiciary, and other local institutions need to be developed in African countries to play a role in the development and maintenance of democratic culture.

(i). The Corruption-ridden Legislature

The legislative arms at different levels of governmental have since the inception of the Fourth Republic frequently engaged itself with the executive in squabbles over mundane, petty issues such as their sitting allowances and the likes. Their desires are often at variances with the country's economic realities. For instance, legislative duties at the National Assembly were suspended for several weeks in 1999 before it was resolved that each legislator could have between N14, 000 and N21, 000 naira (\$156 to \$234) as a daily accommodation allowance. The "furniture allowance palaver" in which the legislators demanded to equip their new official quarters by awarding the contracts by themselves also erupted before the end of their first year in office. This was subdued by the huge negative public opinion and subtle "blackmail" from the executive. A decade later in 2010, there are still strong evidences of unrealistic and unreasonable demands from lawmakers. Specifically, in May 2010, a majority of the legislators in the lower chamber of the National Assembly demanded a new quarterly allocation of N42

million (\$277,000) each. This is apart from their monthly salary of about N1.3 million (\$8,600) each. With the event that such allowances were not considered in the 2010 budget of the National Assembly, the most probable way to accommodate this may be to collapse the capital vote of the chambers. In other words, no capital project shall be executed by the legislative arm in the year.¹⁷ In addition, it is most disturbing that the annual budget, both at the national and regional levels, is unnecessarily delayed by the legislators during the statutory process of approval. Right from the days of President Obasanjo up to the time of the late President Yar'Adua, no national budget was approved before the end of March in any particular year that such budget was meant for. Incidentally, most of these delays were caused by the legislators' regular requests for upward review of allocations directly affecting their allowances and other privileges.

Former President Olusegun Obasanjo wrote the National Assembly accusing the lawmakers of corruption, impunity, greed and of repeatedly breaking the nation's laws. In a letter dated January 13 and addressed to the President of the Senate, Bukola Saraki and the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Yakubu Dogara, the former president specifically accused the lawmakers of fixing and earning salaries and allowances far above what the Revenue Mobilisation Allocation and Fiscal Commission approved for them. He also alleged that most of the 109 senators and 369 members of the House of Representatives were receiving constituency allowances without maintaining constituency offices as the laws required of them. Obasanjo, while referring to the issue of budgets and finances of the federal legislature, said the present economic situation that the country has found itself in is the climax of the steady erosion of good financial and economic management which grew from bad to worse in the last six years or so. According to him, the executive and the legislative arms of government must accept and share responsibility in this regard and that if there will be a redress of the situation as early as possible, the two arms must also bear the responsibility proportionally (Owete, 2016).

Few months after Obasanjo's allegations, in July 2016, the former chairman of Appropriation Committee of the House of Representatives, Hon. Abdulmumin Jibrin accused the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Hon. Yakubu Dogara of abuse of his office by unilaterally taking away N40 billion allocated for constituency projects alongside his deputy, Yussuf Lasun, Minority Leader, Leo Ogor and Chief Whip, Al-Hassan Ado Doguwa without the approval of the House

adding that he and other 12 lawmakers made illegal insertions and allocations into the 2016 budget to the tune of N284 billion”. Speaker Dogara appeared to call Jibrin’s bluff initially when the spokesperson of the house, Hon. Abdulrazak Namdas, debunks the allegations. Namdas during a press conference stated that the Jibrin’s allegations were “baseless adding that most of the allegations on the 2016 budget process and his opposition to immunity of presiding officers are non-issues and mere afterthought manufactured simply because the House relieved him of his position”. However as the allegations against Dogara piled with the realization that Jibrin was not relenting especially after he had made it known that his allegations were not against the general House, but the Speaker, Dogara took to every available means to detangle himself from the quagmire. Reports have it that the speaker, who cannot come out clean on the allegation that he has a hand in the press briefing organized by eight members of the appropriation committee led by the deputy Chairman, Chris Azubuogu, in which they dissociated themselves from Jibrin’s allegation (Khaleel, 2016).

The most recent accusation against the Legislature was made by an advocacy group, Citizens Action to Take Back Nigeria (CATBAN), was that the quartet of Senate President, Bukola Saraki; his deputy, Ike Ekweremadu; House of Representatives Speaker, Yakubu Dogara; and his deputy, Lasun Yusuf, were engaged in financial fraud totaling N630,125,499.90. CATBAN said the four principal officers of the National Assembly executed the fraud by pressuring and using the Federal Capital Development Authority (FCDA) to provide them with accommodation. This is in spite of the fact that the monetization policy of the Federal Government bars all agencies from using taxpayers’ money for to meet personal demands of public officers outside the provisions of the law. According to CATBAN, the results of an independent investigation it conducted showed that in March 2016, the four principal officers of the National Assembly approached the management of the Federal Capital Development Authority (FCDA) to provide them with residential accommodation. This, it said, was sequel to a plan perfected by an agent acting between the National Assembly and FCDA to steal money via dubious accommodation requests. The requests were said to be approved within 48 hours and followed with fund disbursement, an indication of the desperation to quickly get the money. CATBAN said that the four principal officers, then presented companies that doubled as estate agents and property owners for the exercise. The companies used were Gogetit Investment

Limited, which used a Zenith Bank account to receive the money, Legendark Consult Limited, which used a Guaranty Trust Bank account to receive its own share, and Pitch Global Services, which has an account domiciled with Heritage Bank. CATBAN further said that through the four companies, it found that the sum of N630, 125,499.90 was fraudulently paid by the FCDA for phoney renting, renovation and furnishing of four properties as official residences for Messrs. Saraki, Ekweremadu, Dogara and Lasun (Sahara, 2017).

(ii). The Inherent Constant Failure of INEC

From the onset INEC operated as a stooge of the party controlling the government, making it impossible for it to organize the elections without abiding by the directive of the government and the Party. INEC's partiality manifested itself in several ways which we strongly believe showed deliberate collusion between the commission and the presidency. At other times, INEC's partiality was displayed in a number of ways. In the prelude to the elections, working in tandem with the ruling party, it ensured that there was maximum confusion about the candidature of those representing opposition political parties, especially the stronger ones. Right up to the election INEC refused to display the names of opposition party candidates. Another tactic was the deliberate withholding of election materials from areas considered to be non-opposition strongholds. The materials either never reached the polling stations or reached them so late that effective voting could not be conducted.

On many instances, INEC supported the militarization of the electoral environment, the obvious purpose was to intimidate and instill fear in opponents and their supporters to discourage them from voting, soldiers and policemen mounted roadblocks and paraded the streets of the country, harassing supporters of the opposition. Yet another disturbing factor was the deliberate absence of INEC officials from several polling stations. Where they did arrive they did so with inadequate electoral materials and, ostensibly, without results sheets.

In 2007, the European Observer Mission in Nigeria (EUEOM) reported that INEC made no provision for results to be posted at polling stations or published at local government area offices and state INEC offices. This development was described as against international best practice. It gave the ruling party an undue opportunity to change results before they reached the final collation centres. INEC's decisions lacked transparency and the commission did not provide

important information about a number of issues, including the final number of candidates and the final number of ballot papers printed and distributed (EUEOM, 2007). Other several reports and comments of election observers from within and outside the country berated the shoddy and controversial nature of most of these developments. (Vanguard, 2007)

Another apparent issue is INEC's apparently deliberately shoddy preparations before important elections. For instance, the commission spent more than a year trying to convince Nigerians to participate in electronic voter registration despite widespread opposition from civil society and even political parties, who saw it as a ploy to deceive people and disenfranchise many. It took about six months to conduct a registration exercise and many voters could not verify their names and locate their voting centres before polling day. As a result many prospective voters were effectively disenfranchised because they were unable to locate their voting centres or because, although they had temporary voters' cards their names did not appear on the voters' register. Copies of the voters' registers studied by election observer missions such as the EU showed serious deficiencies, several of them characterized by double entries, underage voters and some unrecognizable pictures. This shoddy preparation was also reflected in the presidential election.

The controversial 2007 general elections exposed the INEC's abysmal performance. The results of the elections were hotly disputed across the land. Consequently, the courts ordered re-run exercises in some states as Kogi, Adamawa, Osun, and Ekiti, where it was obvious or suspected that the electoral body displayed incompetence and, sometimes outright bias. The evidence of the open cases of ballot box snatching, falsification of results and other forms of electoral malpractices, many of which were confirmed in places like Edo and Ondo States led to the initial governorship results been overturned in favour of Adams Oshiomhole and Olusegun Mimiko later in 2009. Similarly, the results of the governorship elections in Ekiti and Osun States were later overturned in 2010 in favour of both Dr. Kayode Fayemi and Rauf Aregbesola respectively (Yagboyaju, 2008a & b).

(iii). The Partisan Roles of Security Agencies.

Since Nigeria's return to democratic and civilian rule in 1999, election periods have brought uncertainty and volatility, resulting at most times in violence. The security institutions such as the police, some sections of the armed forces are also constantly indicted for their damning roles

during organized elections. For instance, in 2003, the Justice, Development and Peace Committee (JDPC) local team that monitored and observed the elections. In its final reports, though in part, applauded the beefing up of security by the police, military and para-military forces. It said that their presence helped to maintain law and order in some parts of the country where there had been high rate of violence resulting in deaths (JDPC, 2003: 20). However, the JDPC noted that the presence of the security agencies dampened the spirits and confidence of voters in many other parts of the country. In its full report, the team specifically noted that:

i. Security agents were out to collaborate with and protect the ruling party, ii. In most of the polling stations they did nothing to prevent hijacking of ballot papers by political thugs, iii. Rigging was peacefully done in the form of ballot box stuffing by mainly PDP party agents collaborating with polling officials (JDPC, 2003: 31), iv. The most damning of the reports is on the use and misuse of security agencies. The JDPC observed that “the ruling party in each of the two geo-political zones (South-South and South-East), with the connivance of some INEC officials and the security officers, unleashed fearsome intimidation against its opponents and succeeded in carrying out massive rigging of elections in a manner that was reminiscent of the dark ages” (JDPC, 2003:37).

Other observer teams such as the Citizens Forum (CF), The European Union (EU), the Commonwealth observer team, The European Union (EU), and the American and the Commonwealth observer teams seem to share the same view with the local observers. The general consensus was that the elections were massively rigged and manipulated on the side of the ruling party (Ajayi, 2006).

Incidentally in Nigeria, the pattern observed in the 2003 election was not very different from patterns in 2007 and 2011. The ripples that followed the gubernatorial election in Ekitistate in 2014 is another indication of how the Nigerian security forces normally aligned with determined crooked politicians to have their ways all the time. Reports spoke of close to some 80,000 security personnel deployed to the state. They took unprecedented security measures. This occasioned significant restrictions of movement in some areas. Though no major incidents of security breach were recorded, obviously, their presence did hinder the electoral process. For instance, at least two governors were confirmed to have been prevented from attending a

political rally by APC. Some journalists were refused coverage of the election and some opposition political leaders were arrested.

Thus, the impression is created that the heavy security and measure thereof produced positive results. Given the calmness that prevailed, the overall success of the voting procedures, and the acceptance of the final results by all parties, the means that were used appear to justify the end. But herein lies the problem. Paradoxically, the same kind of security measures as were adopted in Ekiti can lead to different outcomes. Series of negative outcomes where people's votes do not count and where the authorities that control the security apparatus can decide the result of elections as they desire. In addition, it raises a fundamental question about uses and abuses of security personnel for elections and how to minimize and eliminate such misuse.

Much later, a Nigerian Army Captain, who leaked the audio evidence of how some top officials of the Federal Government and the People's Democratic Party, PDP, under former President Goodluck Jonathan used the Nigerian Army and other security agencies to rig the governorship election in Ekiti and Osun States in 2014. In a statement entitled: "How Nigerian Army personnel were used to rig Ekiti and Osun States Gubernatorial Elections 2014", Captain SagirKoli gave details of all that transpired between himself, his commanding officer, two ministers and some politicians prior to the elections in Ekiti state. He also spoke about the elaborate plans made to replicate the Ekiti scenario in Osun state that same year. The Army Captain's revelation was buttressed by another major revelation from the former Secretary of the Ekiti State chapter of the People's Democratic Party, PDP, Dr. TemitopeAluko, who alleged that former President Goodluck Jonathan gave Governor AyodeleFayose N4.7bn cash to prosecute the June 21, 2014 election in the state.

(iv). The Influenced Judiciary

Judiciary has a role to play in a fledgling democracy; it constitutes the focal point of democracy. Interestingly, the judiciary has impacted seriously on the maintenance of Nigeria's current democracy. In every democracy, there are always issues between individuals which are adjudicated in the courts. The impact of the judiciary on the nation's democracy cannot be overemphasized. The judiciary is the pulse of democracy without which it cannot function

effectively and maximally. Since the inception of the present democratic order. Looking at judicial precedents since the return of democracy in 1999, we find a plethora of judgments that have given direction to Nigeria's democracy. Two cases come handy in this respect. The case of Amaechi Versus INEC, which was hailed as a landmark judgement, that of Ararume vs. Ugwu in which the Supreme Court also gave a landmark judgement. The Supreme Court Judgement on Peter Obi vs. INEC in which the apex court decided on the tenure of office of the governor cannot also be forgotten. The courts had battled with the high level of corruption in the country, and have also allowed the introduction of plea bargaining that has helped to check the systemic corruption in the country.

While agreeing that democracy has done well through of landmark judgments, however it must be appreciate the fact that governments at all levels are still manipulating the judiciary. This shows certainly that the judiciary is still far from being independent. Whether it is admitted or not, the judiciary is already becoming a source of concern whenever the nation moves to the crucial general elections. The situation is bad that some politicians always find it far cheaper to use the courts to scuttle events than to procure the services of thugs. Spurious court injunctions naturally surface at important public functions such that nobody is certain that the coming elections would not be threatened or disrupted by a court injunction obtained from dubious sources. It is particularly worrisome what is going on is that Nigeria seems to have regressed back to the era of the famous "Secret of rule" (*arcana imperii*) of the past. That is why court injunctions that should be openly sought and received have become secret weapons of mischief. Such court injunctions were always served on the candidate(s) or party and the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), which had the responsibility of supervising the conventions or elections as the case may be (Adeniyi, 2016).

People belief so much in the saying that the judiciary is the hope of the common man. Both the high and the low are supposed to enjoy this dictum. The extent to which this is applicable in Nigeria today is unknown. Over the years, the Nigerian judiciary has been severely condemned, castigated and lambasted. There have emerged claims and counter-claims from citizens who alleged perversion of justice in matters relating to their cases. The insinuations often made are that justice goes to the highest bidder. In Nigeria's democracy, many disputed election results are

often resolved in courts. The judges always decide the direction of the pendulum and there have always been the allegations it is where the drums beat louder, there, the pendulum of justice swings to. Simply put, justice is for sale, when the decision of who emerges winner in elections takes place.

The judicial arm of government has over the years been drawn into the arena of corruption and accused to have appeared to be deeply engrossed in excessive acts of corruption, impropriety and mismanagement of judicial power. A remarkable event that signified this was in October 2016, when there was an early morning clampdown on some judges for alleged misconduct and corrupt practices. This event in the history of Nigeria made the year a remarkable and most turbulent for the Nigerian judiciary in two distinct but paradoxical ways. It was the year that the judiciary stood for trial and also adjudicated far more corrupt cases, which involved political big-wigs from mostly, the former administration before Buhari's own. Another notable fact is that 2016 was a year that the judiciary, known for its ability to self-cleanse was nudged to increase the tempo of separating the wheat from the chaff. In the process, the executive appeared meddlesome and consequently locked horns with the judiciary on how best to prosecute the war against corruption, especially within the judiciary. Despite criticisms and condemnations of the manner in which the executive used Department of State Services (DSS), to intimidate and arrest the alleged judges, the revelations and findings in their possessions have remained startling. At the end of the controversial raid by the DSS, about N270million of different currencies were allegedly recovered from the houses of the judges.

One other major event that made 2016 remarkable for the judiciary was the sanctioning of some judges in October by the National Judicial Council (NJC). Those affected were the former chief judge of Enugu state, Justice Innocent Umezulike. NJC forcibly retired him for delivering judgment in a case 126 days after final addresses were adopted by parties, and for other instances of abuse of office. The NJC also recommended justice Auta of the Kano state judiciary for dismissal and prosecution over an allegation that he collected N197million from Alhaji Kabiru, who wrote a petition to the NJC against him. The NJC had disciplined some judges in 2015 (Onyekwere, Dunia: 2016).

6. CONCLUDING REMARKS

THE DEEPENED CULTURE OF IMPUNITY, GREED AND KLEPTOCRACY

This research has demonstrated in an unmistakable terms that the problems of Nigeria are square laid at the doors of her political leadership who through commission or omission has acted in the most irresponsible, unaccountable, lackadaisical, callous, greedy, self-centeredness, visionless and lacking in ideology, philosophy commitment, honesty, probity, patriotism and the likes.

Professor Amuwo (2015) writing in a public lecture pointed out the extravagancy, an excessive obsession for kleptomania culture exhibited by the last administration as revealed by the following statistical figures. Quoting Adisa et al (2014) showed that within a year, the Excess Crude Account declined from \$11.5 billion to a meagre \$2.5billion. While Komolafe (2014) in another mind boggling revelation in Vanguard stated that the Federal Government overspent by N105.47 billion. And of course, the most criminal of, taking the public for granted as revealed by punch editorial (2014) that the Federal Government had about 12,000 abandoned projects valued at over N7.7 trillion after N2.6 trillion had been paid as mobilization fund; the culture of corruption transmuting to impunity.

The looting, plunder and recklessness in handling state finances by the leadership is not limited to the Federal Government rather, it is the same story at all levels; local and state government as well as agencies of state. ProfessorSoremekun (2013) in a public lecture, alluding to a study by Port-Harcourt based Centre for Africa Social Studies (CASS) questioned on the disbursement of allocation to some states in the Niger Delta and what they had used them for taking year 2006 as an example. In that Year, Rivers State got N153billion, Bayelsa was given N16billion, whereas non-producing states like Kwara and Ebonyiwere allocated N23 and N21billion respectively. These figures showed that the major oil bearing states got about five times what accrued to non-oil states. The interrogation was what they provided for their people, if not that such huge resources were embezzled, squandered or even siphoned to foreign accounts. The local governments do not fare better, starved of allocation from the states, the drops that come to them are either shared or spent on questionable project such that they add no value to their localities and communities. Stories has been told of local government chairman who declared in their recurrent expenditures, 20 drivers for 2 vehicles, claiming huge sums for fictitious names and non-existent portfolios.

On a grand scale, Nigerian state lacks leadership, leaders such that have changed the fortunes of their countries. People like Gandhi, Nehru. The corruption has been so entrenched that the political elite act and parade themselves with absolute impunity; as opined by Amuwo (2015) *Nigerian state, a prisoner of the ruling elite*. That is, the stark reality as what we read on the pages of Newspaper or television is completely fallacious. How then do we equate or match the recorded growth of the economy and the profound underdevelopment whereby over 70% of the population are more than poor but destitute in their own “rich” country lacking everything from access to education, portable water, electricity, health-care, housing, social security or what have you. There is therefore every reason to rework or renegotiate the state call Nigeria because in its present form, it is under heavy yoke of its leadership which can lead to suffocation or mortality. In this perspective, a completely new ways of managing or running the affairs of Nigeria calls for urgent consideration. The Buhari government cannot claim to follow the old path that has led us to this near collapse and think there can be solution, rather a completely shift, totally closing the pages of those dark, gruel some years and chart a new course for an reawakening Nigeria.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper completely indicted the political leadership as the fundamental problem of Nigerian state, of course the institutions are equally culpable but the leadership is the major issues behind the non-performance of the institutions and the apparent failure of the state.

The options for a virile Nigeria must start with the leadership for stealing, looting and emptying the common wealth pause and all manners of corruption and consciously put an end to them. Closely related to the aforementioned attitude of the political class is their insidious character of intolerance that pervades the geo-political terrain. Their attitude of intolerance has made a mockery of all our electoral competitions that have turned to war. They have turned the country into a pariah, a praetorian polity where it is the fittest that can survive. The culture of intolerance, incivility has been so entrenched that no one wants to loose election which has given rise to inconclusive elections and petitions, court cases and what have you. The issue is that every politician wants to be in government. No one wants to be in opposition party. But that cannot be democracy, the cohabitation of ruling party and opposition political party is the order in democracy, all our politicians are guilty of this – the ruling parties and the opposition political party which brings to the fore very strongly, legislation against vagrancy in the life of any

government. Carpet-crossing should be abolished once elections have been concluded (Adeola, 2014). Nigeria must transit to responsible, ideological, nationalistic and purposeful parties. The ruling party (parties) must allow the existence of robust, vibrant opposition political parties. As we write, the ruling party has not proved mature in this direction. There is a saying that a country is not great by the talents it has if they are not utilized but the ones it recognizes and effectively employed. In the last decades, it has become a norm that whom you know and not what you know, this is a serious hindrance to a productive and prosperous nation. Nigeria must begin to employ correct talents if it must break the vicious circle of underdevelopment. The present initiative of government to have a new carrier and a new shipping line must be allowed to be run by professionals and be handled totally as a business outfit for government. The example of Korea which is being copied worldwide should be emulated. Government can provide the enabling environment but must be run by private entrepreneurs, businessmen should only report to government. It will be so profitably arranged that, even when government wants to make use of their services, it has to pay; in other words, 'no payment, no service'. If Ethiopia Airline, Egyptian, South African Airway are lucrative ventures, Nigerian government must allow the proposed National carrier and the shipping line be handled, nurtured as a 100% profit-making venture by experts, professionals with full business management pedigree.

On diversification, every encouragement and policy to support the proliferation of solar energy in all forms as a readily available alternative energy should be embarked upon. In the same vein, must this government do all within its powers to immortalize its reign by confronting all odds objectively to set the country on an irreversible path of manufacturing, industrial sector by establishing iron and steel industry. All over the world, it is the core manufacturing industry. In this age of globalization, Nigeria needs a solid, highly developed and functioning iron and steel industrial plant as the primary industry of all industries. The objective is not to produce for export, No. Rather as a primary source if raw material for other manufacturing to produce materials, finished products for various uses, consumable products, spare-parts, even vehicles that can be manufacture for internal consumption and for export. Nigeria must confront the present embarrassment with resolution to move to the next level of a manufacturing nation. Nigerian leadership must allow this dream to work.

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