

## SOCIAL CONTRACT AND LEADERSHIP INTEREST IN NIGERIA

Joseph IWAKA<sup>1</sup>, Franklins Avwoghokihgo SANUBI<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup>Department of Political Science, Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria

### ABSTRACT

This paper is an evaluation of political leadership in Nigeria against the theory of Social Contract. By this we analyze the performance of government on certain policies already made to see if they conform to the postulation of this theory. The study is a historical documentary research using mainly secondary data sourced from extant policies documents, research and literatures. The study finds among other things that the Nigerian political leadership has failed in many respects to conform to the Social Contract theory in their leadership and therefore the study suggests, among others that policy makers should adopt more values of good governance and adhere to the terms of the Social Contract theory.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The interconnectedness of people in political relationships often compels a need for confidence in themselves or in how they govern others. It is crucial that the parties, especially those affected by the consequences of domination, agree on what governance should be like or what rules it should operate under. The principles of the social contract in the instruments of governance can carry weight in terms of the will of the people, their trust in the contract, their role in governance, and their continued loyalty to the contract. The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (CFRN) attests to the existence of a social contract between leaders and followers within the state. The features of the recent political turmoil attest to the need to reevaluate allegiance to this contract.

The movement and emergence of violent groups such as the Boko Haram sect, the Niger Delta Avengers, and the Fulani Herdsmen are a reflection of the general insecurity that is gripping the country, painting a bleak picture of “three days and nights falling on one day” (Rufus, 2017, 21). Many leaders in positions of authority remain indifferent to the plight of the poor, unemployed, and hungry. They are preoccupied with sucking up national fortunes, hence social injustice, corruption, poverty, and insecurity are causing untold hardship to the people. The greatest threat to democracy and good governance in Nigeria is poor leadership that creates a hostile political environment for national development since the restoration of democratic governance in 1999, Nigeria has experienced a deepening political crisis (Odo, 2015). Concern for leadership is a major problem that continues to hinder true democratization by excluding a segment of the political elite from effective participation in the country's politics. According to Fayemi (2009), since independence, years of political misrule and maladministration by civilian and military dictatorships have left the country politically demobilized, humanly underdeveloped, economically barren, and with a large population living in poverty. Therefore, with the 1999 democratization, Nigerians expected that a new wave of political leadership and democratic governance would accelerate the country's development trend. Political leaders were expected to address the country's socioeconomic and political problems, including poverty, corruption, lack of good governance, corrupt electoral system, unemployment, and insecurity (Orji, 2014). Some of these problems appear to be not only worsening but also defying solutions.

Nigerians are deeply frustrated and disappointed that their hopes for a solution to the persistent economic crisis, social tensions, and political instability are not being met. Political corruption and deception are pervasive, and national discontent is widespread as some interest groups have hijacked the country for their own parochial purposes. Thus, Nigeria, despite its abundant human and material resources, continues to languish in the doldrums well into the future. This is contrary to the dreams of Nigeria's founding fathers, who at independence saw Nigeria as a beacon of hope and a bastion of democratic politics in Africa (Oronsaye, 2006). Leadership problems continue to derail efforts at true democratization by excluding a segment of the political elite from effective participation in the country's politics.

Nevertheless, democracy in Nigeria is still significantly lacking in transparency and plagued by corruption, unethical behavior, election fraud, lack of a reliable political party system, electoral violence, and other issues. This paper focuses on why Nigeria still straggling to achieve effective leadership in its democracy. Critics have pointed out the leadership model in Nigeria for its failure to provide the required attention needed for fostering national development and ensuring political stability (Ayeni, 1988; Ake, 1995; and Sklar et al., 2006). Therefore, the main goal of this study is to utilize the social contract theory, specifically John Locke's version of the theory, to pinpoint the deficiency in state establishment, leadership, and governance gap that has resulted in the alarming conditions of instability in the nation. Nigeria has abundant reserves of both natural and human resources that have the potential to bring significant diplomatic wealth and attract the jealousy of numerous countries. Nigeria indeed possesses immense potential to become a dominant force in both the economic and political arenas.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Attempting to discuss social contract and leadership interest, it is not a mistake to first understand the concepts of social contract and leadership. This is due to the ever-changing nature and diverse understandings of the two ideas among various societies and occupations. Whenever there is a diplomatic conflict, as well as socio-political, economic, and security unrest, the protection of the country's interests is dependent on the leadership's role, which is a significant concern for Nigeria and its observers. On this point, academics persisted in mental efforts to find suitable intellectual preferences on leadership to understand Nigeria's external image. Essentially, this section aims to clarify and define political leadership and Nigeria's image issue with the primary goal of shedding light on a specific aspect of their connection, pinpointing areas needing further research, and highlighting opportunities for contribution.

### The Meaning and Nature of the Social Contract

The social contract is formed when free individuals with similar beliefs work together without fear or inhibition to create a fair and just plan of governance for both leaders and citizens. It does not involve force or coercion and results in the demonstration of freedom within the reciprocal relationship between the parties in the social contract. An authentic portrayal, assignment of responsibilities, and mutual exchange are the defining characteristics of such a contractual agreement or record. The beginnings of the social contract are frequently attributed to philosophy, as seen in the ideas of Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and J. J. Rousseau, and this concept has been especially utilized in the realm of politics. The social contract, a concept introduced by philosophers like John Locke, Thomas Hobbes and Jean-Jacques Rousseau both explore the concepts of equality, consent, and individual rights. Social contracts are the implicit and undocumented norms of a community. These are the pacts made between individuals in a community or between individuals and their government in order to establish a civil society and enforce regulations. Society can only operate effectively through the agreement between the leader and the citizens. Social contract theorists believe that humans were able to establish a system to justify political authority through individual self-interest and rational consent, thanks to their natural ability to reason. It was determined that rational individuals can willingly embrace an effective government as a voluntary duty. The social contract theory supports government authority and protects citizens from oppression by restricting the government's power. Philosophers hold slightly varying perspectives on social contract theory, which aim to elucidate various aspects of the relationship between the government and the governed.

Despite the widespread use and acceptance of social contract theory as a way to explain human interactions and government governance, some groups disagree with its accuracy and fairness. Established codes of conduct in a social contract secure the general will, morality, and common good of the people by guiding governance and submission.

### Concept of Leadership

According to the Advanced Learner's Dictionary, leadership is the ability to guide and develop something over time to make it more advanced and powerful. This ability to lead can be used for the benefit of society, which is commonly viewed as effective leadership, or for harm. Therefore, it is the capacity to coordinate, guide, and oversee a team of individuals towards a common or desired objective. Therefore, leadership plays a crucial role in shaping the image of a nation and is vital for its development. Leadership is crucial for establishing, expanding, modifying, or closing small and unpredictable units within a nation or company (Ogbeidi, 2012). Putting people's attention and welfare as the focal point of all strategies and actions, meeting the needs of the people through professionalism, accountability, integrity, security, and benefiting from international support should be the defining characteristic of leadership (Osita, 2016).

Hence, a leader should display a high level of discipline and organization when it comes to planning, budgeting, and upkeep. They invest time in strategizing which actions to take, at what expense, executed by whom, and methods to accomplish different objectives. Certainly, there are numerous perspectives on leadership (Fyneface, 2013; Lukuman, 2014; Ichili, 2016, Ikenga, 2017). However, the consensus in all these viewpoints is that leadership involves strategizing, guiding, motivating or inspiring, and influencing individuals towards achieving shared goals and objectives. For example, according to Fyneface (2013), leadership involves taking on a position and actively carrying out a role that motivates organized group efforts towards achieving common goals and objectives. Agbor (2012) contends that the behavior of its leaders is crucial in determining the success or failure of a society.

As a result, the influence of leadership in governing a state is directly tied to the population size and inversely linked to the reputation of the state. Furthermore, Chemers (2002) characterizes leadership as the act of social influence where an individual motivates others to achieve a goal and guides the organization towards greater unity and clarity. In this paper, leadership refers to political office holders and government officials in control of affairs in Nigeria. Therefore, the ruling elite in politics, known as political leadership, oversee the management of a political entity's

affairs and resources by establishing and impacting policy priorities that impact the area through various decision-making structures and institutions designed for the organized progression of the region (Ogbeidi, 2012; Imhonopi & Ugochukwu, 2013, Ikenga, 2018).

### **The nexus between Social Contract and Leadership interest in Nigeria**

The people frequently claim that the lack of effective leadership and failure to follow the rule of law and Constitution are the main problems in governing Nigeria. This writer believes that leadership filled with empathy listens to the cries of those being led for their well-being. The leader is supposed to follow the desires of the public, but it appears that after gaining power, many leaders become disconnected from the people and their desires. The commands of the Constitution regarding the desires of the people, their well-being, and rights outlined in the Constitution must be honored. Obiagba (2005) reported. Alexander Hamilton is quoted as saying, "The constitution shall be the supreme law of the land."

Therefore, any legislative act that goes against the Constitution is not allowed. Denying this would mean saying that the deputy is superior to the principal, the servant is higher than the master, and that representatives of the people surpass the people themselves, allowing them to do things against their powers and even prohibited by them.

The Constitution's supremacy was made clear in the case of AG, Federation v A.G, Lagos State, where it was emphasized that it is paramount not just when conflicting with other laws, but also when trying to rival it in an already covered area. Failure to follow the Constitution by leaders goes against both its principles and actual wording. Disregarding the rule of law, as demonstrated by not following court decisions, is a clear example. Moreover, the issues surrounding the social contract in Nigeria arise from the fact that certain federal and state agencies do not adhere to it openly or secretly, thereby weakening its effectiveness. The label of Nigeria as a failed state by some is due to the clear breakdown of leadership structures in both direct and delegated forms.

Numerous establishments have not upheld the obligations outlined in the Constitution, such as Federal Character, freedom of the press, and independence of the judiciary, on behalf of the State and the electorate. Additionally, the population lacks a strong awareness for active involvement in governance as anticipated by leadership (Ikenga, Edo, & Ighoshemu. 2022; Ikenga & Chima, 2021). The lack of meetings with constituents and town halls to examine leadership performance shows this truth. However, this does not prevent those in power from acting unjustly and engaging in abuse of power through actions such as extra-judicial killings and arrests.

One of the obstacles encountered by the present democratic regime is the internal conflicts of militancy involving various armed groups in the Niger Delta area, such as the Niger Delta Volunteer Force. The rise in armed robbery, abduction, and extortion of ransom payments from the families of victims is making an impact in this area. Just a couple of days ago, a group of teachers and students from a school in Kaduna were abducted. The attempts to break away and rebellions, such as the ones from the Independent People of Biafra (IPOB), are still vivid in our minds. The challenges of ethnic nationalism, religious insurgency such as Boko Haram, regular conflicts between herders and farmers, and cultism all hinder the pursuit of national peace. Newspapers consistently report on the erosion of values in governance, which is displayed through institutionalized corruption. Various sectors such as security, with civilians facing harsh interventions and rights abuses, demonstrate the urgent need for interventions in road infrastructure, education, healthcare, economy, and labor disputes like minimum wage issues.

Issues such as deteriorating infrastructure, particularly federal roads, ensuring consistent electricity supply, enhancing security for individuals and their belongings, reducing medical tourism, and stopping the emigration of skilled young people and workers, among other things, require immediate assessment and focus. The election dilemma is a crucial issue within Nigeria's ongoing problems that cannot be ignored. Numerous obstacles arise from compromised election processes, reluctance to acknowledge election outcomes, and various legal challenges in different election tribunals. The social, political, and economic issues highlighted previously are not comprehensive. Nigeria has been recently labeled as the poverty capital, a label that may not be incorrect. A number of kids are not attending school in the rural area. It is possible to convey the concern that life in the aforementioned conditions is harsh.

Strong criticism is directed towards the thriving of financially and politically capable individuals at the expense of those who are vulnerable and cannot protect their interests in the social agreement. The reliance on arbitrariness in governance, stemming from the disconnect between the social contract and leadership in Nigeria, still poses a challenge in the country. The answer can be found in leadership that is proactive, purposeful, and empathic.

Nwabueze (2003) mentions Jackson and Rosberg's work on Personal Rule in Africa, highlighting the prevalence of self-centered leadership in Africa. As per the authors, when rules or laws are not respected, individuals become more important than rules, office holders are not constrained by their position, and can manipulate their authority to benefit personal or political motives. Obiagba (2005) contends that the primary difficulty with personalized rule is that it is a

government that does not adhere to any transparent criteria established and disclosed for all to observe, or at least for the courts to interpret and enforce. He comes to the conclusion that the ruler's preferences hold the power of laws. Jackson and Roseberg also suggest that in a system of personal rule, the rules are ineffective in controlling political behavior, making it difficult to predict or anticipate behavior based on the rules. In traditional political terms, the state is ruled by individuals rather than rules (Nwabueze, 2004). In Diamond's (2008) perspective, the ruler's subjects transformed into clients resembling Max Weber's concept, rather than remaining as citizens with rights.

African countries were labeled as 'neo-patrimonial' because of the emphasis on 'personalized, unaccountable power and prevalent patron-client connections', which flow from the top 'big man' - the authoritarian president - to his close associates and supporters, who then act as patrons to lower-level influencers, and finally to the dispersed population of regular citizens, who are stuck in relationships of reliance on and loyalty to their local political patrons. In his work from 2008, Diamond raises the question of why Africa is still facing poverty, stagnation, misery, violence, and disruption fifty years after decolonization began. To bet on a response would mean stating that the cause is 'prebendalism', or leadership centered around the officeholder.

Furthermore, the leadership faces increasing external pressures such as violent disruptions and terror attacks supported by foreign entities. Xenophobic assaults against Nigerians in Ghana, South Africa and other nations have seen a notable rise. Additional outside barriers include the weight of debt, environmental issues such as desertification and rising sea levels, floods, and politically-driven terrorism, among others.

These mentioned external pressures are not the only examples. They provide clear signals about the necessity of the social contract being influenced by both social and political factors. They also demonstrate that the political leadership in Nigeria is experiencing turbulence and unrest. Nevertheless, imagine if the decision to hold a position of authority through election was intentional. In this situation, it is necessary to take intentional steps to address these issues, centered around the question: Do we function as a single nation or as a collection of different nationalities within a federation? Can we reject Western forms of government as foreign and find a purely African system of governance without outside influence? Yes, the response would be affirmative, with a government prioritizing the well-being of its citizens above all else. On the flip side, numerous African countries are viewed as unsuccessful or in decline, as described by Crawford as "various cases of governmental crises and collapse".

He accurately describes a failed state as a scenario where the framework, legitimate power, law, and political organization have crumbled and need to be rebuilt in some way, either old or new (Crawford, 2006). Crawford (2006) mentions Wood (2005) stating that national institutions are frequently missing, tainted, or not working properly. In a situation like this, the core institutions have declined to a point where external assistance is needed to strengthen domestic institutions for self-governance, rather than imposing foreign control, as stated by (Clarke W. and Herbst J. 1996).

### 3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Several theoretical frameworks can be used to clarify Nigeria's problem with its perception. Nevertheless, this research uses a neoclassical realism (NCR) approach, which is a type of realist ideology. Realist theory depends on a state's acquisition and application of power to safeguard itself and sway other states. Realists believe that power consists of both physical and non-physical resources possessed by a state (Nye, 1991; Kaarbo & Ray, 2011). Nevertheless, NCR heavily depends on a state's utilization of soft power. Soft power promotes a state's cultural resources, political values, and foreign policies to influence others' preferences and achieve desired outcomes through attraction and setting political agenda (Nye, 2008).

Gideon Rose is credited with introducing the concept of neoclassical realism in his renowned book review, "Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy." Additional supporters of the theory include Fareed Zakaria, Lobell, Rathbun, Ripsman, and Taliaferro (Firoozabadi & Ashkezari (2016) made this point. NCR, an extended version of Kenneth Waltz's neorealism, argues that states' political outcomes in international politics are not influenced by states' behaviors (Schweller, 2003). The main driving force behind the creation of NCR is when countries' motivations and goals are influenced by their material power capabilities in comparison to others. This indicates that states seek power capabilities in order to protect their interests such as promoting good governance and a positive image, as argued by Kaarbo and Ray. The year 2011 is referred to as "realpolitik or power politics".

NCR suggests that a state's behavior is primarily influenced by its relative power resources, position in the international system, and internal beliefs (Rose, 1998; Firoozabadi & Ashkezari, 2016). Neoclassical realism is utilized in this research to elucidate how Nigeria's political leaders utilize their resources to garner interest from other countries and analyze the relationship between domestic and foreign demands. According to NCR's theoretical analysis in foreign policy, states are advised to pursue their interest, which in this case is related to their image. The



actions of a state are significant as realism highlights the importance of a state's global power and influence in enhancing the state's interest and influence (Kaarbo & Ray, 2011). Therefore, the decisions or lack thereof made by political leaders influence how the state is viewed, specifically in terms of its efforts to uphold or increase its influence compared to other states.

Hence, when utilizing NCR to elucidate the main point of this paper, it is important to note that the theory assists in analyzing and unraveling the divide in Nigeria's reputation issue and developing a theoretical foundation that includes the influence of leadership in decision-making that influences the image atmosphere of the nation. Primarily, the implementation of NCR assists in addressing the deficiencies present in alternative forms of realism and other theories that analyze the shortcomings in policy decisions for the Nigerian project (Oriola & Chibuike, 2016; Saliu, 2016; Sule et al., 2018).

#### 4. METHODS

This study is a historical documentary research and based on a qualitative research approach. The main method of collecting data is through secondary sources such as books, journal articles, policy documents, research and internet resources. In-depth interviews with key informants complement the secondary sources. Gray (2013) utilized purposive sampling method. Prominent individuals were chosen from both government and non-government organizations, experienced academics and specialists in Nigeria's image enhancement efforts, making up the study's sample size. As a result, the study utilizes the interpretive approach for analyzing data. This assists in grasping the standard aspects of the research (Saunders et al., 2009; Creswell, 2014).

The study utilizes Gilbert's (2006) three principles of objectivity to achieve the goals of triangulation as a social research method when explaining the research findings. The principles include authenticity, which determines if the evidence is obtained without biases; representativeness, which assesses the distinctiveness of data collection; and meaning, which evaluates how easily understood and flawless the collected data is.

#### 5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

##### **The noticeable reasons for leadership question and Nigeria's crisis**

It is widely agreed that good leadership plays a crucial role in shaping a country's reputation, thus Nigeria's numerous issues can all be attributed to poor leadership. Truly, many Nigerians believe that the Nigerian government does not prioritize the well-being of its citizens, whether they are living in Nigeria or abroad. One could argue that Nigerians are like sheep without leaders (Akinterinwa, 2013; Fyनेface, 2013; Imhonopi & Ugochukwu (2013) and Saliu (2014) have conducted research on this topic. The explanation for this mentality is not difficult to understand. Initially, numerous academics have recognized the colonial system as a prominent topic of discussion surrounding the crisis in Nigeria (Duke, 2010; Ebitu, 2016; Garba, 2012; Lukuman, 2014). They hinted that the joining of the Southern and Northern Protectorates of Nigeria by the British in 1914 created a unified geographical entity known as Nigeria, affecting Nigeria's reputation. Similar to many other African nations, Nigeria was colonized in the 19th century, and the ongoing discussion on how colonial exploitation has impacted the country's reputation is a prominent topic in academic circles. Duke (2010) asserts that colonialism impacts the mindset of the native population across the social, economic, and political structures of society. The economic system of a society plays a crucial role in shaping the superstructure, such as beliefs and views of the country's reputation, which largely relies on the effectiveness of governance.

Ebitu (2016) also believes that promoting Nigeria internationally has become challenging due to the lingering negative effects of colonialism.

Regardless of whether it is acknowledged, colonialism has had both negative and positive effects on Nigeria's image and national development. Colonialism brought western education to Africans and established English as a common language in diverse Nigeria. Once more, it was presented. Despite the negative impact colonialism had on Nigeria's image and national development, it also had positive influences that should not be ignored. Colonialism brought western education to Africans and established English as the lingua franca in diverse Nigeria. Once more, it brought in western culture that can be adapted to meet Nigeria's requirements, like in other colonized regions. Essentially, the colonial infrastructure and growing urban centers have remained as the core of Nigeria's current socio-economic development (Saliu, 2016; Fawole, 2016).

Yet, despite the authoritarian and domineering image of the military, Nigeria gained a strong reputation as a leading black nation and protector of African interests during the military rule (Fawole, 2016). Truly, Nigeria's reputation on the international stage was mainly attributed to its strong military power, positioning the country as a significant player in Africa and globally. Other evidence supporting this fact includes the resistance against apartheid in South Africa, economic unification in West Africa, rotational position at the UN Security Council, as well as ECOMOG

missions in Liberia and Sierra Leone. Certainly, the era of military dictatorship in Nigeria saw some determined leaders who made lasting impacts on the country's reputation (George, 2012; Akinboye, 2015).

Another reason for the image crisis is the declining ability of the government to address the challenges of the country's political economy. Nigeria, like all countries, has the primary responsibility to meet its national interests by engaging in diplomatic, trade, economic, education, security, socio-cultural, and political relations with other nations. Nevertheless, evaluations of several interdependent factors of state capacity indicate decreasing motivation for enhancing reputation. The reputation of Nigeria is somewhat reliant on the security situation in the country and among its citizens (Aleyomi & Abu Bakar, 2017). Yet, the Nigerian government has failed to meet the anticipated levels in ensuring sufficient security for its citizens (Sampson, 2016).

The state has limited economic ability to address the citizens' needs, provide jobs for the large number of unemployed youth, and ensure access to social services (Osaghae, 2010). As a result, the 'push' factor leads to the irregular migration of Nigerians, as it is challenging for ambitious youth to fulfill their goals in Nigeria. Occurrences of weakened government ability in Nigeria, such as the Niger Delta crisis, frequent kidnappings, ethno-religious clashes, electoral violence, human rights violations, Boko Haram insurgency, and terrorism, have had a negative impact on the country's reputation (Odoemene, 2012; Onapajo & Uzodike, 2012; Imhonopi & Ugochukwu, 2013; Ichili, 2016; Sampson, 2016).

A key factor influencing how leadership is viewed in Nigeria is the government's failure to hold those responsible for violence accountable. This poses a danger to the nation's domestic security and has an impact on its global reputation. From 1999 to 2017, there are no documented cases of individuals being held accountable for committing acts of violence, despite numerous reports implicating various groups and members of the community. CLEEN Foundation along with the World Organization.

Against Torture has accused the government of failing to implement multiple findings of inquiry panels or judicial commissions that investigate different crises contributing to insecurity in Nigeria (Olaniyi, 2017). This does not just blame Nigeria's political leaders but is also a reason why negative security perceptions of the country keep coming back. The government's response to these reports clearly shows that the panel serves as a means for the government to avoid its responsibility of protecting the citizens and its reputation.

Another factor contributing to the country's image crisis is the ingrained presence of corruption and impunity in its national infrastructure. Although corruption is found worldwide, its severity is particularly high in Nigeria, especially within the government. Global concerns are drawn to the Fourth Republic (Uddoh, 2016).

Corruption has greatly damaged the country's reputation and national interests domestically and internationally. It encourages the use of religion for political and economic gain, perpetuates social disparities, and fosters animosity. Therefore, individuals who obtain their wealth through hard work and integrity consider corruption-generated riches to be inappropriate (Akinterinwa, 2013; Imhonopi & Ugochukwu, 2013).

In 2015, Transparency International (TI) ranked Nigeria 136 out of 168 in corruption perception index, labeling the country as deliberately deceitful. In a dishonorable way, ex-British PM David Cameron described Nigeria as extremely corrupt. This was only achievable due to the inadequate commitment of political leaders towards combatting corruption, as most of them are involved in corrupt activities. Evidently, the Nigerian state lacks the necessary moral principles and ideological capabilities to combat corruption, choosing instead to glorify thieves and honor the wrong individuals while demonizing the country's true heroes (Imhonopi & Ugochukwu, 2013).

According to some survey participants and supported by previous research, numerous elected and appointed government officials have been charged by competent authorities.

Nigerians celebrate politicians ousted for corruption who are then appointed to other government positions (Akinterinwa, 2016; Ichili, 2016; Saliu, 2016; Uddoh, 2016). Akinterinwa (2013) points out that the participation of the previous administration Mrs. Patricia Etteh, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, caused outrage by misusing N628 million (\$1.7 million) and refusing to admit her mistakes until she was pressured to step down to avoid impeachment, which led to negative perceptions of Nigerians by the international community and harmed the country's reputation.

Nigeria's political leaders' failure to demonstrate genuine leadership qualities is evident in examples like Salisu Buhari's certificate forgery scandal as a former House of Representatives Speaker and Dr. Chuba Okadigbo's removal for official misconduct as a former Senate President, which negatively affect Nigeria's reputation (Akinterinwa, 2013). Out of everything mentioned, the country's political leadership lacks the moral finesse and personal character needed to improve Nigeria's fortunes and effectively address corruption and indiscipline. Corruption has transformed into a

malignant tumor, expanding in range, destroying the political system in various ways and severely harming Nigeria's reputation.

### **The interventions of political leadership towards national development.**

In Nigeria, it is widely agreed that good governance is essential for sustainable development, as it helps to tackle the contradictions of the domestic political economy and enhance the business environment. The Nigerian state is fully aware that the link between development, image enhancement, respect for human rights, and good governance is a significant issue in the country's Fourth Republic. Nigeria has reacted to these challenges by creating a domestic reform plan called the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy.

In order to reduce poverty and improve quality of life, political economy should be enhanced. The plan sought to advance an economy driven by the private sector and market forces, transforming it into a tech-savvy, highly competitive economy both domestically and internationally, especially in terms of comparative advantage (Kwanashie, 2007).

Moreover, to address corruption, the political leaders introduced the Value for Money Audit of Contracts, also known as the 'Due Process' mechanism, and the Money Laundering Act to combat corruption and financial crimes. Nigeria took steps to increase the battle against corrupt behavior by joining the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) and creating the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission, along with the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission. These efforts are reinforced to varying degrees by various administrations in the Fourth Republic. Nonetheless, the fight against corruption is deemed inadequate due to the significant official and institutional backing for corrupt practices (Agbiboa, 2012; Akinterinwa, 2013). This implies that Nigerian government officials are only pretending to combat corruption and promote lawlessness.

The direction and mood of external perception are often shaped by the leader's persuasion and personal opinion (Saliu, 2014). The initiative by Nigerian political leaders during the Fourth Republic from 1999 to 2018 to attract foreign investors is a crucial factor in enhancing the country's reputation. Nigeria encourages international investment by ensuring security. Sufficient security is the main focus for both investments and investors. As an example, in 1999 when President Obasanjo came into power, he traveled abroad to improve Nigeria's reputation and bring back Nigeria's security into global significance (Fawole, 2016).

Some actions taken to improve security architecture included setting up the Niger Delta Development Commission was established in 2000 to promote swift, fair, and enduring progress in combating the exploitation of the region; Presidential Amnesty Programme was initiated in 2009 to forgive militants from legal action (Akujuru & Ruddock, 2016). The government also worked to combat the Boko Haram insurgency, battle against terrorism, kidnapping, and hostage-taking, and especially address political instability by strengthening the security infrastructure of the country. Nevertheless, security professionals have contended that utilizing suppressive force mixed with counter-insurgency tactics can result in increased retaliatory violence (Akinjuru & Ruddock, 2016; Ichili, 2016; Oyewole, 2016; Sampson, 2016).

Therefore, the government adhered to international standards by establishing the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) in Geneva in 2009 as part of their dedication to promoting and protecting human rights. NHRC was founded with the purpose of establishing a platform for acknowledging extrajudicial actions, combating any violations of human rights, and advocating for the protection and fulfillment of human rights. Nevertheless, the Fourth Republic of Nigeria has documented instances of violent killings, physical mutilation, sexual abuse, forced marriage and labor, religious persecutions, and the conscription of hostages, among other negative treatments (Oyewole, 2016). All of these examples go against the international human rights protection treaty that was signed by the state of Nigeria. Ironically, it is government officials, particularly the Nigeria Police, the Military, paramilitary agencies, and other government institutions, who are mainly responsible for committing human rights violations despite their primary responsibility being to protect life and property.

## **6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Confirming certain intellectual stances and our theoretical assumptions, the research finds that Nigeria's crisis is attributed to corruption, ineffective leadership combined with a corrupted value system among the population, and lack of enthusiasm from the followership. The article found ambitious political leadership concepts for building the nation. This indicates that Nigeria has suitable initiatives that meet global standards for portraying a positive image, yet the country lacks the political determination to carry out the initiatives and resolve diplomatic weaknesses to promote national development, dignity, and integrity. In Nigeria's Fourth Republic, the country remains highly corrupt and impoverished, struggling with insecurity and challenges to democratic governance, among other socio-economic and political issues.

Many national programs in Nigeria are focused on treating the symptoms of the national crisis rather than addressing its underlying causes. Therefore, the research concludes that as the country has evolved politically over time, political leaders should have developed and taken control of the governance system, essentially putting them in charge of governing activities. Therefore, the research suggests the following:

- i. The Nigerian leadership and citizenship must establish a symbiotic relationship based on trust, accountability, integrity, and patriotism to create robust institutions and structures.
- ii. In Nigeria, political leaders must adopt the values of good governance and adhere to the terms of the social contract.
- iii. Furthermore, it was discovered that the new medication had unexpected side effects. The Nigerian government must address issues of corruption, poverty, and unemployment firmly, and encourage accountability and transparency to foster trust among the population.
- iv. Political leaders should focus on genuine development for the populace rather than exploiting economically disadvantaged and uneducated Nigerian youths for political benefits, as this can fuel terrorism and insecurity in the nation.
- v. Ultimately, Nigeria must ensure that its internal focus is in line by evaluating the impact of political leadership policies and their interactions with external parties.

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