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An Appraisal of Plato's Idea on Philosopher King and the Nigerian State

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Abstract

This paper examined the philosophical worldview of Plato's idea on philosopher king in his classical work "The Republic" in the light of the contemporary leadership crisis in Nigeria. It is specifically aimed at tracing the emergence of leadership crisis in Nigeria right from independence, identifying the qualities of leadership in Plato's ideal state, analyzing Plato's ideas on philosopher king in relation to leadership in Nigeria, and examining how leadership crisis in Nigeria could be addressed using Platonic template. The paper adopted a qualitative analysis which was solely based on secondary sources of data gathering as a result, relevant literatures were critically reviewed. It was revealed that the major challenge of the Nigerian state is that of leadership. It was also noted that Nigerian leaders lack the sterling qualities of Philosopher kings as espoused by Plato in his hypothetical Republic. Furthermore, the paper submitted that leadership crisis in Nigeria would undermine the realization of Plato's ideal state. The study concluded that there is urgent need to eschew Nigerian state off the bad leadership rearing its ugly head so as to enjoy the dividends of democracy and socio-economic development.

Keywords: Philosopher king; The Republic; Ideal state; Leadership crisis

Introduction

The territory known today as Nigeria was not so called until 1914 during which the amalgamation of Northern and Southern protectorates took place by Sir Frederick Lugard (Asaju, Arome, & Anyio, 2014). Nigeria experienced 46 years (1914-1960) of colonial domination prior to her independence on October 1, 1960. Since independence, however, Nigerian government is characterized with clueless, uninspiring, and self-centered leaders despite the fact that Nigeria is luxuriously blessed with human and material resources needed for national expansion and transformation (Ijewereme & Dunmade, 2014).

Existing literature reveals that Nigeria is fraught of poor leadership and since independence; Nigeria has never been administered by unselfish, truly transformational, and knowledgeably endowed front-runner.

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By extension, Nigeria has never selected its best product to position of leadership hence, militating against the growth of the state without any serious achievement (Ogbu, cited in Ijewereme & Dunmade, 2014). Since the inception of Nigeria as a sovereign state, attempt have been made by scholars of varied background to put in a proper perspective and attendant benefits of governance or misgovernance of those political leaders who have been opportune to rule at different tiers of government (Ayodeji, 2015), but not much has been done on Plato's philosopher-king.

Following the above notion, Plato view a philosopher as one who love wisdom, has a thirst for knowledge and always curious and eager to learn (Subrata & Sushila 2011). Plato (427-347 BC), the ancient Greek philosopher, and the founder of the Academy in Athens published his famous work "The Republic" around 380 BC to address thought-provoking issues during his time. It was evident that Athenian politics during Plato's time was characterised by political quagmire hence Plato sought a remedy for the chaotic society not in politics but in philosophy. In view of this, Plato discovered a fundamental and lasting belief that those malevolent would never cease until philosophers become rulers or rulers become philosopher (Carugati, Ober & Weingast, 2015).

To Plato, it seemed natural that competence should be the criterion for leadership. The ruler of the state should be one who has the sterling abilities to fulfill that function. Those who have the greatest of the great qualities should be burdened with the responsibility of governing the state. Thus, the main thrust of this paper is to unravel the utilization of Plato's notion on philosopher king in the contemporary leadership crises in Nigeria with a view to articulating blueprint for proficient leadership in Nigeria using the Platonic template.

Conceptual discourse

Leadership

Leadership is relevant to every facet of life. Leadership and leading activity is obtainable in the home, at work, religious gathering and more elaborately, where there are groups of people. However, the conventional meaning of leadership is for an individual within a group to lead and others follow. But overtime, people's perception of leadership begins to change because of the diverse roles the leaders have to perform in different places. Consequent upon this, it is often said that some leaders are born, while others inherit leadership traits (Shobola & Nicholas-Omoregbe, 2012).

Research has revealed that diverse scholars of varying backgrounds have variously perceived leadership to suit their discussion. However, McFarland in Mohammed (2004) perceives leadership as "the ability of an individual to influence others to work beyond regular level to achieve goals within organizations, an institution or society" (cited in Asaju, Arome & Mukaila, 2014, p. 119). Omolayo (2005) describes leadership as a crucial oil that keeps the wheel of government working without any struggle. In his view, leadership makes the difference between success and failure in a state. It involves giving direction to citizens who are the critical assets of the nation.

Kolade (2012) is of the view that leadership process is rested on the ability to allocate scarce resources, which determines the position of power. Effective leadership is central to the attainment of success. It is a privilege to serve and such service should not be bestrides or perceived as leverage to abuse power or an avenue to accumulate wealth. Furthermore, Yukl (2010, p. 21) views leadership as both a “process of influencing others to understand and agree about what needs to be done efficiently, and the process of facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish the shared goals”.

Notwithstanding the complexities regarding the conception of leadership, from the foregoing, three elements are indispensable for the exercise of leadership. These include influence, presence of a group, and goals (Peretomode, 2012). Influence involves a process in which the leader has an impact on others in the sense that he is able to induce them to behave in a particular way. Exerting influence implies that there is a group to be led and hence the second element describes this influence taking place in a group context with group members being followers of the leader. Third, leadership presupposes that the influence of the leader over the group behavior is geared towards the achievement of a particular goal or goals (Spicker 2012).

Types, Qualities and Characteristics of a Good Leader

According to Deckor and Nnodim (2005, pp. 26-28), there are numerous types of leaders starting from home where the father is normally the leader, political leaders, religious leaders among others. They are classified as follows:

Institutional leaders: These classifications of leaders are found in a formal setting. Their functions as leaders are in accordance to the positions they occupy. It is in such a way that successors take over from them whenever they leave office. For example, we have Vice Chancellors, school principals, medical directors of hospitals, among others. These people are generally public officers with limitations to their authority. They come and go according to the rules or regulations laid down for them. This is the type that is common in Nigeria.

Situational leaders: These categories of leaders are seen whenever there are emergencies or inadequacies in a family, organization or social institutions to rectify the anomaly. The main tasks are to meet up with the challenges in existence in such a situation so as to solve them successfully. The danger here is that the leadership holds on perpetually. They assume that continuous leadership as a way of compensating them for salvaging an ugly situation.

Charismatic leaders: This type of leadership is chosen for his personal attraction which propels him to command considerable following by his people. When leadership qualities and policies are popular, he goes into the heart of his people. The people love and adore him for whatever he says or does. They see him as a God-sent and could even worship him. He has great appeal that his followers who could be ready to lay

down their lives in defence of objectives championed by such leader. Examples include Jesus Christ, Prophet Mohammed, Ghengis Khan of the defunct Mongol empire, King Sejong the great of the Joseon dynasty in present day South Korea, Obafemi Awolowo of Nigeria, Mahatma Gandhi, John Kennedy, and Ayatollah Khomeini of Iran, among others.

Traditional/Religious leaders: These groups of leaders are the custodians of culture and religion, and many of them had their positions ascribed by the gods or culture on them. Traditional leaders rule over their domain as dictated by their custom. Just as religious leaders lead their followers according to the doctrine of their religion. They command respect among followers and cannot be easily challenged or removed no matter the circumstances. In some quarters it is believed that only death could cause a transition of power (Deekor & Nnodim, 2005).

However, scholars and practitioners have identified some sterling qualities or characteristics that a leader must possess, which would help them to lead effectively. On this premise, the study identifies the following essential qualities of a leader.

- i. **Honesty:** A good leader must be free of deceit and must be truthful and sincere. When leaders rise above ethical divide and make honesty their watchword and a key value, influencing people becomes easier as they will willingly follow or obey.
- ii. **Integrity:** Many writers attribute integrity to competency and of course it is essential, but it is not enough. It is about having strong moral principles. Lack of integrity destroys competence. Integrity sustains competence. A leader must not allow his personal feeling or emotions to override his integrity.
- iii. **Vision:** To be an effective leader you must have a clear vision. That is, a leader must be aware of what is, and have the ability to think about or to plan the future with imaginative picture of what should be. Omolayo (2005) expressly quotes the Holy bible (Proverbs 29:18) as saying “where there is no vision, the people perish...” It is the responsibility of the leader to catch the vision and communicate this vision to the followers and as well influence, motivate and guide others with a view to achieving the shared vision.
- iv. **Self-Confidence:** This is built through experience. Leaders who lack self-confidence cannot act proactively and cannot initiate or inspire confidence in their subordinates or followers.

Conversely, Okene (2009, p. 12) identified three characteristics of leadership, they are:

1. Knowledge, education, and learning: Knowledge can be acquired by education and training and also by experience. And so, to be a leader, knowledge is essential, and actually very paramount. And so, to be a leader in politics, one must be politically knowledgeable and politically experienced. To lead in a

profession, one must be well qualified, knowledgeable, and experienced in that profession; and so, with other spheres of human endeavor.

2. Courage and fearlessness: A leader must be courageous and imbued with the resolute determination to pursue the aims and aspirations of his people by all legitimate means possible.

3. Strength of character: Leadership is sometimes a very daunting and uphill task. A good leader must therefore have the strength of character that will enable him or her to persevere, even in spite of all odds. He must be focused on the goal, and not be distracted by selfish motives, or personal interests.

The Man Plato: Brief Historical Appraisal

Plato was born in 427 BC four years before the Peloponnesian war between Athens and Sparta, and one year after the death of Pericles, the greatest ruler of Athens. Plato was born into an noble family in Athens, his father Ariston, his mother Perictione and a descendant of Solon the famous law giver in Athens, his step father Pyrillempe, a prominent man in Athens and a supporter of Pericles, his two elder brothers Glaucon and Adeimantus, and a sister, his two uncles Charmides and Critias, who were honorable men in Athens (Okike, 2013).

Plato was a product of crisis that ensued then in Athens, he was born in the year of revolution at Corcyra and the revolt of Mitylene. As a child of twelve years, he had seen the Athenian fleet set sail on the catastrophic expedition against Syracuse and he was twenty-three years when Athens capitulated and lost her empire to Sparta. It must be emphasized that there were three major events in Athens which helped to shape Plato's worldview: the defeat and humiliation of Athens in the Peloponnesian war between Athens and Sparta, the death of Pericles and the Athenian revolution and the death of Socrates.

The Peloponnesian war that lasted for twenty-seven years was a struggle between the business interests of Athens and Corinth for commercial supremacy in the west. Plato attributes the defeat of Athens in the Peloponnesian war to party strife, greed and ambition. Some of Plato's relations mainly the oligarchs reacted against the conduct of the war by the democratic leaders. In 399 BC the thirty tyrants executed his friend and teacher Socrates on charges of impiety and corrupting the young. He died after he drank a poisonous substance, the hemlock. The Oracle of Delphi had described Socrates as the wisest man in Greece and he had since joined the league of Greek gods (Okike, 2013).

Critical Appraisal of Plato's Ideal State

Plato's theory of the ideal state is set out in detail in Plato's dialogue, *The Republic*. In later life, he modified his view in a dialogue called "The Laws". *The Republic* is an ideal society ruled by "philosopher kings" who are free of the chains of materialism and greediness. The inhabitants of the hypothetical Republic are organised into diverse classes in accordance with their psychic nature (Sheppard, 2017).

Plato's significant base of the ideal state is justice. As established by Plato, justice is to provide one with what is "due". Therefore, Plato expounded the concept of federation. The drive of Platonic federation was not to solve the issue of more races but the administration of justice. He wanted to compensate everyone according to capabilities and to prohibit unnecessary interference in one another affairs (Farooq, 2013). Farooq (2013, p. 2) asserts that according to Plato, the state emerged because no individual could, on his own, satisfy all his needs. It was thus, in order to cooperate and provide for their various needs that men established the state. Plato insists that the ideal state is one in which each individual does the job for which he is best suited. Such a state must also be properly led, ably defended and highly stable. The state therefore needs three specialised groups of people, namely, producers, soldiers and rulers.

Similarly, Farooq (2013) classified Plato's ideal state into three major classes, namely, the ruling class, military class and professional class. These classes are also known as the guiding class, auxiliary class and professional class.

Plato based his ideal state on the concept of communism. He wanted a state devoid of problems, a scared and the super-most institute. He believed that the ruling and military classes have no concern with appetite as they represent reason and courage respectively. So, these two classes must be free of any tension to run the administration. He was influenced of the service conditions of the citizens of Sparta where they would sacrifice even their wives for the state. So, he presented the concept of communism in order to control the economic lusts of the two classes to give attention to the state administration. For his ideal state, he deprived the two important classes of private ownership of property and children. The appetite and military classes show less interest, and the ruling class shows the highest interests and they become superior in virtue and as a result, deserve to rule (Farooq, 2013).

As submitted by Plato, the ruling class who is to administer the state should be vastly educated and proficient in philosophy. His ideal state is ruled by the philosopher king who gets regular education up to 50 years age especially in the field of philosophy. A philosopher studies human life and nature and can face the problems with arguments. Government is an art that is effectively dealt by reason better than courage and appetite. Administration in Plato's ideal state requires reason and intelligence. The best form of government, to Plato, is absolute monarchy. Plato believes that a philosopher king is a true statesman, and he would provide everyone his 'due'. Plato asserted further that absolute monarchy is not tyranny because the rule of the philosopher king is on the basis of reason and not on appetite. He serves all his subjects on equal footings. (Farooq, 2013).

In the light of the foregoing, Scholarships Ads (2013) identified the following as features of an ideal state:

Rule of Philosophy: Plato was of the view that in an ideal state the philosopher-ruler should be prominent. He should have a broaden vision of unity of knowledge. Philosopher-kings are immune from the provisions of law and public opinion.

No unqualified absolutism: Though, neither there is any restraint of law nor of public opinion over philosopher-rulers but that is not an unqualified absolutism. It is not all despotism, because rule of philosophy is not free from the basic articles of the constitution.

Control over the education system: Philosopher ruler should control the education system in an ideal state.

Justice in ideal state: Justice is the main feature of Plato's Republic and it is also present in his ideal state. Justice is the bond which binds every member of society together. It forms a harmonious union of individuals.

Censorship of art and literature: In ideal state, there should be a complete censorship of art and literature. It is necessary so that nothing immoral things will not fall into the hands of young individuals.

System of Communism: Plato was of the view that guardian class should live under the system of communism of property and family. The rulers and soldiers do not possess any property of their own.

Equality among men and women: To Plato, equal opportunities should be given to both men and women for their economic, social, intellectual, and political uplift. We can say that Plato was the first feminist of his time.

Principle of Functional Specialization: Plato was of the view that due to multiple wants; an individual could not fulfill all his desires by himself alone due to lack of capacity. Thus, cooperation among individuals should be necessary to satisfy their mutual desires. Some people are specialized in performing some certain tasks.

Qualities of Leadership in Plato's Ideal State

Based on the foregoing, the fundamental attributes a leader must possess in Plato's ideal state include but not limited to truthfulness, high mindedness, sense of reasoning, discipline, intelligence, and courage. This, to Plato can be obtained through the philosopher kings. The philosopher kings will be selected from the most educated elite. The notion of the philosopher ruler was the linchpin of Plato's ideal state. It is deduced from the above conviction that the philosopher should have the knowledge, intellect, and training to govern.

Plato perceives a philosopher as one who loves wisdom, has a passion for knowledge, and is always curious and eager to learn. A philosopher by his orientation was best qualified to rule, implying that knowledge could be obtained only by a selected few who had the leisure and the material comforts (Nwoko, 2006). Leaders in Plato's ideal state do not concern themselves with the satisfaction of any determined human need, but take upon themselves to defend and serve the interest of the state as a whole rather than personalized interest. This group Plato called the philosopher kings. They should have no property, neither marries, nor have family so as for them to rule the State in truth. It is the philosopher kings that have all it takes to administer justice to the right direction of an Ideal State (Nwoko, 2006).

They are the ones whose minds have attained the greatest degree and they are capable to make the wisest decisions. A philosopher would be able to justify and act for the good of the community. A good ruler was one who not only preserved the lives of his subjects, but also transforms them as human beings. When the supreme power in man coincides with the greatest wisdom and temperance, then the best laws and the best

constitution comes into being but in no other way, until philosophers become kings in this world, or till that we now call kings and rulers really and truly become philosophers, and political power and philosophy thus come into the same hands, there is no other road to real happiness, either for society or the individual (Plato, 1955, p. 282).

Plato justifies his argument on an ideal state that, the purpose of founding a state is not to promote the particular happiness of a single class, but of the whole community. If the classes that make up the community lose their proper characteristics, particularly if the guardians of law and state become degenerated and pretentious and therefore fail to bring good government and prosperity, the state is completely ruined. If rulers were allowed to acquire private property, they would become harsh and tyrants instead of guardians of the state (Okike, 2013). The philosopher ruler is the right person to govern, for he would be least enthused about acquiring power for self-interest. Existing states were imperfect because philosophers were not rulers (Subrata & Sushila, 2007).

In short, good governance is about the performance capacity of a government or as it relates to leadership capability. Failure of governance, therefore, could expressly mean failure of leadership. An analogue in relation to this by the researcher, when Professor Oluyemisi Obilade assumed office as the Vice Chancellor of Tai Solarin University of Education Ijagun, she transformed the University that was fast becoming a leper among the comity of higher institutions in Nigeria. The University could not boast of tangible internally generated revenue (IGR), the campus environment was bedeviled with cultist activities among other common crimes. Today, the University can boast of conducive learning environment compared to what she met on ground, staff's salary payment is better compared to those days of incessant strike, academic calendar is stable and reliable, results are timely released and processed on the school portal, and many projects were supervised and commissioned under her administration. This is what Plato is emphasizing that a good leader must embrace transparency, equity and honesty, and should be of calm disposition, sound mind, a lover of truth, and forthright in order to make the society happy.

On its part, the literature of Judeo-Christian theology holds that when the righteous people are in authority, the people rejoice; but when the wicked rule, the people mourn (Proverbs, 29:2) (Okike, 2013). Moreso, Okike, (2013, p. 113) notes that, the literature of Judeo-Christian theology is the same as the Philosopher Kings of Plato's Republic of the ideal state and the modern-day leaders.

The Nigerian State and Leadership Crisis: First and Second Republics

In his thought-provoking and classic book titled, "The trouble with Nigeria" (1985), Africa's foremost novelist, Professor Chinua Achebe identified the Nigeria's problem as being simply and squarely a failure of leadership. Achebe (1985) cited in Olayiwola (2012, p. 1) asserts that:

The trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership. There is nothing with the Nigerian land or climate or water or air or anything else. The Nigerian problem is the unwillingness or inability of its leaders to rise to the responsibility, to the challenge of personal example which are the hallmarks of true leadership.

The above declaration captures the situation of governance in Nigeria since independence. Utilising an imagery borrowed from the game of football, Chinua Achebe lamented a situation whereby an enormously blessed state like Nigeria always “opts for mediocrity and compromise, to pick a third and fourth eleven to play for us” (Achebe, 1985, cited in Olayiwola, 2012, p.1) stressing that we can never make the world league that way.

The First Republic was the republican government of Nigeria between October 1, 1963 and January 15, 1966, governed by the first republican constitution. Nwankwo (cited in Ebegbulem, 2009) argues that Alhaji Tafawa Balewa who ruled Nigeria from October 1, 1960 to January 15, 1966 lacked the capacity to chart a progressive course for national development because of lack of consciousness of development. His term in office was stormy, with regional factionalism constantly threatening his government (Ebegbulem, 2009).

Major General Johnson Thomas Umunnakwe Aguiyi-Ironsi became the Nigeria's first military Head of State via the military coup led by a group of Majors who were predominantly of Eastern origin and ruled between January 16 and July 29, 1966. Imhonopi and Urim (2013) noted that Ironsi administration was brought up under the most passive and apolitical circumstances of colonialist military institution, neither understood the meaning of politics in general nor was he able to diagnose the specialties of the Nigerian political system whose leadership was rested on his shoulders. He was neither confused nor misled; he was basically ignorant and naïve.

General Yakubu Gowon who ruled Nigeria from 1966 to 1975 was apparently the only Head of Government anywhere in the world who had so much money that he did not know what to do with it. The transient national wealth occasioned by the innocent, but unsolicited increase of mineral resources cast a spell of short-sightedness over Gowon and his reactionary advisers. They mistook the momentary flow of petroleum for a perpetual future of the Nigerian economy without conducting a critical sustainable analysis of the international market forces which determine the cost of petroleum and its relevant place to national development (Imhonopi & Urim, 2013).

General Murtala Muhammed's emergence as the Military Head of State between July 1975 and February 1976 was revolutionary as well as challenging. In a short time, Murtala Muhammed's policies won him widespread support, and his decisiveness elevated him to the status of a national hero. Although he brought a new sense of mission but was radical in his approach to governance. His golden administration was cut short by the inordinate ambition of young military officers, who could not comprehend his radical approach to governance and development through assassination in February 1975 (Imhonopi & Urim, 2013).

Murtala's regime was transitory but prior to his death he tried to restore sanity to the country. His short term in office has been labelled by many as Nigeria's 'golden age'. Reasons for this portrayal were rooted in the way and manner he addressed leadership in Nigeria. One of the major steps he took was to retire all the twelve military governors that served under President Gowon. The governors were probed and ten out of the twelve were found guilty of unlawful enrichment. The ones found guilty were dismissed from the military. Apart from the military governors, majority of the civilian ministers under Gowon's regime were

also found guilty of corruption and mass accumulation of wealth. The dismissed governors, among others, were made to return some of the illegal property acquired (Kwaghe & Ecoma, 2016).

General Olusegun Obasanjo took over after the assassination of his boss, General Obasanjo, projected a new course for democratic governance and constitutional development. He, however, has an uncontrolled hatred for the intellectuals and did not see any intellectual dimension that is germane to national development. His policy actions were frustrating the Ivory Tower as he starved the universities of funds and began the distortion of the educational institutions through untoward policy action development (Imhonopi & Urim, 2013). The administration is said to be the best in the heart of Nigerians. It successfully transferred power to the civilian government of Alhaji Shehu Shagari in 1979.

The Second Republic was born on 1st October, 1979 and lasted till December, 1983. Ali (2013) noted that the actual character of the Nigerian political class was enacted during the Nigerian Second Republic. During this regime the basic needs of humanity, food, housing, clothing and other basic necessities of life such as ownership of a vehicle became a preserve of the privileged few. From the early 1980s, the standard of living of Nigerians continued to degenerate even as the cost of living keeps increasing. Prices of some indispensable commodities rise almost above the reach of the low-income earners. (Akinola, Adebisi, & Oyewo, 2015).

A number of weaknesses posed huge threat to the survival of the Second Republic. First, the coalition that dominated federal politics was not strong, and in effect the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) governed as a minority because no coalition formed to challenge its supremacy. Second, there was lack of cooperation between the NPN-dominated federal government and the twelve states controlled by opposition parties. Third, and perhaps most important, the oil boom ended in mid-1981, precisely when expectations of continuous growth and prosperity were at a height. There were many signs of tension in the country (Ali, 2013).

Corruption was widespread under the Second Republic. As elections approached in August 1983, there were economic decline that reflected low oil prices, widespread corruption, and continued government spending at record levels was proof to many that the Second Republic was in miserable shape. The lack of confidence was evident in the massive flight of capital. The second elections under the Second Republic were to be its last. The demise of the Second Republic was fast-tracked by the tension generated by the 1983 general elections, which were similar to those of 1964-65 during the first republic. Under these circumstances the military intervened in December, 1983 (Ali, 2013).

The demise of the inglorious Second Republic saw the military installing Major General Muhammadu Buhari (then GOC 3rd Division, Jos) as the new Head of State. The Buhari administration identified indiscipline as the bane of the nation's ills and therefore decided to fight it in all its ramifications. His government maintained strict financial discipline and accountability. Buhari selectively imprisoned corrupt politicians while draconian decrees were promulgated to check leadership excesses. The chink in his leadership style was the erroneous conceptualization of the primary purpose of government as an avenue for the imprisonment of civil society activists and critics of his government (Imhonopi & Urim, 2011). In the face of the austerity measures, deteriorating economic conditions, and continued widespread political

crisis, Buhari was overthrown in a coup led by General Ibrahim Babangida and other members of the ruling Supreme Military Council (SMC) on August 27, 1985 (Imhonopi & Urim, 2011).

Babangida came into power in a military coup promising to bring to an end the human rights abuses perpetuated by Buhari's government, and to hand over power to a civilian government by 1990. Eventually, he perpetuated one of the worst human right abuses (Campbell, 1994; Shettima & Chukwuma, 2002). In 1989, Babangida legalised the formation of political parties, banned all political parties and formed two political parties namely the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and National Republican Convention (NRC) and urged all Nigerians to join either of the parties. In April 1993, the SDP nominated Moshood Kashimawo Olawale Abiola (MKO) as its presidential candidate, while the National Republican Convention (NRC) chose Bashir Tofa to run for the same position.

On June 12, 1993, presidential election was finally held and it was announced in some states that Abiola had in fact won 19 of the 30 states. Rather than allowing the announcement of the results to proceed, Babangida and his associates decided to annul the elections which led to national chaos. This is what brought about the aborted Third Republic to the Nigerian political dictionary. Widespread acts of civil disobedience began to occur, particularly in the South-West region from which Abiola hailed, resulting in the killings of people mostly from the South-Eastern part of the country (Fajobi, 2021).

The military president of General Ibrahim Babangida turned the country to a political laboratory and came up with a magnificent political transition with an appellation "Interim National Government" which was a neologism to Nigeria government and politics at that time (Fajobi, 2022). With his intelligence and charisma, his visionary and innovative programmes, Babangida could have been placed in the pantheon of revered political leaders in Nigeria and Africa, however, he was unable to meet it with sincerity and discipline required of good and selfless leadership. He deepened the culture of "rent-seeking" and "prebendal politics" and made little effort in infrastructure development (Imhonopi & Urim, 2013).

General Sani Abacha assumed office on 17th November, 1993, after overthrowing the Interim National Government (ING) of Chief Earnest Shonekan. As observed by Emordi (2008), Abacha's administration was disreputable for tampering with and looting the public treasury. He and members of his family became some of the richest people in the world. He served himself and allowed his lieutenants to serve themselves as well. Ogunye (1998 p. 72) submits that Abacha dictatorship laid the country waist in moral. Citizens were disillusioned, disenfranchised, and pauperized. He argued further that during the Abacha regime, political antagonism among groups and nationalities was heightened, a huge percentage of the national income was spent on security for the dictator's image making, industry and agriculture recorded very low growth, incomes were static, prices rose beyond the reach of the ordinary citizen, education standard was seriously affected as many Nigerians could not afford the cost of schooling, there was acute fuel scarcity, the economy was at the mercy of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), hence Nigeria became a pariah state in the comity of nations.

Early in 1998, Abacha announced that elections would be held in August with a view to handing power to a civilian government on 1st October, 1998. It soon became apparent that Abacha had no intention of allowing an honest election. By April, he had strong-armed the country's five parties into endorsing him as

the sole presidential candidate. His transmutation agenda was however cut-short by his sudden death in June, 1998 (Imhonopi & Urim, 2013). Following General Sani Abacha's death, Major General Abdulsalami Abubakar, the then Nigeria's Defense Chief of Staff, was sworn in as new Nigeria's Head of State. Emordi (2008) argued that when General Abdulsalami Abubakar came to power, he attempted to revamp the economy but failed. However, available evidence shows that General Abubakar was able to pay Nigeria's external debt which reduced from \$7.7 billion to \$4 billion. He also recorded a budgetary deficit of N100 billion (Emordi, 2008, p.16).

Leadership Crisis in the Nigeria's Fourth Republic

The contemporary democratic reign of the Nigerian Fourth Republic commenced officially on May 29, 1999. The transition process of General Abdulsalami Abubakar (Rtd) signaled the emergence of General Olusegun Aremu Obasanjo (Rtd) as a democratically elected President (Imhonopi & Urim, 2013). Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, who served as the military head of state from 13 February, 1976 to 1 October, 1979 became the democratically-elected president of Nigeria's Fourth Republic on 29 May, 1999 and ruled since then to 29 May, 2007. In the 1999 general election, Obasanjo contested for the office of the President on the platform of the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) and he ultimately won with 62.6% of the vote, emerging triumphantly in the strongly Christian South-East and the predominantly Muslim North, nonetheless decisively lost his home region, the South-West, to his fellow-Yoruba and Christian, Olu Falae. Chief Obasanjo was sworn in on 29 May, 1999, as the first elected and civilian head of state in Nigeria after 16 years of military rule.

As Kwagbe and Ecoma (2016) has noted, Obasanjo spent most of his first term in office shuttling abroad. He became fierce and humiliated anyone that deserved it without blinking. Obasanjo understood the Nigerian political system to a large extent. Despite the fact that as argued by Ojameruaye (2012) that president Obasanjo provided better leadership during the past eight years than the preceding and military rulers, his administration was faced with many leadership crises.

The administration of President Obasanjo no doubt made a strong effort to curb corruption and ensure good governance than the previous military regimes and civilian administrations. In fact, most of his predecessors encouraged corruption or did nothing about it at best. The formation of the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) and Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) by the Obasanjo-led administration and efforts of the Ribadu-led EFCC were quite laudable. However, there are criticisms that the fight was discriminating, and some "sacred cows" were not investigated or investigated but not penalised. There are also allegations that the EFCC was used to witch-hunt some political opponents. Although there was greater confidence in his government in the preceding military regime (i.e., 1976-1979), but the failed third-term agenda and the way and manner the 2007 general elections were conducted hugely reduced confidence and trust of the people in the administration (Ojameruaye, 2012).

There is a general consensus among observers and policy analysts that President Obasanjo failed woefully to fulfil his promise on the conduct of credible elections. Massive rigging, fraud and irregularities characterized the two elections (2003 and 2007). The 2007 general election in particular was said to be the

worst in the annals of elections in Nigeria. As Brimah (2014) argued, Obasanjo built his friends and sponsors of his party, the PDP; the likes of Aliko Dangote and Otedola were handed chunks of Nigeria in 'privatization frenzy'. Transcorp was formed to further consolidate the complete handing over of Nigeria's assets to private cronies of the PDP. As Obasanjo failed to secure his third term bid, he swiftly auctioned off Nigeria's oil refineries to the same cabal (Brimah, 2014). Obasanjo left office with the failure of the third term agenda and the emergence of late Umaru Yar'Adua, his handpicked successor as president of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (Anuga, 2003).

Umaru Musa Yar'Adua became the 13th Head of State and third democratically elected president of Nigeria on 29th May, 2007 and died in office on 5th May, 2010. Shortly after winning the nomination, Goodluck Jonathan, the then Governor of Bayelsa State, was chosen, as Yar'Adua's running mate (Ashby, 2006). Brimah (2014) posits that Yar'Adua had been handed two disastrous problems by the predecessor Obasanjo government - the Movement for Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) was wreaking havoc in the Southern creeks and Boko Haram had similarly grown in the North-east Nigeria. Furthermore, Yar'Adua after his assumption of office saved the jobs of over 160,000 federal workers awaiting dismissal under various pretenses. Not only that, he released the ₦10billion Lagos State local government councils' funds which Obasanjo failed to release despite court orders compelling him to do so. Yar'Adua went ahead and reversed the increment of Value Added Tax (VAT) from ten percent to five percent accompanied with the reduction of fuel price from ₦75 to ₦65 (Brimah, 2014).

Despite the fact that Yar'Adua sworn to continue with war against corruption and insisted that it was not going to be a toothless-bulldog-war as it was under his predecessor, within the context of respect for rule of law and human rights. However, it was evident that the modification of approach resulted in a "slow-down" of the war. Complaints became rife that the war was losing momentum by the day. Some explanations put forward as responsible for the deceleration and loss of the grounds include delay in the prosecution of top public officials, harassment of former anti-corruption crusaders, Yar'Adua's close relations with ex-governors, and anti-corruption campaign as non-priority (Onuoha, 2011). Unfortunately, Yar'Adua died in office on 5th May, 2010 after he returned from his medical trip to Saudi Arabia.

Goodluck Ebele Azikiwe Jonathan succeeded his boss and became a civilian president between 2010 and 2015. Remarkably, Gabriel (2014) pointed out that Jonathan government has been adjudged as the frailest and the most challenged in the history of the country as his government has been flawed by insecurity, intensifying poverty, poor infrastructure and unemployment. The scholar further contended that, if there is anything that has affected the Jonathan administration more, it is the insecurity situation in the country. Since 2010, the Nigerian state has almost on a daily basis experienced violations to life and property in the hands of the Islamic Boko Haram sect, thousands of people have been killed in terror attacks in the North-east region since the insurgents came to limelight (Gabriel, 2014).

Ibekwe (2015) argued that the administration of President Goodluck Jonathan can at best be labelled as underachieving, a review of its performance in various sectors corroborated this assertion. The administration of President Jonathan was described as unfortunate for a government which came to power on the back of widespread support and one that enjoyed massive public goodwill in its formative years.

In his inaugural speech, Jonathan promised a transformative government. He promised to take the economy to a new dimension, create jobs and to provide overall happiness to Nigerians. He promised to improve electricity and medical care for all, provide efficient and affordable public transportation and first-class education for every Nigerian. But it soon became evident that these were merely sound bites as the Jonathan administration could not deliver most of its promises, causes which led to his defeat in the 2015 general elections by Nigerians (Ibekwe, 2015).

President Muhammadu Buhari was sworn in as the 15th Head of State on 29 May 2015. He came on board on a “Change” mantra. It is important to note that prior to the election, a strong coalition of oppositional parties; Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), Congress for Progressive Change (CPC), All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) along with aggrieved faction of the All-Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA) metamorphosed to All Progressive Congress (APC). The APC presented Buhari as a political messiah who will usher Nigeria out of political wilderness into a much-expected Canaan land however, reverse is the case as the incumbent administration of president Buhari is not devoid of evident shortcomings identified in earlier administration. Perhaps the most frustrating crisis under Buhari’s regime is the issue of insecurity as banditry, Fulani herdsmen menace and terrorism is now a critical national issue begging for urgent intervention. The economy and educational sector is currently in a state of comatose as lecturers of universities are now on industrial action since February 2022 over unfulfilled agreement between the union and the federal government ably led by President Muhammadu Buhari. It is therefore crystal clear that Nigerians are anxiously waiting to vote in a new leader who will effectively address the challenges of the Nigerian state.

Plato’s Ideal State Versus Nigerian State

From the foregoing, it has been revealed that the Nigerian state since independence has been characterized with leadership crisis and in the same parlance, Nigeria leaders past and present are not qualified as philosopher kings as espoused by Plato in his philosophical work “the Republic”. Taking a cursory look into history, Dr. Goodluck Jonathan is the most educated president in Nigeria history; he bagged a PhD degree, however, not in philosophy or politics followed by late Umaru Musa Yar’Adua who was a university graduate. Other past heads of state only possessed military school certificate and little knowledge on Western education. More shockingly, the incumbent president, Muhammadu Buhari, lacks the educational qualification of leaders, in Plato’s ideal state. There was widespread scandal over the authenticity of his certificate prior to his election in 2015.

However, elites that are major gladiators in Nigeria First Republic (1963-1966) had a substantial educational background. For instance, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, the first indigenous Governor-general at independence and President of Nigeria when Nigeria became republic in 1963, Chief Obafemi Awolowo, the Premier of the defunct Western Region, Ahmadu Bello, the Premier of the Northern Region, and Tafawa Balewa, the then Prime Minister, were all exposed to sound Western education and qualified enough as a ruler.

Plato sought to establish elitism of ability where meritocracy is the basis for attaining a leadership position however in Nigeria, the composition of our leaders is based on patron-clientelism, nepotism and tribalism among other factors. Hence, these perverse forms of leaders in Nigeria are unable to marshal the ship of state to a desirous end which corroborates the hypothetical submission of Plato's republic.

Conclusion

This paper submits that there is no nexus between Plato's idea on philosopher king and the Nigerian state the reason is not far-fetched, the success of governance in any organized political system is determined by the type of leadership in government however, Nigeria is still battling with leadership and governance challenges after sixty-two years of independence. This dismal situation corroborates with Plato's critical submission because Nigerian leaders are not philosophers hence it is natural to expect chaos in such polity where rulers have no qualities of philosopher king as espoused by Plato. By implication, this paper concludes that leadership crisis in Nigeria would undermine the realization of a Plato's ideal state. This implies that there is urgent need to eschew Nigerian state off the bad leadership rearing its ugly head so as to enjoy the dividends of democracy and socio-economic development. Therefore, Plato's ideas on philosopher king may be relevant in other climes, but it hasn't been fully utilized as a basis for political leadership role in Nigeria.

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