

Saul's Leadership Prowess: Paradigm For Nigerian Leaders

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Abstract

The leadership role of King Saul in spite of his 'personal character questions', needs to be emulated by Nigerian leaders for effective leadership. Saul had great skills, wit and patriotic inclination which he harnessed for the greater good of his people and nation at large. During his reign, Israel tremendously progressed in almost every sphere. The exemplary leadership of Saul is manifested in the way he defended the course of his nation with whatever possible means including risking his life and that of his son Jonathan. Different from Saul's leadership style, Nigerian leaders have acted in a manner capable of plunging the nation into chaos and underdevelopment. There seems to be no genuine commitment on the part of the leaders to show innovative and patriotic tendencies which are imminently needed to overcome the myriads of challenges facing Nigeria. Having said this, it is pertinent to observe that a systematic hermeneutic and historical interpretation to support the hypothesis inherent in this discourse has been employed. Besides, the major concern of this paper is to advance reasons for adopting king Saul's leadership paradigm so that the current and subsequent Nigerian leaders should harness to the progress and development of the country

Key words: Leadership, leader, patriotic/patriotism, development

Introduction

Saul's rulership of Israel was preceded by the legitimacy he enjoyed from among his own people. In other words, Saul's assumption of office as the leader of Israel was as a result of the popular support and choice of his people. The Jews clamoured and wanted an institution of monarchy just as other nations around them. As aptly surmised in an article named *Saul and David* (<http://www.theology.edu/lec15.htm>) :

...there was other strong pressure to change the government of Israel to kingship...the elders of Israel came to the aging prophet (Samuel) and demanded that a visible king be appointed over them and that they might have a leader who could conduct them to victory over their pressing foes.

Despite the resistance from Samuel who was the *judge*, Saul was subsequently made the king. By this, Saul ushered in a new style of political administration otherwise known as monarchy or kingship. Prior to his assumption of leadership, there was a quasi-centralized system of government headed by a *judge*. *Judges* were Jewish tribal leaders that presided over military, legal and/or other matters (Nelson: 2006, Barenboin: 2005, Coogan: 2009). Samuel being the last judge of Israel tried to paint an unfavourable picture of the kingship. He gave the people an insight of how un-salutary and bad the kingship was (Okwueze: 1998). Nonetheless, the failure of the administration of Samuel was partly evidenced through the negative reactions from among the people he led (Guzik: 2001). Besides, the corruption exhibited by Samuel's sons (http://bible.cc/1_samuel/8-5.htm)

probably formed part of the thorns and setbacks to his administration. The people possibly feared that the sons of Samuel were incompetent and should not be entrusted or allowed to meddle with issues of governance.

With Saul, the reign of judges ended in Israel. Though it is fitting to acknowledge that Saul had some moral questions, he also had great skills that translated into an unprecedented success during his reign. Once as a leader, he subsequently formed a formidable army that led Israel into victories (Deffinbaugh: n.d). He displayed great leadership qualities of selflessness, courage, love and impartiality. These virtues were really the basis for the success of Saul's administration. Among the achievements of Saul is the peace he brought in Israel through the unification of the confederating tribes. The semi-autonomous regions and tribes were brought under one single political authority. Because of these, Israel flourished. When 'the incursions and invasions from the neighbouring nations were checkmated' to a reasonable degree (Zavada: n.d), the people (the Jews) had the leverage to work; make war and agricultural equipment and subsequently prospered economically. A careful examination of Saul's leadership roles and achievements shows that he was driven by patriotism and love for his nation and people. It is likely that this great passion for the progress of his nation influenced him to devise so many strategies and even personally went to wars not minding his status as the king.

Unlike Saul, there seems to be no patriotic sentiments in the way and manner Nigerian leaders control and manage the affairs of the

country. Lack of good leadership qualities like that of Saul has made Nigerian leaders to adopt attitudes and policies that have plunged the country into chaos, underdevelopment, and disunity. Achebe (1983) maintained that the problem with Nigeria is the failure of leadership. If the Nigerian leaders could fight their prevailing problems as Saul did during his time, the country could unite, develop and possibly be a model of success in the world considering the vast natural resources and manpower.

From the above backdrop, this study among other concerns would critically assess Saul's leadership roles in juxtaposition with selected Nigerian leaders. Such comparative study is designed so that current and subsequent Nigerian leaders could learn and emulate Saul's core values, attitudes and strategies that led him into successes in spite of apparent great odds and challenges.

Assessing the Leadership Roles of Saul

Most often, Saul is depicted as a villain, disobedient and calloused leader (Okwueze: 1998). Many stories in 'conventional books' portray him as weird, wicked, rebellious and wasteful. However, a critical assessment of issues concerning Saul could prove him otherwise. Saul's sense of love and patriotism for Yahweh and to his nation perhaps informed most of the decisions he made which translated into tremendous development and progress in Israel during his administration.

When Saul was anointed and installed as the first king of Israel (Green:2007), some daunting tasks faced him. Chief among them, could be how to curtail or stop the menace of the powerful neighbours

especially the Philistines and how to handle the issue of unification of the confederating tribes of Israel (Bright:1980). To achieve these, he adopted and implemented great skills and soon Israel recorded incredible successes; they were victorious in their wars as against the situation of defeat during the period of the judges. The schism that bedeviled the tribes of Israel was, to a reasonable extent, brought under control. The new king (Saul) for the first time formed a single army comprising all the tribes of Israel. Obeta (2011) argued that:

...even though the Deuteronomic editors paint a very unfavourable picture of Saul we must acknowledge some of his great achievements...he took the pains of organizing the twelve tribes of the confederation into one kingdom.... He delivered his people from foreign oppression especially that of the Philistines...established a band of professional soldiers...instead of taxing his people, devised a very easy method of paying his soldiers...they took the spoil...

It is deductible from the above excerpt that Saul made remarkable, as well as, laudable achievements during his reign; notwithstanding the fact that he was presented as a bad leader in the Old Testament. The Philistine's oppression of Israel extended to the barricade of the latter from making war equipment. Nevertheless, Saul at some point paved the way and accessed the iron smelting or making part of Philistine by dislodging and winning over the enemy. It was fittingly rendered that:

Saul not only pushed the Ammonites in the Transjordan,

but by his victories over the Philistines, notably as a follow-up of Jonathan's brilliant rout of the Philistine garrison at Michmash (1 Samuel 14:1-46), he also broke the monopoly on iron. The Philistines did their best to see that the Israelites did not learn how to forge new metal. "now there was no smith to be found throughout the land of Israel; for the Philistines said, 'lest the Hebrews make themselves swords or spears.' but every one of the Israelites went down to the Philistines to sharpen his plowshare, his mattock, his ax, or sickle (1 Samuel 13: 19-20) (<http://www.theology.edu/lec15.htm>)

Saul, from the description above, established and created a platform at which the subsequent Jewish leaders would utilize their resources and develop. He seemed to be the *messiah* of a sort to the Jews during his reign. It is observable that it was not only war equipment that could be produced with iron. With the control of the iron, agricultural implements as those mentioned in the above excerpt could have been produced and used for agricultural purposes. The gain of this towards the production of agricultural products could be enormous.

More so, having established a formidable band of soldiers, the task of maintaining and sustaining them could have been a disturbing issue. Soon, he (Saul) devised a means of feeding his army. Instead of taxing his subjects, the soldiers carted away and took spoils after a successful war (Avinoam: n.d). Though, the idea of taking spoils runs contrary to the stipulations inherent in the deeds of holy war in Israel at the time, Saul accepted his mistake and was willing to repent from it.

When Samuel reminded Saul on how the latter had violated Yahweh's laws by bringing spoils after war victory over the Amelek, he tried to exonerate himself perhaps for the simple logic that he needed the spoils to sacrifice to the Lord and probably to feed the army with the edible items. Realizing his mistakes, Saul said to Samuel:

... I have sinned; for I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord and your word, because I feared people and obeyed their voice. Now therefore, I pray... pardon my sin and return with me, that I may worship the Lord...and Samuel said unto Saul, I will not return with you; for you have rejected the word of God and the Lord has rejected you from being king over Israel (1sam.15:24-31)

It is discernable from Saul's assertion that the pressure from the people he was leading led him to make such decision. A leader who listens to the yearnings and the concerns of his followers like Saul could be adjudged to be a good one (Nnadi:2011) but the reverse was the case in this situation. This is because the law of Yahweh which invariably was the rule of action had sanctioned non-interference and taking of booty and spoil. Critically speaking, Saul, notwithstanding the purported wrong deeds, was humble. In fact, Saul could be said to be a meek leader who after realizing his "mistakes" admitted and also begged for forgiveness. At one time, Samuel said to Saul "... even though you consider yourself of no importance, you are the leader of the tribes of Israel..." (I Sam. 15:17). Saul lived and suffered much like the ordinary people he led unlike the subsequent kings especially "Solomon

that lived an archetypal and classic lifestyle”(Archer: 1964). As the king and the leader of the army, he could challenge and rebel against Samuel yet he never did such even when it appeared that “Samuel developed some questionable attitudes toward him in the guise of doing what Yahweh had ordered. Instead, when Samuel refused to forgive him, he continued begging and subsequently tore Samuel’s clothe into two perhaps by mistake. In a swift reaction, Samuel maintains that the Lord has rejected him (Saul); that the kingdom of Israel under Saul will collapse and that someone better than him will take over the leadership (Agbo and Ibenwa:2011). Samuel made us to understand that God rejected Saul despite his unflinching desire to repent of his “sins”. The mind of God may not be easily known, but it calls for question and reflection on the attitude of Samuel to Saul in this case. God rejected Saul because he spared Agag and took spoils to sacrifice to the Lord yet forgave his successor king-David, after committing many atrocities including, conspiring to kill Uriah in a war and marrying his wife-Bathsheba.(Guzik:2002). This sin according to Hooker (2011) is worse than any of the sins of Saul. In his own submission, Morgan (2011) asserts that:, “in the whole of the Old Testament literature there is no chapter more tragic or full of solemn and searching warnings than this”. Anyway, he (Yahweh) forgave David as Nathan confirmed after the former admitted his sins and was willing to repent. (<http://skepticsannotatedbible.com/2sam/12.html>). One is led to then wonder why Saul’s situation was different. There is the possibility that Samuel was an overbearing character to Saul; he capitalized on Saul’s minor mistakes to pull the vibrant leader down (Okwueze:1998).

Probably he might have used the clause "...the Lord said..."(Rice:2011) to unleash his personal hatred on Saul and his administration. In so many instances he used the said clause when referring to God's "rejection" of Saul (*Obetta: 2011*). It is really interesting to remember that he '(Samuel) was initially against the institution of monarchy in Israel' (Graig: 2004). This sentiment might have influenced his subsequent attitude towards Saul.

Before the incidence that led to the total rejection of Saul by God as Samuel claimed, Saul had engaged in a yet another battle with the Philistines at Gugal. The brave king had waited for seven days in vain with his soldiers for Samuel to offer sacrifice to Yahweh (dedicate the war to Yahweh) before they engaged in the war. Such sacrifice was a must-do so as to commit the war to Yahweh. Without this, it was believed that Saul and the soldiers would be defeated and probably killed. By right, Samuel had the sole responsibility to perform the sacrifice and knew the implication of going to war without the sacrifice. However, he absconded. Saul and the soldiers waited for Samuel for seven days without any sign of his showing up. By this time the Philistines' armies had drawn a battle line and were ready to strike and kill the Jewish combatants. Fear gripped some of the Saul's soldiers that some had started dispersing. The "foot soldier king", left with probably no other viable option, performed the sacrifice and immediately Samuel surfaced. Writing about this incidence, Okwueze (1998) stressed that:

...left with no choice, at this point(non surfacing of Samuel), Saul fearing the consequences of going into battle

without devoting it to Yahweh decided to perform the ritual: burnt offering which Samuel would have ordinarily done. As soon as Saul finished the offering, Samuel arrived and rebuked him for acting foolishly and contrary to Yahweh who anointed him (1 Sam. 13:8-14). For not being passive (refusing to do anything) in this acute dilemma in which Saul found himself he is condemned by Samuel as losing favour in the sight of Yahweh.

Instead of begging Saul, the soldiers and probably Yahweh for forgiveness, he (Samuel) failed in his duties. He blamed Saul and subsequently declared that Yahweh had lost favour on him-Saul. It is obvious that Saul's minor mistakes were blown out of proportion by Samuel. Samuel acted as if he had set all the traps with baits and waited for Saul to be captured or trapped. It seems that his strategies worked to his favour but that cannot demean the potentials of the great king who put his life, including that of his son-Jonathan on the line to save his people. Though with some contradictory reports, it is believed that Saul later died defending the course of his people (<http://www.tektonics.org/qt/sauldead.html>).

As a leader who never had a predecessor as a king in his nation from whom to learn, it was challenging; but he never felt wanting of good ideas. He knew the import of "due process" and would always employ the best of people that will work for him; for instance the way he recruited his soldiers. It is worth observing that the king ... whenever he (Saul) found a man who was strong or brave, he would enlist him in

his army *1sam.14:52*. (http://www.conservapedia.com/David_and_Jonathan). He could have recruited only the able bodied men from the tribe of Benjamin from where he came.

The tribe of Benjamin was the smallest tribe in Israel at the time and the bigger and powerful tribes like Judah and Ephraim were not happy that their leader should be a Benjamite. As observed in an article “Lessons from King Saul” (http://www.specialtyinterests.net/peoples_choice.html):

While the people in general were ready to acknowledge Saul as their king, there was a large party in opposition. For a monarch to be chosen from Benjamin, the smallest of the tribes of Israel - and that to the neglect of both Judah and Ephraim, the largest and most powerful - was a slight which they could not take. They refused to profess allegiance to Saul or to bring him the customary presents. Those who had been most urgent in their demand for a king were the very ones that refused to accept with gratitude the man of God's appointment. The members of each faction had their favorite, whom they wished to see placed on the throne, and several among the leaders had desired the honor for themselves. Envy and jealousy burned in the hearts of many. The efforts of pride and ambition had resulted in disappointment and discontent.

In situations like the one described in the above, Saul could have reacted negatively in certain ways to those opposing him from the other tribes. But “...Saul continued his usual work unphased (sic),(1.Sam. 10:27). In another parlance, Saul held his peace as dissenting voices and oppositions challenged him.

From the foregoing, a leader like Saul from his exploits and

challenges cannot be painted to be wicked, disobedient and callous in relation to the prevailing circumstances that engulfed him. However, the vibrant king was presented as a villain in the Old Testament probably because he never appealed to the biblical writers that compiled the story. On this note the New World Encyclopedia (2011) depicts that:

It should be noted that the story of Saul is largely written and edited by biblical writers who favored the southern, or Davidic Kingdom of Judah . Our picture of Saul is therefore not an objective one. If his own supporters had written histories of his reign which survived intact, we would no doubt have a very different portrait of him.

The ideas in the above excerpt support the fact that Saul was a victim of bad representation in spite of his purity of heart, humility, wit, bravery, love and patriotism for his nation. He is indeed a model of leadership not only to Nigeria but to different governments of the world.

Nigerian leadership Model

The style of leadership since the creation of Nigeria has been bedeviled with squander-maniac principles, corruption, lack of vision, un-patriotism, and lack of courage to do right things to mention but a few. This, no doubt, has called for great concern. It seems that the basis and memoirs from the Nigerian founding fathers and leaders were anchored on faulty ideals and lack of intellectual maxims that could invariably lead to corrupt leadership. According to Booth (1981), there were poverty of thoughts that could lead to bad leadership styles in Nigeria as found in the biographies of Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe and

Obafemi Awolowo. There were models from the said founding fathers, according to Booth (1981), that could lead the said leaders and the subsequent ones to amassing wealth and not really taking up good responsibility and leadership roles. Just as the prediction of Booth, leadership in Nigeria since independence has been troubled with erratic policies and general lack of merit and patriotism. In the years following the independence up until now, it appears that the reason for the backwardness and underdevelopment of Nigeria is not unconnected to bad leadership. The sorry state of Nigeria; crises, suspicions and unhealthy rivalry among the different ethnic nationalities, corruption and similar problems, is the resultant effect of appalling leadership style. No wonder Achebe (1983) in his book *The Trouble with Nigeria* posited that...

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

Achebe was categorical in branding Nigerian problem as the failure of leadership. This could probably be because of the daunting evidences of actions and inactions from Nigerian leaders which have beget terrific setbacks and underdevelopment. Achebe reviewed the abysmal role of Nigerian leaders from Independence to 1982. He queried:

The countless billions that a generous providence

poured into our national coffers in the last ten years (1972-1982) would have been enough to launch this nation into the middle-rank of developed nations and transformed the lives of our poor and needy. But what have we done with it? Stolen and salted away by people in power and their accomplices. Squandered in uncontrolled importation of all kinds of useless consumer merchandise from every corner of the globe. Embezzled through inflated contracts to an increasing army of party loyalists who have neither desire nor competence to execute their contracts. Consumed in the escalating salaries of a grossly overstaffed and unproductive public service. And so on ad infinitum (Achebe:1983).

The leadership question and corruption in Nigeria at the period described in the above was even mild when juxtaposed with the level of corruption within the leadership circles years after Achebe had completed his work. During the military rule of Ibrahim Babangida, there was a wide range of corruption. Babangida (Nigerian president 1985-1993) was accused of embezzling over 12 billion dollars accruing from oil windfall. Under his administration he created a special account for the money accruing from crude oil during the gulf war (Adewole:2011). As postulated by Idaewor et al (2010):

the decision as to what expenditure items to be financed out of these dedicated accounts was made by the President alone. For example, the accounts had been utilized to defray an assortment of expenses that could not in any way be described as priority such as: \$2.92 million to make a documentary film on Nigeria; \$18.30 million to purchase TV/Video for the Presidency; \$23.98 million for staff welfare in the Presidency; \$.99 million for travels of the First Lady abroad; and \$59.72 million for security".

Babangida was not alone in the business of plundering Nigeria treasury.

Aluko (2004) pointed out that

...the intense 12-year period 1979 – 1991 – the Iranian Revolution, the Iran-Iraq War and the Gulf Iraq/Kuwait war - that led to a significant increase in world oil prices in comparison with those up until the mid-70s (see Figure 1), with oil producing OPEC countries like Nigeria benefiting from so-called "oil windfalls" – saw at least four governments as beneficiaries, with Alhaji Shehu Shagari enjoying a particular spike in 1980/81 during the Iran/Iraq war, and General Babangida's regime benefiting from the Gulf War windfall which had its peak a decade later, in 1990. By convoluting Figures 1 and 2, an (sic) net average export amount of 1,300,000 barrels per day, at an average of \$20 per barrel for the years 1985 – 1991 would yield \$66.43 billion for Nigeria.

Sadly enough, the said amount in the above extract could not be accounted for. There had been wide spread embezzlement from the different leaders and government mentioned. Even though Dr. Pious Okigbo's report accused General Babangida's regime of embezzling over 12 billion Nigeria, the subsequent Nigerian leaders and governments were and are unwilling to probe and punish him, if at the end he is indicted. During Obasanjo's regime, he turned a blind eye on the call for probing the former leader-Babagida. His (Obasanjo) statement suggested that there was no such corruption during Babangida' regime. (Aluko:2004). The current President Jonathan Goodluck like his predecessors is not pressing on probing the former leader. There are incidences of other forms of corruption by many

people in the high places that probing them is becoming a herculean task. And perhaps that singular reason and other sentiments might have stalled the prosecution of the aforementioned leader and others in that category. Even a 'careless observer' should easily know that the whopping and greater sums of money derived from oil in Nigeria are embezzled; at least there is nothing to show for such a huge sum. The severity of poverty in Nigeria is really a thing of concern considering the country's huge foreign earning through petroleum products. It is believed that only a few Nigerians, the elite, are enjoying from the oil proceed as over seventy percent are living below the poverty line (Chiakwelu:2011).

Also, tribalism, *ethnicism* and nepotism have become increasingly influential in the style of political administration in Nigeria. Leadership in Nigeria has been largely based on tribalism and *ethnicism*. For instance, in Nigeria said Dozier (n.d) and Mwakagile (2001), tribalism is at the heart of national matters, whereas presidential hopefuls from certain areas and tribes, were seen as jokers and not fit to lead the country. Sometimes, there is the argument that the reason for the recent series of crises in the northern part of Nigeria is to show dissatisfaction in the leadership of President Goodluck Jonathan from a southern minority tribe in the minds of those people he is not fit to be the president of the country. The said president from the minority tribe of Ijaw (Dokubo:2011) had a great opportunity and become the first president of Nigeria from such a tribe. The feat was historic because the tribes that had produced Nigerian presidents have been the Hausa/Fulani, the Yoruba and the Igbo. These tribes have been the three

dominant among the over two hundred and fifty tribes (Mgbe:2012).

Mwakikagile (2001) aptly captured the fact that:

...in governance, the northern tribes are said to discriminate against the southern tribe, and this is evident when the line of presidents of Nigeria is studied as portrayed as under. "General Gowon, a northerner, was overthrown by another northerner, Murtala Muhammed in 1975. Later, under unfortunate circumstances, the mantle fell on General Obasanjo, a South Westerner, who then handed over to Shehu Shagari, another northerner. Muhamadu Buhari, a northerner, forcibly took over from Shagari, but his tenure was short-lived when a fellow northerner, Ibrahim Babangida, took away the helmsmanship from him. Under fire for annulling a supposedly free election that would have put Moshood Abiola, a south westerner in power, Babangida handed over to a south westerner, Ernest Shonekan before General Sani Abacha, another northerner, snatched it away from him. When Abacha mysteriously and suddenly died, General Abdulsalam Abubakar, a northerner, took over and eventually handed back to Obasanjo, a South Westerner. Before leaving office, Obasanjo made sure that the presidency had gone back to another northerner – Umaru Yaradua. Haba!

Dozier (2011) opined that the manner of rotation of the Nigerian president has turned out to be:

.... like a chess game between the northern tribes and southwest tribes(sic); but it is not so, it is the true position in Nigeria. As much as the country boasts of many tribes, and regions, presidency is passed back and forth amongst

tribes, and this is often done forcibly. The question that is asked may take the form of; why the misrepresentation of regions and tribes? Are the other tribes less intelligent or important as compared to the others? Or are they less ambitious or hard working compare to the other tribes/regions? Do they contribute equally to the growth of the nation? The answers to this question may portray how bad tribalism is in Nigeria.

Tribalism much as Dozier had posited is a glaring bane of Nigerian leadership. The worst of it is that when leaders emerge from certain ethnic or tribal region, he tends to favour “his people” not minding the pains of the remainder of the country. Major political posts would be given to the leader’s kinsmen and major projects executed in his own area neglecting the other regions. During president Obasanjo’s regime, some of his kinsmen supported his unpopular policies just because he is one of them (Ikhariale:2002). Also, Abubakar had accused the aforesaid president of unduly favouring his fellow Yoruba kinsmen. As he reasoned:

I have consistently argued for the past three years that we are unfairly saddled with a failed President. Not only is Olusegun Obasanjo’s regime visionless, directionless but arrogant and insensitive... There was no sign that the Chief from Owu was ready to hear any other voice except his and that of his cronies. His is another unwilling but imposed President. Like Shehu Shagari who preferred to be a Senator but was drafted to the highest seat, Obasanjo preferred to be allowed to tender his chickens after his harrowing experience at Yola prisons. But unseen political forces settled for him and his road was cleared, including pardon, which was hastily gazetted. But unlike Shehu Shagari, Obasanjo appears to come with a king size grudge. First against the Abachas and all those who served Abacha. He

retired all top Army officers who served his predecessors in political assignments. Having dealt with his immediate constituency, he moves against the north. Northerners in the bureaucracy and political positions were dethroned and replaced in most cases by his kinsmen – the Yorubas. He placed his kinsmen – the Yorubas in virtually all strategic positions in government, the forces particularly the Police as Heads. He proceeded to draft policies that further Afenifere – Yoruba agenda.

If the accusation leveled against Obasanjo is anything to go by, such attitude, perhaps had been entrenched and became part of the norms and rule of governance in Nigeria. Obasanjo's predecessors could have even done such things more than him. During the administrations that saw many of the northerners as Nigerian leaders, most strategic offices were occupied by people from the aforementioned region. Besides, the region was the primary focus on the project implementation, certain job recruitment and so on. The rest of the country was watching with awe and grudges. The writer of the above cited article who probably is a northerner might have been expressing his displeasure on the fact that it had not been as usual, where the north would through Nigerian leadership style be unduly favoured. As if the current president is suffering from ethnic bias, it is alleged as put by Adesina (2011) that Niger-Delta region the president 'home' got 86% of federal government projects between March and August this year (2011) amounting to over N760 billion. The rest of the regions got little or nothing. It seems that the president is paying back for the neglect of the region by the previous leaders or may be for his personal sentiment for "his own people". Whichever way, the attitude portrays the decadence in our

leadership.

Another point raised by Abubakar is the fact that our leaders are forced on us. There is no free and fair election in Nigeria. (Iredia:2011) This has contributed to our leaders emerging from a questionable way and platform. The means of imposing leaders through the so-called democratic processes in Nigeria is, however, better when compared to the manner the previous Nigerian military leaders and presidents emerged. They came into leadership through coup de tat.

As many of these Leadership emerged through unwholesome means and practices, they soon become corrupt and mischievous. Billions of dollars have been siphoned by leaders other than Babangida that was earlier mentioned. For instance, during Abacha's regime, a total of five billion dollars was embezzled at one instance by the late dictator (<http://www.naira.com/823498/sani-abacha-one-nigeria/11>). The situation of embezzlement by Nigeria leaders is worrisome. Many of them have invested the stolen money in another country (Ayikoye: 2010), despite the fact that Nigerians are dying because of poverty and related effects.

Furthermore, most Nigerian leaders in one way or the other jumbled religion and politics. Both Muslim and Christian leaders have invariably used religious influences negatively in their administration. For instance, millions of dollars are routinely used by different Nigerian leaders and government to send pilgrims to Mecca and Jerusalem. Indeed, the exercise seems to be a waste of resources (<http://www.nigeriancuriosity.com/2009/12/of-pilgrimages-hajj-nigerians.htm>). Pilgrimage appears not to have contributed

meaningfully to alleviate the excruciating conditions of ordinary Nigerians. Many Nigerians are living in squalor and in most cases the elites and the ‘privileged citizens’ are always selected and equipped to go on such pilgrimage. In other words, the selection process of the pilgrims especially on the ‘Christian side’ should be a matter of concern. Pilgrimage in itself may not be wrong but the state sponsor of such which is wasteful (Akpoviri:2011). In actual sense, Nigerian government is developing Saudi Arabia or Israel by investing in the pilgrimage without anything to show for it. The level of religious intolerance in Nigeria despite these state sponsored pilgrimages is very bothersome. It calls for reflection by both adherents of the two religions and the government on the other hand.

From the foregoing, it goes without saying that Nigeria since independence has been troubled with bad leadership. Aderounmu (2011) has branded all Nigerian leaders thieves and looters of varying degrees. In the recent Mo Ibrahim African Governance Index report for year 2011, Nigeria had an abysmal performance. The country has a very poor leadership record and it had been like that for so long. In 2011 Nigeria was ranked 41 out of 51 countries (Arinze: 2011). The country has taken similar or worst positions in the past assessments.

LEARNING FROM SAUL’S EXEMPLARY LEADERSHIP

Saul unlike most Nigerian leaders became a leader through a popular choice of his own people. He became the leader not through the barrel of gun as had been the case with some Nigerian leaders. Different military leaders became presidents after varying degrees of bloody coup de tat. Among the leaders that usurp and forcefully take over other

regimes after partial or successful coup-de-tat were Aguiyi Ironsi, Yakubu Gowon, Murtala Mohammed, Mohammed Buhari, Ibrahim Babangida, and Sani Abacha (Onyemaechi: 2011). Even during democratic dispensations in Nigeria, there had been the situations where unpopular candidates emerged winners in elections through fraudulent means. The selection and election of the former Nigerian president Musa Yara'dua to a very large extent followed dubious process. The election was marred by shady practices so that even the said president at some point admitted the inconsistencies and great flaws that marked the election. (<http://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=2&ved=0c>). Prior to the 'election' of Yaradua, there had been the freest and fairest election in which a man named Mushood Abiola emerged the winner and president-elect. (Kilgour:1998) There had not been such free and fair election in Nigeria before the aforesaid election. However, after the popular support and election of Abiola, the military government of Ibrahim Babangida annulled and denied him (Abiola) the chance to be the president. Afterward, he (Abiola) died in the prison custody under mysterious and questionable circumstances. (Madsen: n.d). Saul after winning the heart and support of the Jews, not even Samuel stopped him from clinching the leadership position. And this legitimacy from the Jewish people must have influenced major decisions of Saul that led to great success in Israel. If Nigeria should adopt nomination, selection and election processes through 'popular choice' as did in the time of Saul, there is the likelihood of progress, development, and responsible governance.

Saul became a leader of the Jews but not without oppositions. Initially, Samuel was against the institution of monarchy in Israel. He only changed his position after pressure from the masses and Yahweh himself. (see page 1). By this, it is not out of place to argue that indeed Samuel was against Saul's emergence as the king. Meanwhile, when Saul finally became the leader of the Jews, he never paid Samuel back for originally being in the "other political or ideological divide". Also, Saul was careful in dealing with the oppositions from other tribes within Israel after becoming the leader. He never punished them for being against his nomination as the leader. Nigerian leaders should learn this virtue of Saul. Now and then, Nigerian politics is such that those who emerge 'winners' and cling unto political power most often will turn against the opposition(s). Varied means of punishment as denial of job and political opportunities, neglect, false allegations which would lead to unjust punishment would be unleashed on the oppositions. During the military regimes of Ibrahim Babangida and Sani Abacha there were accusations of systematized elimination and killing of individuals that opposed the governments (Idaewor:2010, Ade: 2012). In the democratic dispensations and regimes, various leaders and presidents chastise those opposing them employing varying strategies. Incumbent leader as the president in Nigeria, seems to be entrusted with so many un-checkmated powers that he can maneuver many things. He can determine who becomes his successor; reference to this is the selection of former president Musa Yaradua by his predecessor Olusegun Obasanjo (<http://zainabusman.wordpress.com/tag/olusegun-obasanjo/>).

Obasanjo could have as well not allow any person that had opposed his government to be the president. Besides, if the allegation leveled against the incumbent president of Nigeria- Goodluck Jonathan in project implementation is anything to go by, it shows that the president never imbibed the wisdom of Saul who made entire Israel the focus of his policy and administration. Still not too late, Jonathan can retrace his steps and transcend above any sentiment and lead Nigeria as one united country as did Saul with Israel. Also, the subsequent leaders should uphold the principle and take it as rule of action.

Saul as a leader lived a modest life. He was the kind that went to war with his soldiers. He shared the pains with the common man and wanted to defend his country at all cost. He put his life, including that of his own son on line. Fighting series of wars of which he and the son later were consumed; both died in a war. Nigerian leaders have separated themselves from the course of the masses and ordinary citizens. Most of them are so selfish and mischievous. There had been several reports of embezzlement by the previous Nigerian presidents. Instead of fighting to defend the nation, they fight to defend their “private pockets” and interests. No Nigerian leader through his actions has acted in a way that depicts that he is willing to lay the life of his son, let alone his own life, in a course that will make the country to progress as did Saul. It will be unthinkable that a Nigerian leader, in this respect, a president, would allow his son to be part of the military contingent entrusted to fight in defence of the country. Rather, the Nigerian leaders’ children would most often be in foreign and developed countries of the world where their security and welfare

would be safeguarded. There is much apathy and selfish interest on the part of Nigerian leaders. Recently, there is a report linking president Goodluck Jonathan and the vice president Namadi Sambo of a plan to spend almost one billion naira public fund for feeding and other domestic expenses (Ekott and Ogala: 2012). It is atrocious that the president would budget such huge sum whereas he had earlier announced that the country is at the verge of economic collapse and ruins if proper measures are not put in place. He removed fuel subsidy that has been benefitting the common Nigerian (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-16579001>) and appropriated huge sum to himself and household. He ought to have felt the pains of the ordinary citizens just as Saul. Having said, adopting Saul's passion, love, and patriotism is what Nigerian leaders need at this point and beyond.

Saul's consciousness and recognition of "due process" is what Nigeria has appallingly failed to recognize and inculcate in its culture. When Saul wanted to recruit his soldiers, he never focused on his tribe or in any other thing except competence. (<http://www.story-lovers.com/bible2sauldavid.html>). If such recruits were to be in Nigeria today the story would be different. Instead, one would be recruited because of his state of origin, nepotism, *ethnicism* and tribalism (Dike:2002, Dike:2001). Many things in Nigeria ranging from employment, university admissions, political appointment, location of industry etcetera, are done in such a manner. This has become a setback to the development of the nation as most of the time quacks and the mediocre are selected in such an unfair process. Nigerian leaders should

adopt Saul's virtue of following a common and ideal rule of "due process"; shunning all sentiments to absorb the best people in a particular job or endeavour.

A good leader has the responsibility of using the popular yearnings and the public opinions of the 'electorates' and masses to form the basis for policy making and implementation. Nigerian leaders hardly listen to the cravings and plights of their citizens. President Goodluck Jonathan had not listened to the far cry of the citizens after he removed the fuel subsidy thereby increasing more than double the price of the product. The whole nation demonstrated against the removal of the subsidy but the president never moved his ground until many lives were lost and the labour unions threatened to continue striking that will further cause economic havoc to the nation (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-16533072>). When he finally shifted his position from 140 to 97 naira (though the fuel price was previously at sixty five naira), he ordered the soldiers to quell or quench further demonstrations (Madukwe:2012) This means that those citizens who wanted to peacefully demonstrate were prevented from expressing themselves by armed to teeth soldiers who are ready to use every means to stop the demonstration. Far from this kind of attitude, Saul was willing to obey his subjects at a great cost. He listened to the voices of the people and that led him to take spoils of war which runs contrary to the holy war. The consequence of this is a total rejection of Saul kingship by Yahweh as Samuel maintained (Chamberlain: n.d). He never regretted doing the wish of the people when he suffered the effect of such decision.

Conclusion

From the foregoing, it is pertinent to argue that good leadership is what Nigeria needs at this point and beyond so as to save it from underdevelopment, crises and total collapse. The bane of Nigeria development more than any other variable is poor leadership. This has translated to shallow and misdirected policies and implementation. The glaring hallmarks of the Nigerian leaders, as observed from parts of the preceding submissions are corruption, partiality, clannishness, and general lack of vision and skills to lead. The effect of the bad leadership in Nigeria is evidenced in the underdevelopment, poverty, backwardness etc. facing the country despite its enormous natural and human resources. The recent agitation and clamour for Sovereign National Conference (Adefaka: 2012) and feeling from different quarters to divide Nigeria into different independent states (Ukpai: 2012) could be linked to the people's dissatisfaction and inefficacy on the leadership. Leadership in Nigeria from inception and foundation till date has been problematic. Nigeria leaders seem to lack the virtues and 'ingredients' necessary for good governance

In the face of this abysmal performance in leadership and colossal consequences on Nigerians, it is ideal that the leaders transcend above whatever sentiment by imitating the sound leadership role of king Saul. Saul harnessed virtues and skills inherent in him to lead his people triumph over their predicaments. The Jews recorded successes in war, agriculture, and other national and personal issues due to the decisive and sound leadership of Saul. Even though, the Nigerian problems are in many ways different from the classical Jews, it goes

without saying that the problems can only be solved through good leadership that unifies various ethnic, socio-economic and political divisions against a common enemy as corruption, poverty and so on, hence the call to draw from the wealth of knowledge and skills of Saul which during his administration translated to great success.

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