

Leadership Subterfuge (Artifice) and the Sit-At-Home Dilemma: Implications on the Performance of The Nigerian Economy

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ABSTRACT

From Monday, May 31 2021, through an order issued by the Independence Movement for the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) across the five states of the South East region in Nigeria for a compulsory ‘Sit-At-Home’ order, the country has been in disarray with untold economic implications. This paper therefore sought to critically examine the leadership subterfuge and the Sit-At-Home dilemma, while underscoring its implications on the performance of the country’s economy. The paper adopted content analytical method of secondary data exploration to deal succinctly and concretely on the nexus between leadership, the people and the economy; but further queried the subterfuge and dictatorship in leadership as having dire implications on the Nigerian nation. The ‘Non-dominance’ theory was adopted so as to give a clear narrative from the theoretical and empirical point of view of the study. The paper argues that more now than ever before, Nigeria is witnessing leadership insensitivity resulting from leaders’ tactless attitude at its crowning, giving rise to insulation of economic matters from popular participation, manipulation and monopolization of democratic process, including the use of violence and electoral fraud to secure legitimacy with severe clamp-down on opposition and public opinion. The paper revealed that the subterfuge quandary has culminated in confrontations, lawlessness, killings and gross insecurity with overwhelming socio-economic downturn, orchestrating an economy enmeshed in abject poverty, hunger, unemployment and gross underdevelopment. The paper recommended amongst others that there should be earnest efforts channeled towards propagating strong leadership values of consultation, consensus, selflessness, transparency, accountability and above all patriotism. And that while we seek for equity, justice and fairness, we must take caution to ensure that our agitations are applied not to inflict more hardship on ourselves vis-à-vis the Sit-At-Home order that continues to be extended till date.

KEYWORDS: *Leadership Subterfuge, Democratic Dictatorship, Biafra, IPOB and the Nigerian Economy.*

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I. Introduction

In Sub-Saharan Africa, leadership implies service to followers and to the general public, in the sense that leadership is about inspiring and influencing others to gain their support and cooperation at achieving common goals. Avails that in a democratic setting, leadership should be ‘for all’ and ‘with all’, whereby the leader recognizes that he is a representative who must always take cognizance of the interest of the followers and carry all sectors along (Anekwe, 2021). This implies that leadership should always consider the pulse of the people to identify their felt needs or where they are hurting, and lead to fill those gaps that would proactively prevent confrontations and contestations of marginalization in the future.

Thus as a proclaimed democratic state, the Nigerian leadership is meant to extol the consent of the governed and protect their fundamental human rights, ensure equal opportunity for all with fundamental recognition of popular sovereignty, representativeness, majority rule, minority rights, popular consultation, right of choice between alternative programmes, consensus on fundamental issues, and essentially respecting the

peoples discretion in choosing their own leaders in elections (Mile and Jeje, 2018). These factors are considered ideals of leadership in a democratically governed polity that seeks attainment of meaningful and sustainable development.

In Nigeria, the issue of effective leadership and governance has become a hot-button issue prompting scholarly research interest around the world. It appears that since its attainment of political independence in 1960, ethnic cleavages resulting to ever ripe ethnic marginalization and confrontations had always taken the center stage of Nigeria. As a nation that went through 33 years of political instability with military interregnums (Heerten and Moses, 2019), we apparently have witnessed dictator-rulers than inclusive-leaders, majority of whom believe in personality rather than impersonality and common good.

The lack of authenticity and the conscious refusal to retrieve one's self-centered personality traits in leadership position has resulted to the concern of this study. This paper, argues that Nigeria is now, witnessing leadership subterfuge (artifice) at its uttermost form, giving rise to the sit-at-home dilemma and brandishing an economy enmeshed in abject poverty, hunger, unemployment, crippled economy and gross underdevelopment. Against this backdrop, this paper aims to concretely scrutinize the nexus between leadership subterfuge and the sit-at-home situation in the southeast vis-à-vis its impact on not just the economy of the southeast, but the country at large.

Statement of the Problem

In a multi-tribal system like Nigeria where perceived political manipulations of ethnic identity and ethnic sentiments engender ethnic contestations in siting of industries and infrastructure, resource control and allocation, power distribution and access to key bureaucratic positions; it appears that the agitations and confrontations that has contributed to the Sit-At-home situation is a problem of 'leadership subterfuge' that is leadership artifice or deception. It seems that the institutions and the semblance of democratic groundwork that ought to be the bedrock of any meaningful socio-economic development in Nigeria are manipulated deceitfully, leading to weak economy with rising unemployment and inflation, poverty, criminality and life-shattering insecurity with sociopolitical unrest.

The perceived agitation is that the Igbo's are highly marginalized, but it appears the argument has gone beyond whether or not the Igbo's affiliated Independence Movement for the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) is right to agitate, rather concern is been raised vis-à-vis the consequences of the continuous observance of the Sit-At-Home order until the fair trial and/or release of Nnamdi Kanu, the much proclaimed leader of IPOB. Besides, the perceived leadership subterfuge problem as well as the implications of shutting down the southeastern region as ordered by IPOB lack concrete intellectual insights and implore for inquiries which this paper will attempt to practically and theoretically address.

II. Methodology

This paper adopted Content Analytical method of secondary data exploration to deal succinctly and concretely on the nexus between leadership, the people and the economy; but further queried the subterfuge, dictatorship and economy degradation as the upshot of the Sit-At-Home quandary. In examining the leadership phenomenon, the paper adopted the terms 'leadership subterfuge' and 'democratic dictatorship' to fully capture the dimensionality of destructive leadership and personality traits taking shape in Nigeria.

The content analytical method enabled this paper to explore the empiricism that it is no longer about querying ineffective or bad leadership since their findings are replete all over the Nigerian scenery, revealed by different studies. In this context instead, we query the subterfuge nature of leadership in a country where it appears those held in trust by the people to govern them, have now moved to the 'advanced level' of petty tyranny, abusive regulation/control and even strategic bullying and extermination.

Theoretical Framework

Depicting a clear narrative from the theoretical and empirical point of view, this paper adopts the 'Non-Dominance' theory as its theoretical framework, originally put forth by an Irish philosopher and political theorist Philip Noel Pettit in his 1997 book titled "Republicanism: A Theory of Freedom and Government". The theory was further brought to intellectual limelight by Frank Lovett in his work on "A General Theory of Domination and Justice". The Non-domination theory addresses the inevitable social inequalities occasioned by having to live at the mercy of another when leadership is demonstrated as camouflaged tyranny (Colton, 2015).

The tenets of the theory is premised on the notion of 'Freedom', 'Democratic self-governance' and 'Participatory State' built upon the ideology of individuals having a voice in decisions that affect them. Thus, the Republican conception of political liberty defines freedom as "Non-Dominance" which is described as "the condition of not being subject to the arbitrary or uncontrolled power of a master. To this end, "Freedom is the status enjoyed by someone to the extent that no one else stands over them like a lord or master and interferes in their lives on an arbitrary basis" (Cabrelli and Zahn, 2017).

Within the context of this study, the 'Non-dominance' theory best explains the arbitrary and predatory relationship between Nigerian leaders and the masses, such that Nigeria's fundamental approach to leadership is troubling. The obvious killings and instigations of insecurity, hijacked elections and recruitment system of who knows who with impositions of candidates, the impunity among party stalwarts in the choice of party flag bearers in Nigeria, the accorded immunity and power clauses for elected leaders snowballing into dictatorship in the rulership, to mention but a few, are forms of democratic abnormalities the 'Non-Dominance' theory argue against.

In every country, it is the responsibility of the leadership to protect the political, social, and economic interests of the citizens by making policies and finding solutions to their problems and guiding the polity to a prosperous economy. Deplorably, the primary goal of assuming leadership position in Nigeria nowtopsthat of self-enrichment, to also include exerting exclusive lordship over key positions in the society, shutting down oppositions and forcing through policies that would enable their group retain power for life, obviously contradictory to the notion of 'Non-Dominance' theory and true democracy.

Conceptual Discourse

Leadership Subterfuge: Leadership is one of the most critically debated issues in society, considered to be integral to goal attainment and any meaningful development. In fact, it is a universal phenomenon which breathes life into every human activity or endeavour. Porter and Mclaughtain (2016) define leadership as an influence relationship among leaders and collaborators who intend significant changes that continuously reflect their mutual purposes. Accordingly, Aibieyi (2014, p. 55) vividly describes leadership as a "cooperative followership", arguing that without followers or subordinates, all the leadership wherewithal of the individual leading will be irrelevant.

It can be inferred from the foregoing definitions that it is the followers who are led, that give meaning to leadership, since the core task of a leader as an influencer, is to influence the conduct of the followers. As a result, the manner and extent the followers/subordinates are influenced, creates the compulsion to put in more efforts than they would have given towards any given course. Thus, the argument ensuing from the foregoing definitions is premised on the perceived direct and indirect behavioral deception of leaders in projecting the opposite of what they claim to be which has sprung up different angles of debate in governance literature based on the nascent term of "Leadership Subterfuge".

Leadership subterfuge can be referred to as 'artifice' which connotes deception, that is, leadership by deceit. Some scholars like Onimisi (2015) explained leadership subterfuge from the angle of office-bearers, particularly the elected representatives who employ various types of campaign strategy to canvass for support/votes, making humongous promises in the process for which the voters are supposed to hold them accountable to; but on attaining the position, they end up never delivering what they promised. Therefore, not only do they renege in fulfilling their electioneering campaign promises, but their accessibility by the masses becomes an illusion whereby the people can neither access them, nor can they be responsible and accountable to the masses that empowered them.

Krasikova, Green and Lebreton (2013) however argue that leadership subterfuge goes deeper than unfulfilled promises, adding that it is subsumed in the destructive element or aspect where the promises were never meant to be kept at all, but also an exploitative agenda were the initial intent was to rob the people of their due share to the public resources; orchestrated by using a clever trick to deceive followers into believing their agenda. Ominisi (2015) defined leadership subterfuge as destructive leadership, that is, a volitional behavior by a leader that puts followers in jeopardy by encouraging them to pursue the leaders aims that contravene the legitimate interests of the public; and even going as far as employing a leadership approach that involves the use of authoritarian coercive methods of influence with followers. In this case, they can be accused of moral dishonesty/fraudulence, and by not keeping faith with the followers their position (attainment/retention of their governmental position) was by subterfuge.

Ominisi (2015) further argues that when a leader, any type whatsoever leads by deception, it actually entails that he has a lot to conceal, would like to if not already evading responsibility; thus, aims at escaping blame; and though the people may or may not realize they are been led astray, but yet are powerless to right the anomaly because sovereignty no longer lies with the people. Suffice to argue that leadership subterfuge in other words is a deceptive stratagem meant to hoodwink followers to give their support and cooperation for a cause they believe in but one which necessarily does not benefit the people if not the selfish aggrandizements of the leaders.

Democratic Dictatorship: Also referred to as "False Democracy" is a major correlate of leadership subterfuge (Paul, Orokpoko and Ojo, 2017; Arowolo and Aluko, 2017; Nweke, 2015). According to the Universal Democracy-Dictatorship Index, the conceptualization of democratic dictatorship counts on rules regarding the existence of or extent of competitive elections and representative governance. Thus for a regime to be considered democratic by the Democracy-Dictatorship Index, it must meet the requirement of the following four

rules: (a) the chief executive must be chosen by popular election or by a body that was itself popularly elected; (b) the legislature must be popularly elected; (c) there must be more than one party competing in the elections; (d) an alternation in power under electoral rules identical to the ones that brought the incumbent to office must have taken place.

This therefore confers on all the masses the opportunity to participate in decision-making; making it a catalyst for accountability, transparency and responsive government (Arowolo and Aluko, 2017). It repudiates arbitrariness and authoritarianism, and extols the consent of the governed that goes beyond opportunity of mere election but more comprehensive fairness, equity and justice in all political competition and public affairs; respecting the fundamental rights and liberties of the citizens (Gastil, 2020).

Historical Trajectory of Nigeria

Nigeria is a country found in the Western African region, next to the Gulf of Guinea, amid Benin and Cameroon with a total area of approximately 923,768 sq. km and 4,047 km in land boundaries; rated as one of the most populous countries in the world with an estimated population of 208,994,835 people as of 1st January 2021 (Country Meters Report, 2021). According to Africa Countries Facts (2021), the population is extremely diverse with more than 400 ethnic groups, but comprised of three major ethnic tribes i.e. the Hausas (inhabiting the north), the Yoruba (in the west), and the Ibos (in the east).

The Nigerian people are predominantly Christians (49.3%) and Muslims (48.8%) with 1.4% mixtures of folk/traditional religions and 0.5% religiously unaffiliated people. Economically, the country is rich in mineral resources having oil as one of its biggest exports, operating a mixed economy that focuses mainly on telecommunications, financial services, industry and technology. However, many Nigerians are poor and life expectancy is generally lower in Nigeria, just about 55.2 years, with high child mortality rate (58.23%) attributed to abysmal healthcare system via leadership failure (Statista, 2021; World Bank, 2021).

Nigeria is a member of the British Commonwealth given that historically, the Republic of Nigeria came under British colonial rule after Lagos was invaded by the British in 1851 and became a British protectorate in 1901. The Northern and southern protectorates were amalgamated in 1914 by the British government to form what became known as “Nigeria” under a colonial rule that lasted until 1960 when Nigeria finally attained its independence (Luepke, 2018). Established as a federal state, postcolonial Nigeria was split into three main regions, each dominated by one or two ethnic groups: Hausa-Fulani in the north, Yoruba in the west, and Igbo in the east; later in 1963 Nigeria was separated into four states when the multi-ethnic Midwestern State was carved out of parts of the Western Region (Mile and Jeje, 2018).

Today, Nigeria operates a federal system of government, with three tiers of government, viz: Federal, State and Local Governments; comprised of 36 autonomous states (including the federal capital territory Abuja) with 774 Local Governments Areas (LGAs), each of which is administered by a Local Government Council (World Bank, 2022). Governmental positions are manned by leaders through elections but with a marginalized zoning leadership system for government positions (Agunyai and Efembo, 2017).

Anekwe (2021) argues that this doesn't make much sense for democracy, especially in a multi-tribal system like Nigeria where political manipulations of ethnic identity and ethnic sentiments engender ethnic contestations in resource control and allocation, power distribution, and access to key bureaucratic positions. Moreover, the civil war (6 July 1967 – 15 January 1970), the series of military coup d'état and the emergent military governments after the country attained independence, have created a Nigerian leadership and political environment that has not been stable until the 1999 democratization (Mile and Jeje, 2018).

The Birth of the Republic of Biafra

On attaining independence, Nigeria had been widely considered one of sub-Saharan Africa's most promising postcolonial states, especially as large amounts of high-quality oil reserves and other mineral deposits had been discovered shortly before the end of colonial rule. Unfortunately, two British legacies combined to ruin the evolution of a stable political system and socioeconomic relations. Daly (2020) avers that first; the colonial rule divided the people along ethnic lines, and then incorporated the groups into a forced-union in a centrally governed federal state.

Consequently at the regional level, a system of patronage was created along ethnic lines; while at the national level, the three ‘mega-tribes’ ruthlessly competed for state resources that yielded more oil revenues flourished from late 1960's. Heerten and Moses (2019) clearly notes that this led to a deepening rift that severed the North and the Southern Regions, while the Eastern Region geographically located in the country's Southeast, was increasingly isolated and marginalized in particular. Thus, with the fear of domination, federal and national elections turned into fiercely fought battles for power; ballot rigging and other forms of manipulation. Eventually in January 1966, an Igbo-dominated military initiated series of coups and counter-coups that led to the installation of military rule with the highest-ranking officer General Johnson Aguiyi-Ironsi, emerging as the head of state (Okeke, 2020).

Daly (2020) notes that the North felt threatened and had Irons captured and killed in a counter-coup which installed Lieutenant Colonel Yakubu Gowon as the new head of state. The coup d'état was a success, except in the Igbo-dominated Eastern Region, where the military governor, General Ojukwu remained in power. Between June and October 1966 violence was at its highest peak with massacres against Igbos living in the Sabon Gari (the 'foreigners' quarters' of northern Nigerian towns) and subsequent riots which claimed the lives of tens of thousands, later unfolding into the civil war that began in 1967. Amid rampant fears among the Igbos in particular, the Eastern Region began to call for more autonomy and after failed negotiations, on 30th May 1967, the East's political leadership headed by Ojukwu declared its secession from Nigeria and its independence as the Republic of Biafra.

Emergence of the Independence Movement for the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) and the Sit-At-Home Dilemma

Officially the Republic of Biafra came into being as a secessionist state in West Africa that separated from Nigeria and existed from May 1967 to January 1970 same time as the civil war. Nevertheless, there exists the Independence Movement for the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), a group led by Nnamdi Kanu, a British/Nigerian citizen who has been advocating for the secession of southeastern Nigeria in our contemporary era. The on-going Sit-At-Home quandary is an emergent tool of IPOB introduced on Monday, May 31 2021, by an order issued by IPOB across the five states of the South Eastern Region in Nigeria for a compulsory shutdown to observe a sit-at-home order in honour of the people killed during the Nigerian civil war (Okoli et al., 2021).

The Sit-At-Home order was obeyed by residents as businesses, banks, markets, schools, streets across Imo, Abia, Anambra, Enugu and Ebonyi States appeared completely empty. Presently, the intermittent "Sit-At-Home" is gradually becoming the new normal in the southeast, especially following the arrest of IPOB leader Nnamdi Kanu who was arrested in Kenya and repatriated to Nigeria at the end of June, 2021; charged with terrorism, treason, illegal possession of firearms, etc. (Ukpong, 2021). While government reassures the people not to sit-at-home as citizens who have freedom of movement under the existing Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria; however, the people sit-at-home regardless, attributed to fear of loss of life/properties with rising insecurity and police brutality (Nwaiwu, 2022).

Okoli et al., (2021) affirm that Mondays in most southeastern parts of Nigeria are now compulsory days of incarceration and though some State Governors urge the people to go about their normal businesses, the rate of Sit-At-Home compliance is still mind boggling. Concerned people have attributed the high level of compliance to insecurity and failure of government to protect lives/properties; while others contend that 'Ndi Igbo' are tired of marginalization, so they demonstrate their solidarity by Sitting-At-Home to demand for the "Republic of Biafra".

Images of Empty Market and Streets in Enugu and Umuahia during Sit-At-Home



Source: Ajasa (2021).

Issues of Democratic Dictatorship and Leadership Subterfuge in Nigeria

It is deleterious that the misconception of Nigerian leaders, who perceive leadership as dominance or supremacy concept, has culminated in an alienated followership-leadership relationship. Nweke (2016) affirms the foregoing assertion by explaining that democracy in Nigeria has three unique dysfunctional features viz: insulation of economic matters from popular participation, manipulation and monopolization of democratic process including the use of violence and electoral fraud to secure legitimacy and a clamp-down on opposition and public opinion. Igbaekemen (2014) argues that this kind of leaders lack the human relations attitude to foster participatory leadership to consolidate democracy in Nigeria.

In analyzing the plethora of leaders that have spanned the Nigeria leadership ladder, Imhonopi and Ugochukwu (2018:81) were assertive that “selfish, mediocre, tribal leaders and opportunistic small money-minded people masquerading as leaders have continued to regenerate in Nigeria” Over time, it is now normal to cheer on unproductiveness, ineptitude, mediocre, parochial and ethnic-drunk leaders whose preference of self-preservation over national interest continues to undermine Nigeria’s attempt to liberate itself from the clutches of underdevelopment.

Imbalance in Siting of Infrastructure, Resource Control and Power Sharing

Rotberg and Campbell (2021) allege that some people see Nigeria as a ‘failed state’ under President Buhari; this is not because there are completely no signs of infrastructural development, but they innocuously argue that President Buhari’s concentration on building refinery, connecting roads/rail ways and electricity in the North is only but a subterfuge of a promised ‘change’ and subsequent ‘next level’ to Nigerians, while it is seen as a pursuit of his leadership aim of empowering the North and to craftily trace his way back to Nigal Republic; where he has now built a refinery, exporting Nigeria’s crude oil to be refined there, at a huge cost of Nigeria’s tax-payers money.

Originally, the vision for the federal character principle (which was later entrenched in Section 14:3 of the 1999 Constitution) was to ensure that in power relations and power sharing, government decisions on citing industries, building roads and other infrastructures, awarding scholarships, recruitment or appointment or employment of public office holders, admission and revenue allocations, etc. does not favour or alienate any particular group or ethnic region against any other. Dishearteningly, the initial intentions have been muddled up in ethnic power toggles where the dominant ethnic region in power takes all.

Okereka (2015) was quite vociferous in his explanation of ethnicized resource control in Nigeria avowing that the situation is all about sticking to one’s tribal group and favoring such against the many existing others within a society, with the seat of power and its economic benefits regarded as the exclusive preserve of some groups over the others. Most glaring is the lopsidedness amongst the geo-political zones and states within them rendered comatose due to ethnicized transfer of resources from one region for the development of another and the underdevelopment of the region where the resources are based or extracted from. The imbalance in infrastructural development in Nigeria has murdered the humaneness of democracy in Nigeria and any semblance of equity, fairness and social justice; thus, culminating in rapid growth of Militias, bandits, and insurgent groups clamoring for their supposed rights.

Recruitment and Election in Nigeria

Recruitment and election are crucial processes through which public personnel assume various positions in public organisations and governance. Elections in Nigeria have become mere formalities of virtual democracy, with recruitment and appointments exercised based on the dictates of the powers-that-be. Arowolo and Aluko (2017) assert that because democracy is practiced in such a way that responsible and competent people are scared away, the people who stand for election in Nigeria are not qualified candidates by the requirement of the law. Since 2015, no military officer of South-East extraction has securely made it in the security team composed by President Buhari (Erunke, 2021). A lot of Nigerians bemoan that in a country where there are millions of Professors and enlightened men in all sectors of the country, yet what we have is leadership that is piled-up with uneducated, unenlightened, not exposed, daftly-minded aging men waxing in gerontocracy (Okpata and Ezika, 2019).

Thus, the issues of imposition of candidates and impunity among party stalwarts in the choice of party flag bearers is beyond appalling; and when the means of enthroning public leadership is faulty, the nation is headed towards destructive tendencies. Democratization in Nigeria is bathed in electoral violence, manipulation of election results and constrained political participation. Paul et al., (2017) argue that elections in Nigeria are not only flawed but warped as the political parties are dominated by godfathers, money bags and ex-military leaders emerging as candidates to be elected. Their party primaries (if/when conducted) are mostly selective, non-participatory and undemocratic; thus resulting in the corruption of the leadership, loyalty to god-fathers and patrons, and indifference to the electorate and citizens in their style of governance. These issues of faulty

legitimacy and representative nature of the leadership in the country, is reflected in their lack of accountability and responsiveness to the constitution and to the electorate.

Immunity and Power Clauses for Elected Leaders

The immunity and power clauses for elected officials in Nigeria is one of the most pressing debates today as enshrined in section 308 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria which confers immunity from legal proceedings on certain political office holders, including the office of President or Vice-President, and Governor or Deputy Governor. Okeke, Ojukwu and Nnamani (2020) aver that the immunity clause was meant to protect the President, Governors and their deputies from vexatious litigation, so that they can concentrate on the State affairs and carry out their duties efficiently; thereby protecting the dignity of the office. Opportunistically, politicians have used the clause to the detriment of true democratic consolidation in Nigeria.

The underlying emphasis is that the immunity clause gives the incumbent an undue advantage over other participants in the electoral process through the means of manipulating the entire electoral process. At the federal and state level, the manipulation ranges from compilation of voters' register, to the appointment of electoral officers and members of electoral tribunal to protect stolen mandates, use of state instrument of coercion and apparatus to intimidate opposition parties and denial of access to state owned media houses to ensure they regain or elongate their tenure against popular will. Okeke et al., (2020) was quite vociferous in their assertion that political leaders in Nigeria commit all sorts of atrocities with impunity as they feel untouchable under the guise of the immunity and power clauses.

Implications of the Sit-At-Home Dilemma on the Performance of the Nigerian Economy

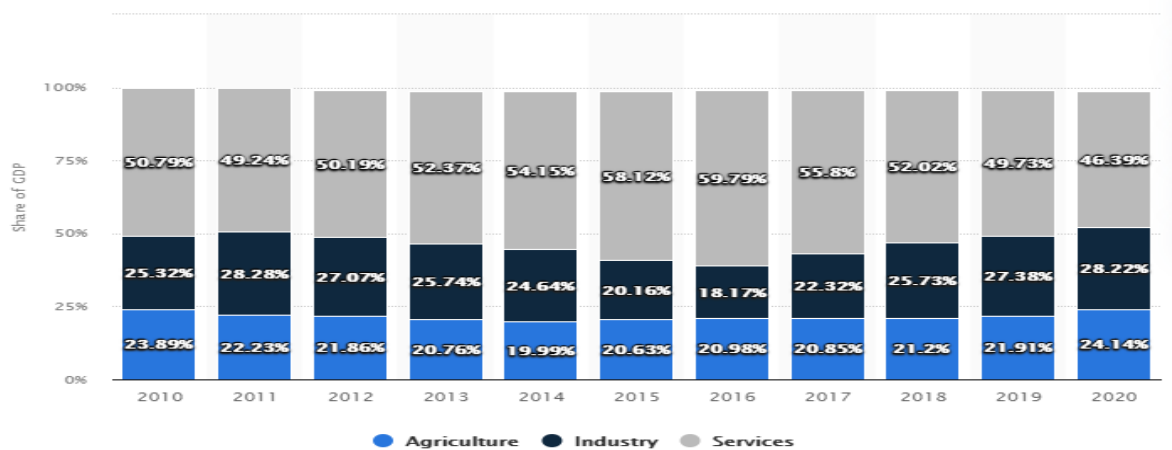
Nigeria is on the heels of the worst economic downturn ever in the country's history and the patch-up or economic comeback is very farfetched due to the personality of the administration. Munshi (2020) attributed Nigeria's dire economic prognostication to leadership deceit in planning and executing resource programmes, which has made the outlook of the economy fragile, clouded by uncertainty regarding the oil price trajectory, rising inflation, elevated unemployment, security challenges and social tensions. Okoli et al., (2021) assert that Nigeria now is indeed a very big fraud, arguing that when the present APC-led government came to power in 2015, a Naira was equal to a Dollar at ₦187, but presently a Dollar is over ₦500.

One of the foremost agitations of the Southeasterners is that the Igbo people are highly marginalized with obscene social injustice and inequality as particular ethnic group has seized and continue to hold power at the detriment of all others (Heerten and Moses, 2019). Daly (2020) affirms that nobody from the Southeast has ever emerged the president of Nigeria and overtime, power has rotated within a particular ethnic line. Okpata and Ezika (2019) corroborate that the bureaucratic melodrama arising from benching a given region or ethnic group against the other is now the trending gimmicks of power play in Nigeria; culminating in humongous imbalance and hegemonic power control both socio-politically and economically.

Okoli et al., (2021) clearly emphasized that this has led to more agitations for Biafra and has further empowered the Nnamdi Kanu-led IPOB to be loved and supported by most Igbos, because of the amount of global awareness they have brought to the ugly plights of the Igbos. Evidence point to the fact that the already bad economy was exacerbated by the June 2021 arrest of Nnamdi Kanu with the shutting down of the South East region, initially every Monday but now includes the days Nnamdi Kanu appears in court, like the observed sit-at-home on 17th-20th January 2022. Though IPOB secretary general averred that the sit-at-home order were overextended through grapevine medium, the people of the southeast still stayed indoors regardless (Akpan, 2022).

This is invariably considered to have inflicted more problems on the people of the southeast and the Nigerian economy in general that is already burdened with loads of hardship, likened to become even more injurious on the people and their means of survival if the quandary persists (Nwaiwu, 2022). In 2020, most of Nigeria's GDP came from industry and trade (as revealed in the figure below) mainly from 17.4 million SMEs who fend for themselves relentlessly.

Distribution of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) Across Economic Sectors (2010-2020)



Source: Statista, 2021.

The Igbo’s are said to be the most industrious, resilient and arguably the most innovative tribe in Nigeria with Nigeria’s major economic contributions coming from textiles and palm oil along with pharmaceuticals, plastics, cement, and cosmetics mostly commercialized by Igbos; yet the Hausa-Fulani is the most politically successful tribe in Nigeria with their political domination (Yahaya, 2021). Meanwhile, the textile productions/trade in Aba (Abia State) makes the Ariaria International Market the second largest market in Nigeria after the Onitsha Main Market, which is the largest market in Africa in terms of geographical size and volume of goods (Madichie, 2021) with these markets shut down during impositions of the sit-at-home orders.

Deserted Ariaria International Market Aba during Sit-At-Home



Source: Alaribe (2022).

The Vice President of Nnewi (Anambra State) Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Mines and Agriculture (NCCIMA) clearly notes that the sit-at-home dilemma is being exercised with huge economic implications for the south eastern states i.e. Imo, Abia, Anambra, Enugu and Ebonyi States; such that it has cost the southeast over N50 billion so far. But the economic loss is not only felt by the southerners, considering the transport sector for instance that grinds to a halt with no movement of vehicles from any part of the country into the southeast (Ogbonnaya, Nwosu and Iwuagwu, 2021). Besides, farmers and traders in the northern part of Nigeria are also impacted negatively with the IPOB sit-at-home quandary. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2021) accounts that tomatoes, onions, carrot, cabbage, potatoes, and other highly perishable vegetables/crops are predominantly grown in the north but mainly consumed in the southern part of the country, especially the southeast.

While financial returns on these goods for the days of sit-at-home are inhibited, most of them either perish due to delays of delivery or the goods already on transit are accosted and destroyed on entering the southeast. For instance, on Monday, 27th September 2021, a truck load of tomatoes and other vegetables/crops been conveyed from the north to the east, was burnt down at Enugu for supposedly violating the Monday’s sit-at-home order which allegedly had been suspended at that time (Ede, 2021).

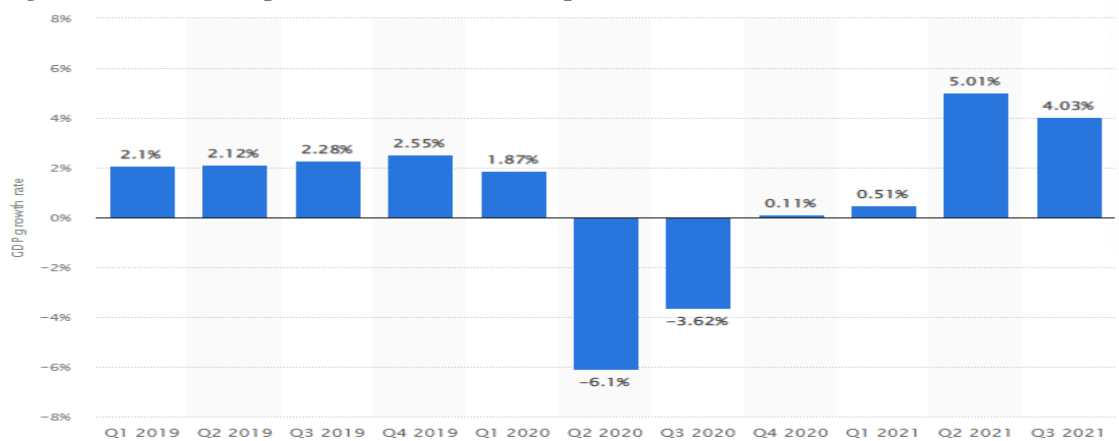
Tomatoes and other Vegetables Burnt during Imposition of Sit-at-home



Source: Ede (2021).

The transport sector which is an integral part of Nigeria’s economy loses at least Three Billion Naira per day the sit-at-home restriction is imposed. Ogbonnaya et al., (2021) explain that an average of One Million people travel in and out of the Southeast daily, at supposed cost of Three Thousand naira per traveller, which is a huge loss to the Nigerian transportation industry in general and for the individual transport companies. Okoli et al., (2021) clearly note that the Nigerian economy losses more than 60% of its GDP from industrial activities and trade with the compliance of Sit-At-Home order, and it would further deteriorate the economy with the final data reveal for 2021 not looking good at all.

GDP growth from the 1st quarter of 2019 to the 3rd quarter of 2021



In the first quarter of 2021, the Non-oil sector accounted for 90.75% of aggregate GDP with about 4% increase in growth after the COVID-19 pandemic effects of 2020 (National Bureau of Statistics, 2022). As revealed in the figure above, the beginning of 2021 was still abysmal, but even more disheartening is the fact that the 5.01% growth picked up in the 2nd quarter of 2021 diminished to 4.03% in the 3rd quarter of 2021 (Statista, 2022). Some economic analysts attributed the decline to the effects of the repeated blackout of the entire southeast economy following the peak of the sit-at-home order from June to December 2021 (Nwaiwu, 2022).

Not to mention the individual livelihood that are adversely affected by the Sit-At-Home dilemma and the daily lives lost in the process. Amnesty International reported in August 2021 that at least 115 people were killed by security forces in four months in Southeastern Nigeria and the figure is purported to have doubled since then, spiraling violence in the guise of stopping IPOB (Ojigho, 2021). It is important to note that security of lives and properties is integral to economic activities and economic growth, because people wouldn’t trade where/when safety is almost completely lacking. Avail to note that the high rate of insecurity and debasing of citizens have furthered instilled fear and compulsion to sit-at-home by mere rumor of the order, whether or not it is issued by IPOB (Nwaiwu, 2022). Besides, hoodlums are taking undue advantage of the situation to loot shops, goods and traders on transit in the guise of sit-at-home (Daly, 2020).

Okoli et al., (2021) aver that the harsh economic hardships Nigerians passed through due to COVID-19 lockdown is exacerbated by the Sit-At-Home dilemma, and the popular opinion is that it is unfair to the people of South East to keep locking down the zone at the discretion of IPOB. Nigeria inflation rate hit over three year

high in 2021 from 11.4% in 2019 to 16.5% as at January 2021. External debt increased by 5.8% of GDP, imports is at 52.4% compared to exports at 6.1%. The value of Nigerian currency fluctuates between 500-570 Naira per Dollarsince the end of 2021; while cooking gas pricehas risen to as high as 712 Naira per liter, with recent fuel scarcity/price hike in 2022; and ironically, the national minimum wage remains the same (30, 000 Naira) while some states are yet to fully implement the minimum wage. This is a country where over 3% of its GDP is stolen from its treasury by leaders yearly, with over \$ 6.8 billion stolen in the past 7 years (Focus Economics, 2022).

III. Conclusion

There's no gainsaying the fact thatcountries of the worldthat have attained successful growthby manifesting effective leadership,have fast-tracked their progress in good standard of living with adequate provision of critical infrastructure that render efficient services and ensures a sense of national unity and human capital development. Unfortunately, Nigerian leadership has far fallen short of any semblance of effective or true leadership; rather what exists is a subterfuge and democratic dictatorship that have given rise to agitations and the resultant Sit-At-Home quandary that continuous to degrade the economy and annihilate certain regions.Leadership in the present Nigerian circumstance is rather used to trick the followers in order for the leaders to achieve their selfish and self-centered separate goals. Leadership subterfuge and its correlate of democratic dictatorshiphave rubbished any meaningful progress made towards economic progress, taking the country and its economy more backward with far-reachingdisturbing concerns for the masses. This paper concludes that when leadership is true, it provides an overarching sense of direction and vision, an alignment with the environment, a healthy mechanism for innovation and creativity, and a reservoir that invigorates and spurs national development.

IV. Recommendations

Taking into consideration the submissions of this paper, there should be earnest efforts channeled towardspropagating strong leadership values of consultation, consensus, selflessness, transparency, accountability and above all patriotism. This paper calls for total reformation of our electoral system and institutions as well as a re-orientation of our mindset as Nigerians, so that we can make every effort to curb our political system from the emergence of accidental leadership and the enthronement of mediocre; which can be facilitated through a well-developed electoral body that enjoy substantial independence of operation.

An unprepared personality and circumstantial leadership should henceforth be jettisoned by the electorate in any electioneering. And we must first of all comprehend that good governance is a right and not a privilege; thereforedemand to be led in the right manner based on our consent and any form of leadership subterfugeor dictatorship should not be excused in any way. We must stand for what is right at the pollslaying aside any fear or favour or religious biases.

Likewise, while we seek for equity, justice and fairness, we must take caution to ensure that our agitations are applied not to inflict more hardship on ourselveslike the continuous prolonging of the Sit-At-Home order.Likewise, the Presidency should put all personal biases aside and use all the resources and goodwill at its disposal to get to know better the grievances of theIgbo people and Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB)through dialogue and render effective solutions.

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