

THE EFFECTS OF PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF YAR'ADUA'S LEADERSHIP ON STABILITY AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

The political stability and socio-economic development of my state hinge on the competence and effectiveness of the political leadership. Without the support, co-operation and contributions of the populace, leadership becomes a herculean task for the leader. However, the willingness of the populace to support and co-operate with the political leader is dependent on how the governed perceive and assess the quality and character of the leadership. This work is an attempt to use the factors of legitimacy, political will, charisma, political culture, popular participation, political stability and social integration; identified by the respondents as the highpoints for determining the effectiveness and efficiency of the president, to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of President Yar Adua in the face of the mounting public criticism of his administration. Employing the primary research method of direct observation, interviews and questionnaire, the data generated was processed through the theoretical perspective of Leontief's input/output model of analysis, and the findings led to the conclusion that, although the performance rating of the President was below average; the quantum of the activities of his government portends a high index for appreciable development strides.

INTRODUCTION

The need for this paper is informed by the fact that in recent times, the Nigerian media have been awash with statements of popular disaffection and dissatisfaction with the political leadership of President Yar'Adua based on own – performance and absence of leadership direction. There have been calls on the president, especially from the opposition and even elder statesmen; to resign amidst charges of ineptitude and lack of direction. The populace has followed such calls and comments to accuse the president of ill-preparedness to govern the state or not carrying all sections of the polity along. The problem has prompted review of the performance of the president so far; and a visit to the electoral circumstances which brought the president into office as he is being accused of not being the product of the electoral will of the people.

Austin (1982) maintains that any government that would have the moral right to exercise its sovereign will over the people is to be

a product of the will of the people. He argues that if it were not so, the people would rise against the government to bring it down. However, Laski (1983) had submitted that the reaction of the people to the government of their day depends on a number of factors which include: what they feel about the government; how informed they are about the government and her activities; what part they can play in the formation and activities of the government; what the government says it can do for the people; what they feel the government can do etc. He argues that if the populace feels that the government is a good one or is doing well, they are bound to support it. Rourke (2006) is of the view that if the people know a lot about a government, they would identify with the government on the basis of what they know about it to either support it or withhold their support if such knowledge is positive or negative. He argues that if the populace knows little or nothing about a government they are

popular political apathy would make the people uninterested in the government and her activities and it would be difficult for the government to carry the people along nor to achieve the goals it has set for itself. In most instances governments set for themselves the task of satisfying the needs and aspirations of the governed so that it could be seen to be carrying the people along.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical basis of this work shall be the input/output theory of Prof. Leontief Okowa (1997). The theory is a model of the political economy approach to social analysis which examines the effects of the systemic input of variables and their outcome in relation to the expectations there from. According to Leontief, the theory is useful in checking the effectiveness and consistency of the various inputs into a system and the output effects in keeping with the projections and expectations of the impacted target. This theory is better than the input/output theory of Easton which deals with systemic inputs generally. In line with his investigation, the theory will establish the effects of the inputs of the activities and issues of Yar'Adua's government in relation to the expectations and projections of the populace as the impacted recipients of such outputs. Given the political nature of the social expectations for development, it is no gainsaying the fact that this theory is a veritable instrument in the determination of the summary of the response, of the people in their conclusion of their impression of the scope and effect of Yar'Adua's government on the polity.

The objective of this work is therefore to ascertain how the Yar'Adua government has been able to do this and the consequences of that attempt; the people's perception of the effectiveness of the government; the effect of the activities of the government on the stability of the state and how this has contributed to the development which the government desires to achieve; and how such developments can be sustained in the polity. Governance, according to Ochen (1996) is predicated on the tripod of the government, the governed and the issues being addressed by the government. In the views of Egomwan (1998) the issues a government treats are the issues the governed have articulated to it as its needs.

It is very important to come to grips with this and to understand the implication of the role of the government to the governed; the perception of the government by the governed

and the effects of their perception on the effectiveness and activities of the government in achieving its objectives and the sustainable development of the polity. Here lies the significance of this work that it will chart the course of understanding the importance of how the perception of the government by the people would shape and determine the stability of the polity, the scope of development that can be attained by the government and how such development can be sustained (Dahl, 1998). The contribution of this work will therefore enhance the stability of the state; ensure effective governance and make government more responsive and sensitive to the feelings and reactions of the populace. Varma (1998) identifies political leadership as personified by the president or by whatever nomenclature the head of government is known as the pivot for the actualization of policies and programmes of government into concrete signposts of developmental aggregates that satisfy the needs of the populace and meet their expectations.

Suberu (1996) is of the view that the perception of the government ability to meet their needs and satisfy their expectation by populace determines the way they would consider the character and reputation of the government personified by and also (the president) would determine his acceptability; which in turn determines the level of cooperation and followership or rejection and disobedience such a government gets from the populace. In the case of the Nigerian state the people's reactions of approval or disapproval of the government depends on how the government handles or reacts to issues that are front burners in the land; but most imply those areas the president had highlighted in his 7 point agenda.

In Nigeria, these issues range from wealth creation and human capital development; power supply, security; the Niger Delta crisis, the fight against corruption; electoral reforms, and land reforms. How the government reacts to and handles each of these evokes the reactions and impressions of the governed about the political leadership. In all of these, responsibility is placed upon the president to exhibit competence and adequacy in his perception of his position and the powers encompassed in it in handling matters considered front burners; ab initio, by his own assessment and that of the populace.

Almond and Powell (2007) had enumerated certain factors which they consider as the grounds for assessing the effectiveness or

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|-----|-------------------------------------|----|----------------------|
| A. | The Groups 1 – 10 are | B. | The zones 1 – 6 are: |
| 1. | The Political Class (PC) | | South-South |
| 2. | The Working Class (WC) | | South-East |
| 3. | The Women Groups (WG) | | South-West |
| 4. | Market Traders (MT) | | North East |
| 5. | Students (ST) | | North West |
| 6. | The Academic Class (AC) | | North Central |
| 7. | Non Governmental organizations (NG) | | |
| 8. | The Organized Private Sector (PS) | | |
| 9. | The Professional Group (PF) | | |
| 10. | The unemployed person (UP) | | |

The respondents in the 6 zones scored the Political Education effort of the government:

$$56 + 55 + 44 + 50 + 51 + 44 = 300 \div 6 = 50\%$$

Legitimacy of the government:

$$56 + 58 + 48 + 58 + 49 + 43 = 318 \div 6 = 53\%$$

Charisma of the President:

$$36 + 44 + 34 + 50 + 40 + 42 = 246 \div 6 = 41\%$$

Popular participation of the citizenry in government:

$$58 + 50 + 50 + 50 + 52 + 52 = 324 \div 6 = 54\%$$

Political Will of the government:

$$40 + 42 + 46 + 48 + 40 + 48 = 270 \div 6 = 45\%$$

Political Culture in the land:

$$44 + 42 + 44 + 45 + 57 + 50 = 282 \div 6 = 47\%$$

Political Integration:

$$42 + 49 + 60 + 50 + 43 + 50 = 294 \div 6 = 49\%$$

Political stability:

$$46 + 48 + 58 + 53 + 63 + 56 = 324 \div 6 = 54\%$$

Contemporary Relevance of the government:

$$62 + 68 + 58 + 52 + 60 + 66 = 366 \div 6 = 61\%$$

Economic Development effort of the government:

$$54 + 44 + 52 + 44 + 45 + 49 = 288 \div 6 = 48\%$$

This can be represented cyclically as:

RESULT OF THE FINDINGS

The results of the findings show that the assessment of the respondents ranked the contemporary relevance of Yar'Adua's government in terms of global trends of democratization highest with an average of 61%. This is followed by Political stability 54%; Popular participation of the populace in the government 53%; Legitimacy of the government (in terms of being the political will of the people 52%; Political education of the populace by the government 50%; the Economic Development effort of the government 48%; Political integration of the different segments of the polity (in terms of carrying every section along) 49%; creating and sustaining the political culture (of the norms and practices) in conformity with democratic governance 47%; the Political will to govern the state 45% and the Personal Charisma and aura of a president 41%.

A zone by zone summary of the responses of the six geopolitical zones shows that the south-south zone ranked contemporary relevance highest with 62% and the charisma of the president lowest with 36%. The south-east ranked contemporary relevance highest with 68% and grouped political culture and political will lowest with 42% each. The south-west ranked political integration highest with 60% and charisma lowest with 34%. The north-central ranked legitimacy highest with 58%; scoring economic development lowest with 44%. The north-east scored political stability highest with 63% and charisma political will lowest with 40% each. The North West scored contemporary relevance highest with 66% and scored charisma lowest with 42%.

A factor by factor assessment showed that four out of the six zones scored contemporary relevance highest one, out of the six scored political integration highest and one only also scored political stability highest. In the same vein, five out of the six zones rated the president's charisma lowest among the factors. One out of the six rated economic development lowest.

ANALYSIS OF THE FINDINGS

The ratings by the respondents elicit a lot of comments. Whereas the placement of contemporary relevance highest among the factors can be justified by the popular clamour for the democratization of the political; the ranking of political stability in the second place is a surprise considering the serious threat to peace and

stability emanating from the Niger Delta; the Biafra agitations in the South-east; the Oodua peoples congress disturbances in the South-West. The same can also be said of popular participation which occupies the third position; whereas the president is being accused of not carrying everybody and every part of the country along. There have been serious complaints that the president's appointments are not nationally spread both in terms of ethnic configurations and party affiliations. One also can argue that legitimacy is poorly rated in the 4th position as it shall have come second after contemporary relevance since it is the product of a system for which the people have shown a preference for. Another result is subject to argument is the placement of the charisma and political will as the least of the ten factors. The president cannot change his personality and mind set overnight which are the determinants of performance in these factors.

CONCLUSION

A major outcome of these assessments is that the populace should give the president some time. The haste in rushing to conclusions may at the end prove the critics wrong and the president right. For example, the opinion that the administration has failed in all fronts especially in the area of power generation which may set the foundation for economic development may turn out as an unnecessary wrong assessment as the developments on ground with the National integrated Power Project (NIPP) has shown that it is possible for the government to deliver on its promise of 6000mw of electricity by the end of 2009.

Taking these factors together is summed up in a demand that the president should demonstrate evidence of creating the dividends of democracy which he has summed up in his seven points agenda. In his characteristics manner he is going about them slow and steady; although slower and "unsteadier" compared to expectations especially in the area of economic development in terms of serving industrial activities that have been stymied so that productivity can be stimulated to check inflation and create the much needed employment. The criticisms are causing many distractions that even affect the focus of the president.

RECOMMENDATION

The president should be given opportunity and time to put his agenda into

action. The criticisms are noisome and distractive. Also, co-operation and obedience are the bases of acknowledging the legitimacy of a government. Since Yar'Adua's government has been sassed high on legitimacy in this research, it is necessary for his government to be given the co-operation and followership that will give this administration a good health. The contending forces that challenge how things are being done should seek recourse to the rule of law (upon which the government predicates its bearing) by the use of the law-making process which has in recent times demonstrated willingness to assert her independence and hold the executive to act in tandem with legislations. In other words, the agitations and crisis over resources allocation, marginalization and exclusion should be taken to the National Assembly to be legislated upon, and where there are agreeable legislations on them; the National Assembly should bear upon the presidency to enforce and implement them.

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