Bridging social capital and the imperative of leadership development in Nigeria

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Abstract

This paper asserts that there is a nexus between the nature and character of leadership and the stock and genre of social capital in a polity. Specifically, it posits that low levels of bridging social capital (generalised trust) in contemporary Nigeria are reflective of the abysmally low levels of leadership capital possessed by the holders of State power in particular and the political class in general. The paper takes its bearing from the following postulations: First, it asserts that leadership is the central actor in the creation and maintenance of social capital, whether bonding or bridging. Second, it argues that low levels of bridging social capital in post-authoritarian Nigeria is largely due to the inability of the political leadership to engender trust among the diverse people that constitute the State. The low levels of bridging social capital, therefore, have serious negative implications on inter-ethnic and inter-group relations in the country. It concludes that an adherence to the idea of servant leadership would substantially increase the stock of bridging social capital in Nigeria and the spate of identity-related conflicts ravaging the nation (since until now, political leadership has not been able to create generalised trust) would drastically reduce.

Key words: Bridging social capital; contemporary Nigeria; leadership development; servant leadership.

Sumário

Este artigo afirma que existe um ligação entre a natureza e o caráter da liderança e o tipo de capital social em uma política. Afirma que baixos níveis de capital social de ponte (confiança generalizada) na Nigéria contemporânea são reflexo dos níveis abismalmente baixos de capital de liderança possuídos pelos detentores do poder do Estado em particular e da classe política em geral. O artigo baseia-se nas seguintes postulações: Primeiro, afirma que a liderança é o actor central na criação e manutenção do capital social, quer se trate de vínculo ou de ponte; segundo, argumenta que os baixos níveis de ponte de capital social na Nigéria pós-autoritária é em grande parte devido à incapacidade da liderança política para gerar confiança entre as diversas pessoas que constituem o Estado. Os baixos níveis de capital social de ligação, portanto, têm implicações negativas sérias nas relações inter-étnicas e inter-grupos no país. Conclui que a aderência à ideia de liderança servidora aumentaria substancialmente o estoque de capital social de transição na Nigéria e a confusão de conflitos relacionados à identidade que assolam a nação (até agora, a liderança política não conseguiu criar uma confiança generalizada) Reduzir drasticamente.

Palavras-chave: Capital social; Nigéria contemporânea; desenvolvimento de liderança; Liderança servil.

Introduction

The leader occupies a central role as a broker and facilitator of stakeholder relationship and ultimately as enabler of stakeholder social capital. Being embedded in and central to a network of stakeholder relationships, a leader is key in engaging stakeholders, co-opting them to realize a mutually desirable vision and in connecting them for the purpose of responsible change – thereby bridging structural holes. (Maak, 2007 pp. 336-337)

Leadership, be it of an organisation or a nation, has a crucial role to play in bringing people together to work harmoniously in order to achieve the collective goal. Indeed, it is the central actor in the creation and maintenance of the intangible resources or social capital required to wedge together diverse stakeholders to achieve collective goals. As a matter of fact, it has been observed that a responsible and responsive leadership facilitates the creation and maintenance not only of the stock but also the genre of social capital required for the nation's progress and development. Maak (2007 pp. 331-332) emphasises this when he writes that it is a key quality of responsible leaders to act as weaver and broker of social capital as well as contribute significantly to creating a network of complex relationships within an organisation or a nation and its stakeholders.

This is the backdrop against which a critical examination of the nature and character of the leadership of the Nigerian State and its implication on the stock and genre of social capital available in the polity is undertaken. This study posits that the negative outcomes of the in-group and out-group relationships in the country are a result of the inability of the nation's leadership to provide the right leadership. Weak leadership endangers the creation and sustenance of the stock and genre of social capital required to facilitate cooperation and collaboration for the common good among the diverse people that constitute a nation. Thus, this study makes a case for the need for leadership development targeted at raising the idea of servant leadership imbued with the culture of civic nationalism as opposed to the prevalent culture of ethnic nationalism. Ethnic nationalism has a negative impact on the stock of social capital available in the country.

Broadly speaking, this study seeks to interrogate these questions: what are the effects of the low levels of bridging social capital on the sociopolitical and economic fortune of the nation? What can possibly be done to reinvent and transform the nation's leadership to become an agent for the creation and maintenance of the genre of social capital required in a multi-ethnic society such as Nigeria?

Our analysis in this study is developed in five broad parts: The first part of the study shall briefly dwell on the clarification of some key concepts employed in the study, namely, servant leadership, leadership development and bonding/bridging social capital. The second offers an overview of the nature and character of the nation's leadership and its relationship with the low levels of bridging social capital in the country; the third shall discuss the implications of the low levels of bridging social capital on the nation's body politics; the fourth explores how servant leadership can serve as elixir in the creation and maintenance of bridging social capital in multi-ethnic Nigeria. The fifth articulates the imperative of leadership development for the nation's political elite; and the final section presents the conclusions.

Conceptual discourse/key concepts

In this segment, the key concepts that underlie our exposition, namely, servant leadership, social capital, and leadership development, shall be clearly delineated to facilitate our understanding of the central argument.

Servant leadership

In order to have a lucid understanding of the concept of servant leadership, it is imperative that we shed light on the very idea of leadership. Leadership is the most critical factor in determining either an organisation's or a nation's fortune. It has to do with the management of people and resources towards the realisation of the goals and objectives of a group, an organisation or a nation. In fact, the centrality of leadership to the accomplishment of the goals, objectives and promotion of the general well-being of the people of a nation cannot be overemphasised. From whatever perspective we view it, leadership can make all the difference between success and failure in anything we do for ourselves or to any group to which we belong (Abolurin, 2012 p. 3). The fortune of an organisation or a nation is largely a function of the quality of leadership. Indeed, leadership is said to be the essential determinant of development and a core ingredient in organising, mobilising and inspiring societal resources for the attainment of goals (Ajayi, 2004).

Essentially, leadership is the force that inspires and motivates others towards the realisation of the corporate or collective goal of a group, organisation or a nation. A leading authority on leadership captures this when he writes:

> Leadership is leaders acting as well as caring, inspiring and persuading others to act for certain shared goals that represent the values – the wants and needs, the aspirations and expectations – of themselves and the people they represent. And the genius of leadership lies in the manner in which leaders care about, visualize and act, on their own and their follower's values and motivations (Macgregor, cited in Philips, 1997).

Greenleaf first coined the term servant leadership in 1970 in an essay entitled 'The Servant as Leader,' where he describes the servant leader in the following words:

> The servant-leader is servant first... it begins with the natural feelings that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. That one is sharply different from one who is the leader first, perhaps because of the need to assuage an unusual power drive or to acquire material possessions. The leader-first and the servant-first are two extreme types... (Greenleef, 1970).

Characteristically, the servant leader's motive is not to direct the activities of their followers. Instead, the servant leader's behaviour motivates, influences, inspires, and empowers followers to focus on ways to better serve others. It is a humble means for affecting followers' behaviour. Servant leaders rely upon service to establish the purposes for meaningful work and to provide needed resources, including bridging social capital. Servant leadership characteristically exhibits

a unique method for stimulating and influencing the behaviour of others for the accomplishment of the organisation's or a nation's collective goal.

Servant leadership evinces the leadership model that inspires the followership to be committed to the good of others rather to self or the group to which one belongs. The point that is being made here is that a servant leader, through his or her attitudes, behaviours, mores, policies and programmes, in terms of giving priority to serving the followership, inspires the generality of the people to be committed to the promotion of the collective good.

Social Capital

The concept of social capital, theorised by Bourdieu (1993) and Coleman (1988-1990) and popularised by Putnam (1993), represents assets possessed by the collective. This perhaps explains why it is often seen as capital from the social point of view and an endowment of social structure, not individuals (Sidgwich, 1883; Marshall, 1890; Coleman, 1990). The nature of this form of capital was apply captured by Coleman (1988 p. 898) and Paxton (2002 p. 256) when they note that:

> Social capital is explicitly social: thus, it is an asset that resides not in individuals but in the relations between individuals, it is conceptualized as the network of associations, activities or relations that bind people together as a community via certain norms and psychological capacities, notably trust, which are essential of civic society and productive of future collective action or goods in the manner of other forms of capital (James Farr, 2004 p. 9).

Social capital represents intangible assets collectively owned either by a group or community that facilitates and nurtures healthy relationship among individuals in terms of tolerance, trust, belongingness and open-mindedness required for the accomplishment of the collective and common good. Cohen and Prusak 2001 express this when they observe that social capital is the stock of active connection among people: the trust, mutual understanding, shared values and networks that make cooperative action possible. This explains why the concept of social capital is often referred to as social trust. Trust, it must be noted, is a moral resource that enables individuals and groups to cooperate and collaborate for the achievement of common good.

It is instructive to note here that two types of social capital have been identified; namely, bonding and bridging social capital (Putnam, 2001). Bonding social capital facilitates the promotion of cooperation in strong inwardly focused, fairly homogeneous groups. Woolcock (2001) expresses this when he opines that bonding social capital refers to homogeneous relationships with those of similar background and status. Bridging social capital creates and nurtures solidarity and facilitates reciprocity among individuals and groups from diverse background. It represents the social force that promotes cooperative relationships among individuals from diverse ethno-religious and cultural backgrounds. It is a horizontal dimension referring to heterogeneous relationship with more distant friends, relations and colleagues (Woolcock, 2001).

Leadership development

According to Van Velsor and McCauley (2004), leadership development is defined as the expansion of a person's capacity to be effective in leadership roles and processes. It involves the acquisition of knowledge, virtues and mores that enhances the leadership capability in setting direction, creating alignment, and maintaining commitment in groups of people who share common work. It entails the infusion of the leadership with the right values and virtues with a view to strengthening its capacity to deliver and serve as drivers and sustainers of a society's or a nation's collective aspirations and goals.

On the nexus between leadership and the crisis of bridging social capital in contemporary Nigeria

Let us reiterate that leadership is the most important factor in determining a nation's socio-political, economic, environmental and cultural well-being. Indeed, leadership is often regarded as the most critical factor in the success or failure of institutions and nations. It is against this background that this segment explores the nature and character of Nigeria's leadership class with a view to bringing to the fore how it underlies the abysmally low levels of extant bridging social capital in the nation's polity. In other words, this paper seeks to show the relationship between the low levels of Nigeria's leadership capital and the deep-seated distrust and intolerance that characterise the relationship among the diverse ethno-religious groups that constitute the nation. In an interview, Lamidi Olayiwola Adeyemi, one of the foremost traditional rulers in the country, describes the nature of the relationships that exists among the various groups in Nigeria thus:

Our differences define our perception of one another. The distrust is so deep-seated that we have an incongruent group of people rather than compatriots with a shared destiny. Our diversity has become our worst nightmare... After more than 50 years of independence, we are still not more than strange bedfellows forced to cohabit under the same roof. Our co-existence as a people has long been defined by our differences rather than the strength of our diversity (Lamidi Olayiwola Adeyemi, 2014).

The argument here is that the dysfunctional and disenabling social relations among the nation's diverse groups is largely a function of the nature and character of the nation's leadership. An overview of the nature and character of the leadership of the Nigerian state would help to provide an insight into one of the propositions of this paper that the low levels of bridging social capital in contemporary Nigeria is reflective of the abysmally low levels of leadership capital.

In light of the above, the question that looms large is: what are the factors responsible for the inability of the nation's leadership to galvanise the generality of the people of the Nigerian state to place the collective interest of all Nigerians above that of self or group? The truth is that the reasons for this dysfunctional situation are multi-dimensional.

First, the leaders are, to a large extent, ethnically inclined. The truth of the matter is that ethnically inclined leaders, especially in multi-ethnic societies such as Nigeria, cannot but have a profound negative impact on the creation and maintenance of bridging social capital. The

leadership of the Nigerian State, right from the period of independence to contemporary times, is largely predisposed to promoting the interest of members of his or her ethnic origin over and above the others that constitute the nation. The tendency for Nigeria's leadership cadre to prefer and be committed to their ethnic base, it must be noted, was rooted in the pre-independence struggles against colonial rule. The struggles for independence from colonial rule were led by leaders who primarily saw themselves as leaders of their ethnic groups and carried this mindset over to post-colonial Nigeria.

Babawale notes the pivotal role of ethnicity in the making of the Nigerian state. He states:

Historically, the ethnic element has played a dominant role in the Nigerian political process since independence. The political parties of the First and Second Republics reflected the country's geo-ethnic divide. The Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) and the Action Group (AG) were based in the South-west among the Yoruba, the National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC) and the Nigerian People's Party (NPP) in the South-east among Igbo, while the Northern People's Congress (NPC) and the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) were based in the north, predominantly among the Hausa Fulani (Babawale, 2007:33).

The point that is being established is that Nigeria's colonial and post-colonial leaders were and still are largely driven by ethnic considerations in the formation of political parties and the management of the public sphere. To that extent, equity and justice that should be the guiding principles in the exercise of power as well as the distribution of resources are sacrificed on the altar of ethnicity (Paxton, 2002).

Also, there is the aversion of the nation's leadership to the principles of the rule of law and public accountability. Put differently, the Nigeria's political elite lacks the culture of constitutionalism that underlies democratic governance and promotes tolerance and understanding in multi-ethnic societies such as Nigeria. It should be noted that the respect for the rule of law and the idea of public accountability are basic features of democratic governance. Indeed, these elements, when observed in a polity, facilitate the promotion of trust and peaceful co-existence among people of diverse backgrounds. Unfortunately, individuals who are rabidly opposed to the enthronement of due process and public accountability largely constitute the leadership of the Nigerian state. Babawale (2007 p. 49) acknowledges this:

The challenge facing the current civilian dispensation is how to put in place a democracy that is profoundly transformative in the sense of changing the perception of the ruling class about power, changing the character of the Nigerian state, the deposition of the government to the people and the disposition of the political elite to democracy.

Third, the political corruption of the leadership of the Nigerian state is scandalous. The magnitude of corruption in the country is such that, for many, corruption is the guiding principle of governance

in the nation. Commenting on the state of corruption in Nigeria, Pogoson (2009 p. 65) observes:

By 1999, when the Obasanjo administration assumed office, corruption had become pervasive and had eaten deep into the entire fabric of the Nigerian society. Surveys of nations by Transparency International, a Berlin-based non-profit organization, rank Nigeria among the most corrupt country in the world. In 2000, it was ranked the second most corrupt in the world. In 2001, 2002 and 2003, Nigeria was ranked the second most corrupt out of the surveyed. Year in year out, Nigeria's rating on the Corruption Watch Index continues on the upswing, so much so that it has affected the cognitive perception of Nigerians and the country's image among the comity of nations.

The truth of the matter is that 16 years down the democratic path, corruption in Nigeria has assumed alarming proportions. In the most recent release of the Transparency International Corruption Watch Index, the Nigerian state is placed as one of the most corrupt countries on earth. Consequent to this, the Nigerian state is seriously hindered from meeting the needs and promoting the well-being of the generality of the members of the country. This, of course, culminated in citizens looking to their ethno-religious groups for succour and, by implication, cultivating within group trust and networks at the expense of the much required between group solidarity and trust. Aiyede (2006) reflects the disenabling effects of corruption on a nation's polity in general and on social relations in particular when he notes that corruption undermines the legitimacy of government and democratic values of trust and tolerance.

Fourth, which is closely related to the issue of corruption of the leadership of the Nigerian state, is the mismanagement of the nation's resources. This pervades all levels of governance – local, state and federal. Interests outside the purview of collective or common interest largely dictate public policies and programmes that are supposed to be guided by the values and norms of multi-ethnic democracy. In a penetrating analysis of the factors that underlie the allocation of resources in Nigeria, Joseph (1991) contends that two fundamental elements of the sociopolitical system, which affect and often determine the allocation of public goods in Nigeria, are the phenomena of clientelism and prebendalism.

It is instructive to note that decades after the publication of Joseph's work and about 16 years of democratic experimentation, the pattern of distribution of the nation's resources is still hugely devoid of the principles of fairness, social justice, equity, transparency and concern for common good. Thus, the result of this model of distribution of public goods is uneven development, structural discrimination, injustice, oppression and state authoritarianism (Eghosa Osaghae, 2006 p.3). Characteristically, all these gave birth to despondency in the generality of the Nigerian people due to the State not promoting their collective or common interest. Consequently, the generality of the Nigerian people, rather than be enthusiastic about affairs of the 'civic public', become passionate about issues related to their 'primordial public'. This, inevitably, continues to grow the bonding form of social capital at the expense of the bridging form of social capital required in a multi-ethnic Nigerian state.

Fifth and last, the leadership of the Nigerian state is characterised by a lack of vision and commitment to common goals or national interests. It goes without saying that the place of leadership commitment to common goals in the creation and maintenance of generalised trust (bridging social capital) in multi-ethnic societies cannot be overemphasised. Let us at this point state that it takes common goals to turn differences and value conflict and asymmetrical ties into bridging capital (Taylor and Scharlin, 2004). In contemporary Nigeria, the reality is that the greater percentage of the people are not too disposed toward any agenda that is meant to genuinely promote national cohesion and common destiny. They are more disposed toward promoting primordial and ethnic agendas. This, it must be pointed out, is due to the leadership penchant for throwing up the ethnic card to gain access to the state power and ultimately national treasury. This, perhaps, explains why the struggles for who controlled the presidency in 2015 (election year) were largely contested from an ethno-religious viewpoint rather than an ideological one.

Understanding the impacts of the crisis of bridging social capital in contemporary Nigeria

The low levels of bridging social capital in contemporary Nigeria engender devastating effects on the nation's sociopolitical and economic fortunes. The obvious lack of trust among the diverse groups in the country is manifesting in ways that seriously threaten the corporate existence of the Nigerian state.

Intense struggles occur for the control of state power among the various ethnic groups that constitute the county. Competition for power, particularly control of federal power, was and still is being informed by the lack of trust that underlies relationships among the various ethnic groups occupying the geographical entity called Nigeria. Pierre L. van den Berghe articulates the logic behind the competitive mistrust, which underpins the intense struggles for power when he notes:

By and large, people expect members of ethnic groups other than their own to be 'tribalists, i.e. to be biased in favor of their fellow ethnics and against 'strangers'... Most people assume that all others except those in the same circle of intimate (fellow kinsmen, fellow townsmen, or persons linked by patron-client ties) will behave in ways which further the other person's interest at the expense of oneself.

The perception of 'others' as groups that are seeking to undermine or possibly frustrate the realisation of one's group interest, which undergirds the relationship among the various groups in the Nigerian State, was actually at the root of the tension building up as the 2015 general elections in the country approached. The point here is that the intense clamour of the majority of the people from the south-south region for the return of President Goodluck Jonathan's administration to power in 2015 is largely due to the lack of trust in others from other parts of the county to promote their interests. The Hausa-Fulani from the north of the country agitated for the return of power to one of their own for reasons similar to those of the people of the south-south of the country.

Lately, however, there appears to be a consensus that power be rotated between the northern and the southern parts of the country. It is instructive to point out that the whole idea of power rotation as a way of promoting inclusiveness and belongingness of all stakeholders is indeed a clear testimony and a key framework for analysing and establishing the reality of low levels of generalised trust among the various groups in Nigeria. The point is that state powers are scarcely deployed to promote collective national interests in contemporary Nigeria. Eghosa Osaghae (2006 p.9), in his analysis of the end to which state power is made to serve in Africa, posits that "rather than be relatively autonomous, states in Africa have been captured and used by ethnic forces to further narrow ethnic agendas, including genocide".

Moreover, the identity related conflicts in virtually all parts of the Nigerian state are largely as a result of the very low levels of bridging social capital in the country. The degree of identity related conflicts in contemporary Nigeria are exacerbated by the proclivity of the nation's political elite to employ ethnic mobilisation to either gain access to power or to exclude other groups from it. It must be emphasised that ethnic mobilisation characteristically deepens differences and increases the risk of full-blown ethnic conflict. In this regard, Manuel Vogt (2014) observes that: 'ethnic mobilization exacerbated the existing competition, compromising ethnic equality and increasing the risk of violent conflict'. The reality is that the Nigerian State is a very good example of a multi-ethnic state that is being crippled by inter-group hostility and mistrust. This obviously is as a result of the paucity of the stock of bridging social capital available in the polity.

The abysmally low levels of bridging social capital also impact negatively on the quality of public policies and national discourse. Following deep seated mistrust among the groups in the country, public policies, more often than not, are designed and executed not with a view to promoting even development, justice and equity, but to further strengthening the prevalent hegemonic and oppressive domination of one group over the others. A very good example of state policy that was informed by ethnic consideration and prebendalism was the issue of state creation. Too many states, the bulk of which were not viable, had been created. Indeed, it was in response to this demand that the just concluded national conference recommended the creation of eighteen additional states. The reality of the situation is that groups demand states because they feel that their interests cannot be advanced within the existing state structure. This undoubtedly is a reflection of the growing bonding social capital as opposed to the increasingly depleted bridging social capital, which the Nigerian state actually requires.

Finally, it must be emphasised that the low levels of bridging social capital in contemporary Nigeria is posing a very serious challenge to the consolidation of the nation's fledgling democratic governance. It should be stated that the place of social capital in the flourishing of democratic process couldn't be overemphasised. Social capital can help to create democracy in a country that is not democratic. Alternatively, it can help to maintain or improve an already existing democracy (Pamela Paxton, 2000 p. 287). However, the potentiality of social capital to create and nurture democracy is both a function of the genre of social capital and the ethno-religious and sociopolitical configuration of a society. For example, nationalist groups within the framework

of a multi-ethnic state are likely to exacerbate societal cleavages and interfere with democratic consolidation (Pamela Paxton, 2000 p. 255).

There is an upsurge of ethnic/nationalist groups due to the low levels of bridging social capital in contemporary Nigeria. The point is that these groups have characteristically undermined social cohesion and multi-ethnic democratic values such as tolerance, solidarity and belongingness. Consequently, the nation's democratic process, rather moving towards consolidation, is manifesting negative signals, suggesting the possibility of democratic reversal to authoritarianism. There was tension in the country while the nation prepared for a general election in 2015, obviously because of struggles over which of the ethnic groups should control the centre where the buck of the nation's resources are dispensed.

Given the above, the question that looms large is how do we reinvent the nation's leadership and what form of leadership has the characteristics to engender trust and promote belongingness among the diverse groups that constitute the nation? The next segment of the paper provides an answer to this question.

Servant leadership, bridging social capital and the imperative of leadership development in contemporary Nigeria

The leadership of a nation is critical to the creation and maintenance of bridging social capital, which is a social asset that is relevant to the promotion of national cohesion, stable peace and the proper functioning and flourishing of democracy in multi-ethnic societies. Indeed, it is axiomatic to posit that contemporary Nigeria is in dire need of a leadership that characteristically exhibits features that could elicit trust and solidarity among the diverse peoples of the nation.

Our argument in this paper is that a servant leadership is what the contemporary Nigeria requires to turn the fortunes of the nation around and engender generalised trust among the over 250 ethnic groups in the country. But before we discuss how this form of leadership can evolve, let us shed light on the importance of bridging social capital to the enthronement of stable sociopolitical and economic development in a polity.

First, bridging social capital creates the opportunity for better understanding among people of diverse religious, ideological combined with cultural backgrounds. Consequently, it facilitates cooperation and collaboration among diverse groups for the achievement of common or collective good. In fact, a multi-ethnic society can hardly function productively without the availability of reasonable stock of this genre of social capital. It is a necessary foundation for the flourishing of a multi-cultural society.

Moreover, bridging social capital is critical to the development of the ingredients of a multi-ethnic democracy, that is, tolerance, power sharing, justice, fairness, accountability and equity. It goes without saying that the contemporary Nigerian state, more than any other time, is in dire need of these values to strengthen her fledgling democratic process. In fact, one could safely argue that these values are invaluable ingredients and vital to the establishment of national cohesion and

social order in a multi-ethnic society. We must add that intolerance, injustice and lack of equity are some of the reasons for the failure of leadership of the Nigerian State to forge a national vision that could encapsulate the collective interests and aspirations of the generality of the Nigerians. This clearly explains why it was difficult to arrive at a consensus on how decisions were to be adopted at the recently concluded national conference set up by President Jonathan.

Furthermore, bridging social capital contributes to the promotion of constitutionalism and participatory democracy in a multi-ethnic society. This is due to the availability of the values characteristically dispensed by generalised trust, such as belongingness and solidarity, which facilitate cooperation among diverse groups that exist in a polity. These values characteristically encourage people's participation in collective or common good, which ultimately deepen constitutionalism and the democratic processes in general. Where there is lack of trust among the citizenry of a nation, the levels of commitment to the common good and the governance process is naturally very poor. In fact, in a polity where the relationship among the various groups is characterised by suspicion and mistrust, the tendency is for groups in the polity to seek to undermine each other and ultimately grind down the smooth running of the governance. This appears to be the case in contemporary Nigeria. Against this background, we could posit that the importance of bridging social capital to the consolidation of Nigeria's fledging democratic process in particular, and the transformation of the nation in general, cannot be overemphasised. Having established the centrality of a nation's leadership to the creation and maintenance of bridging social capital in a polity, there is the need to provide an overview of the nature and character of Nigeria's leadership class.

First and foremost, it must be emphasised that the crisis of leadership in Nigeria has become endemic. It could be argued that the Nigerian State has never had a responsible, dynamic and committed leadership since her independence from colonial rule. The Nigerian state, from the first democratic experiment in 1960 to military regimes and back to democracy as practice today, has been managed by leaders who are selfish and corrupt (Joseph C. Ebegbulem, 2009).

Consequently, it is imperative that Nigeria's leadership class be reinvigorated to serve as an agent of positive change and creator of bridging social capital. The truth is that there is the need to solve the leadership problem in Nigeria where people who know next to nothing about leadership are now in a leadership position... (David Oyedepo, 2014). The point being advanced here is that before the diverse people that constitute the Nigerian State cooperate and collaborate for the achievement of collective good, there is the need to consciously and conscientiously build the capacity of the nation's leadership class with a view not only to divesting them of divisive values and tendencies and investing them with values that promote integration and cooperation of the Nigerian people, but also to imbue in the nation's leadership the values and ethos of servant leadership.

In a nutshell, this paper avows the premium leadership development that is targeted at raising leaders that would be guided by the collective interest of the generality of the Nigerians. The Nigerian State requires leadership that is, above every other consideration, committed to serving

the people rather than being served. A servant leader, characteristically, is driven by passion to improve the well-being of the generality of the people, rather than that of any particular ethno or religious group. This leadership variant, undoubtedly, would galvanise people, irrespective of ethno-religious backgrounds, to cooperate and collaborate to promote mutual and collective interest.

Conclusions

The tension and apprehension with respect to the 2015 general elections and the unhealthy competition and rivalry about who occupied the presidential seat, coupled with the violence ravaging the Nigerian State, undoubtedly were largely due to the very low levels of generalised trust (bridging social capital) available in the nation's polity. This disenabling and dysfunctional state, we argued, was brought into being as a result of the inability of the nation's leadership to infuse Nigeria's body politics with multi-ethnic democratic values and virtues of belongingness and solidarity, which characteristically promote cooperation among ethno-religious and social groups that constitute the nation.

Given the preponderance of bonding social capital in the nation's politics largely due to the character and nature of the ruling elite, it is imperative that Nigeria's leadership class be reinvented to become agents for promotion of the much needed bridging social capital. We argue that the reinvention of the nation's leadership cadre can be achieved through a strategic leadership development programme focused at raising leaders who are committed to serving the generality of Nigerians rather than members of their ethnic or religious group. It is this kind of leadership, we submit, that can engender trust and substantially increase the levels of bridging social capital required to promote consensual politics, governmental efficiency, and dynamic interaction among the various groups and social order in multi-ethnic Nigeria.

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