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Leadership as Rocket Science and Descent of the Nigerian Nation to the State of Nature

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ABSTRACT

This research article delves into the intricate interplay between leadership complexities and the sociopolitical regression of the Nigerian nation, drawing parallels to the metaphor of rocket science and the state of nature theory. The study dissects the root causes of Nigeria's descent into a state of nature characterized by institutional decay, socio-economic disparities, and governance deficits. By examining contemporary leadership practices in the country, the research uncovers systemic failures in leadership selection, decision-making processes, and accountability mechanisms that have collectively contributed to the nation's tumultuous development-journey. The study invokes the state of nature theory, first conceptualized by political philosophers, to highlight the erosion of social contracts and the erosion of citizens' trust in institutions. The cascading effects of inadequate leadership on national cohesion, economic development, and societal well-being are explored in the paper. The article offers a plausible framework to comprehend the intricate web of leadership dynamics that have propelled the Nigerian nation toward a state resembling the hypothetical "state of nature." The analysis underscores the urgency for transformative leadership reforms, institutional overhauls, and civic engagement to arrest the declining trajectory and to foster a sustainable ascent toward prosperity and stability.

Keywords: National Leadership in Nigeria, Rocket Science as Metaphor, Nigerian Nation, Leadership in Nigeria, State of Nature, State of Nature Theory

1. INTRODUCTION

The Nigerian nation endowed with abundant resources and cultural diversity, presents a pertinent case study to explore the intricate interplay between leadership complexities and sociopolitical regression. Over the years, Nigeria has grappled with systemic challenges, ranging from rampant corruption and inadequate governance structures, to escalating ethnic tensions and socio-economic disparities [1]. As the nation's trajectory has veered toward multifaceted insecurity, scholars and observers have sought to unravel the underlying factors contributing to this descent. The allegorical comparison of leadership to rocket science offers a metaphorical platform to dissect the intricacies of effective governance, while the state of nature theory provides a philosophical backdrop against which to assess the nation's departure from an idealized social contract.

This research endeavors to synthesize these disparate yet interconnected concepts, presenting an interdisciplinary exploration that amalgamates insights from leadership studies, political philosophy and public administration. By illuminating the complexities of leadership through metaphor of rocket science, this research aims to dissect the fundamental flaws in Nigeria's leadership selection, decision-making processes, and accountability mechanisms. Concurrently, the examination of the nation's decline through the state of nature theory provides a lens to scrutinize the erosion of trust in institutions, the erosion of social cohesion, and the fragmentation of the social contract that underpins societal stability.

The overarching objective of this study is to bridge the gap between the unfilled notions of leadership and the tangible manifestations of its consequences on a nation's trajectory. By exploring the Nigerian context, this research aspires to contribute to the broader discourse on leadership effectiveness and its pivotal role in shaping the destiny of nations. In doing so, it endeavors to provide both a theoretical framework and practical insights that may inform policy initiatives, institutional reforms and civic-engagement efforts to steer Nigeria away from its current trajectory toward a more cohesive, prosperous, and stable future.

2. EXPLICATING LEADERSHIP

Leadership, as a concept and practice, is a cornerstone of human society, driving progress, influencing outcomes, and shaping the trajectories of individuals, organizations, and nations [2]. It embodies a complex interplay of behaviors, traits, and decisions that guide and inspire others toward common goals. Leadership is exhibited through diverse styles, such as transformational, transactional, servant, and autocratic leadership styles. Each style reflects varying levels of emphasis on motivation, communication, decision-making, and collaboration. Effective leaders often display traits like empathy, resilience, decisiveness, and adaptability.

These traits enable them to connect with their followers, navigate uncertainties, and steer their teams toward success. Leadership is closely tied to influence and power [3]. Leaders leverage their influence to motivate, persuade, and guide others. Then the ethical use of power is critical in fostering trust and achieving collective goals. Leaders provide a vision that inspires and guides their followers. Articulating a clear direction helps align efforts and mobilize resources toward a common purpose.

Leaders often grapple with intricate decisions that have far-reaching consequences. Balancing short-term needs with long-term goals requires astute judgment and an understanding

of systemic implications. Rapid changes in technology, globalization, and societal norms demand leaders who can adapt and guide their teams through uncertainty and ambiguity. Furthermore, in today's interconnected world, leaders must navigate diverse teams, understanding and valuing varied perspectives to foster inclusivity and innovation. Leaders actually face ethical challenges, needing to uphold principles while making tough choices in morally grey areas. Maintaining integrity is vital to sustaining trust in leadership [4].

Within organizations, effective leadership correlates with enhanced productivity, employee satisfaction, and innovation. Strong leadership fosters a positive organizational culture that attracts and retains talent. Visionary leaders drive social movements and advocate for change, from civil rights to environmental sustainability. Their influence extends beyond their immediate sphere of control. Political leaders shape policies, governance structures, and international relations, influencing the development and stability of nations. Leadership experiences contribute to personal growth, enhancing communication skills, emotional intelligence, and problem-solving abilities.

The intricate tapestry of leadership weaves together diverse styles and behavioral traits that catalyze influential decisions and, as leaders navigate challenges, their actions ripple through organizations, societies, and history. However, the focus of this contribution is national leadership

2. 1. Elucidating National Leadership

National leadership is a multifaceted and pivotal concept that pertains to the individuals, policies, and strategies that guide a nation's direction, development, and governance. It encompasses the roles, responsibilities, and decisions of those who hold influential positions within a country's political, social, and economic landscape. National leaders play a crucial role in shaping the present and future of their nation by formulating and executing policies, fostering unity, and addressing the needs and aspirations of their citizens. National leaders often articulate a vision for their country's future. This vision outlines the desired path for development, progress, and societal well-being. Goals related to economic growth, social equity, infrastructure development, and international relations are set to realize this vision. National leaders are responsible for crafting policies that address various aspects of the nation's functioning, including healthcare, education, economy, security, and environment. Implementing these policies effectively requires strategic planning, collaboration, and adaptation to changing circumstances [5].

National leaders must make critical decisions that impact the nation's trajectory.

These decisions can range from economic policies and diplomatic relations to crisis management and resource allocation. They serve as the face of their country on the global stage. They engage in diplomacy, negotiations, and international cooperation to advance the nation's interests and contribute to global affairs. Effective national leaders work to unite diverse populations, bridge societal divisions, and promote a sense of shared identity and purpose among citizens [5]. They are accountable to their citizens for their actions and decisions. Transparency in governance ensures that citizens are informed about the government's activities and the reasons behind policy choices.

Leading a nation involves managing intricate socioeconomic systems, diverse populations, and competing interests, requiring leaders to balance a wide array of considerations. National leaders often face moral dilemmas where they must weigh the greater good against individual or special interests, navigating through ethical complexities.

Citizens have varied expectations from their leaders, making it challenging to satisfy everyone's demands while making tough choices [6]. National leaders also must navigate a complex web of international relations, trade agreements, and geopolitical dynamics that impact their nation's standing on the global stage. The impact of national leadership is demonstrated by development and progress. Effective leadership contributes to a nation's economic growth, social development, and technological advancement. Sound leadership fosters domestic stability, ensuring citizens' safety and protection.

National leaders influence their country's reputation, alliances, and engagement with the global community. Decisions and policies of leaders can leave a lasting impact on their nation's history and future trajectory. In essence, national leadership encapsulates the process of guiding a collective vision toward prosperity, harmony, and progress. Effective national leaders inspire, strategize, and collaborate to propel their nation forward while addressing the challenges that come their way.

3. AN EXPOSE ON THE STATE OF NATURE

The concept of the "state of nature" is a fundamental idea in both philosophy and political theory. It explores the hypothetical scenario of human existence without the presence of organized society, government, or established laws.

This concept has been extensively discussed by various philosophers, particularly during the Enlightenment era. It gained prominence during the Enlightenment period with thinkers like Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Hobbes, in his work "Leviathan" (1651), depicted the state of nature as a state of perpetual conflict and chaos. He famously described it as a "war of all against all." In the absence of authority and government, individuals' natural desires for self-preservation would lead to a life marked by insecurity and violence [7]. Hobbes argued that to escape these state, individuals would willingly enter into a social contract, surrendering some of their natural rights to a sovereign authority in exchange for protection and order.

John Locke, in his work "Two Treatises of Government" (1689), presented a more optimistic view of the state of nature. He believed that in this state, individuals would have natural rights to life, liberty, and property. Unlike Hobbes, Locke believed that people would generally be capable of governing themselves and respecting each other's rights. However, he acknowledged that conflicts might arise; leading people to establish a government to impartially protect these rights and resolve disputes [8]. Rousseau, in "The Social Contract" (1762), emphasized the idea of the "noble savage." He suggested that in the state of nature, humans were initially innocent and free, living in harmony with nature and their instincts. It was the advent of private property that led to inequality, social conflict, and the need for governance. Rousseau proposed a social contract that preserved individual freedom while creating a collective "general will" that represents the common good [9].

Essentially, the concept of the state of nature serves as a thought experiment to explore the origins of political authority, the role of government, and the nature of human beings. It is important to note that this is a hypothetical scenario, and historical evidence suggests that pre-societal human existence was likely more nuanced than what these philosophers described. Critics argue that these philosophical depictions oversimplify the complexities of human behavior and ignore cultural, historical, and psychological factors that shape societies [10].

Additionally, the concept of the state of nature often serves as a theoretical foundation for various political ideologies, and interpretations can vary widely. Fundamentally, the state of nature is a philosophical and theoretical concept that explores human existence without organized governance. Philosophers like Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau used this concept to develop their ideas about the origins of government, societal structure, and the relationship between individual freedom and collective order.

4. HOW LEADERSHIP BECAME ROCKET SCIENCE IN NIGERIA

In metaphorical terms, rocket science is an intimidating complexity, a nonconcrete and impenetrable engagement, something only the gods or at best the prodigies of this world may attempt to confront unsuccessfully. It is in this context that leadership has become rocket science in Nigeria. It is reemphasized in this section of the paper that the focus is on national leadership. As already posited above, the essence of national leadership is demonstrated by progress and development.

National leadership sums up the process of guiding a collective vision in a nation toward progress, prosperity and national harmony. After nearly sixty three years of independence from the former colonial masters (Great Britain) in 1960, progress, prosperity and national harmony cannot plausibly be ascribed to the Nigerian state as accomplishments [11]. Contemporary Nigeria is objectively characterized by chaos, retrogression, destitution and distress [12]. How did the country arrive at this point?

It is principally because, the ostensive national leaders at independence in 1960, were patently ill-prepared for the duties of national leadership. On the contrary, they conceived of national leadership as victory. They saw it as triumph over the departing colonial masters and opportunity to subjugate their sundry domestic enemies.

The historical fallout of this antecedent is multifaceted leadership mumbo jumbo. Successive national leaders in the country have been products of the resultant national leadership gibberish and the nation eventually finds itself at the juncture where national leadership is now rocket science.

5. CONTEMPORARY SCENARIOS OF THE NATIONAL STATE OF NATURE

The Abject Poverty of Teeming Number of Nigerians

Let it be noted in the first place that official statistics that emanate from Nigeria are in the manner of open secrets usually fabricated by the issuing public servants as truths [13]. In such regards, what is usually released on annual bases as the poverty rate in the country is egregiously inaccurate as evidenced by empirical realities. However, the nation's National Bureau of Statistics in NBS (2022) discloses as follows:

Sixty-three percent of people (133 million) are multidimensionally poor. Multidimensional poverty is higher in rural areas, where 72% of people are poor, compared to 42% of people in urban areas. Approximately 70% of Nigeria's population lives in rural areas and 30% in urban areas. Yet rural areas are home to 80% of people living in poverty, and the intensity of their poverty is also higher, at 42% in rural areas compared to 37% in urban areas (see Table 1)

Table 1. Multidimensional poverty by area in Nigeria

Area	MPI	Incidence (H, %)	Intensity (A, %)	Population Share (%)	Number of poor people (million)
National	0.257	62.9	40.9	100	132.32
Rural	0.302	72.0	41.9	69.6	105.98
Urban	0.155	42.0	36.9	30.4	26.94

Source: National Bureau of Statistics (2022)

In practical terms, the rural areas are close to nature. So the poor in Nigeria are close to the state of nature (intended and unintended puns). The reality is that poverty is real in Nigeria and is not fully reflected in the officialese of government functionaries. Poverty and anger have ways of being intertwined although anger is not totally justifiable by poverty. Poor and hungry Nigerians are angry and that partly explains the scales of bestiality in the country which is also a function of the scenario under which leadership is interpreted as rocket science.

Incidences of National Bestialities

There is no type of crime that is not reported in the Nigerian media on daily bases [14] and social media also facilitates the reportage of such occurrences on real time dimensions [15]. People are endlessly kidnapped for ransoms and their heads cut-off eventually [16]. Because leadership is rocket science in the country, the police are overwhelmed by such developments [17].

Paradoxically, the police in Nigeria also kill people at will and the murderous officers are truly never held accountable for their crimes and punished as the applicable law demands [18]. Citing Human Rights Watch (2007), Onwunyirimadu [19] posited that within June and September 2007, the Nigerian Police had killed more than 785 people while the true number of people killed by the Police between 2000 and 2007 might have exceeded 10,000. On the odious flipside of these interrogations, police escorts of those leaders who conceive of leadership as rocket science are frequently ambushed and practically all the members of the police team killed by killers that are never arrested [20].

Sundry terrorist and quasi-terrorist groups are on the loose in the country, killing and maiming in large numbers. These include the dreaded Boko Haram Group in Northern Nigeria, the ones called Fulani Herdsmen that contextually originated in the North with murderous spread everywhere in the nation.

And there are the ones variously described either as Unknown Gunmen, Eastern Security Network, etc; but based in the eastern part of the country. Then the western part seems to be the den of the kill-and-go kidnappers. In all these instances, blood keeps flowing from the activities of the groups, akin to what could have only been obtainable under the state of nature. Presented below in Table 2 is an intentional homicide statistics to illustrate the current level of killings in Nigeria.

Table 2. Intentional Homicides (Per 100,000 People)

Country	Most Recent Year	Most Recent Value
Netherlands	2021	1
New Caledonia	2009	3
New Zealand	2019	3
Nicaragua	2021	11
Niger	2012	4
Nigeria	2019	22
North Macedonia	2019	1
Northern Mariana Islands	-	-
Norway	2021	1
Oman	2021	0
Pakistan	2021	4
Palau	2018	11

Source: Authors' Compilation from <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/vc.ihr.psrc.p5>

The above data was randomly (purposely) selected from the above mentioned World Bank sources. From the global list, alphabetically and vertically standing, five countries were before and after Nigeria (placed at the middle). Nigeria presented an Intentional Homicides (per 100,000 people) figure of 22. Oman had zero, others reported from 1-11 as their intentional homicide per 100, 000 persons positions. As at 2019 when Nigeria made available the country's statistics, homicide cases in the Nigerian state had not become as worrisome as they are in today's Nigeria. By the way, it is not very clear why the Nigerian authorities do not usually release crime statistics on yearly bases. In any case, it is one additional illustration of how such issues are integral to the rocket science thesis of this contribution. Production of accurate and timely crime statistics is also rocket science in the country.

The nation of Nigeria may not essentially be among the most dangerous countries in the world but it patently gives the indication of a location where national leadership is giving up on security issues (Human security issues). It used to be the case that the affluent members of the society either provided themselves the needed security from their own resources or used their connections with the state authorities to personalize the services of the police and other security personnel to serve them and their family and other dependents.

This is no longer overtly in vogue in the country. The ubiquitous killers of today, when they strike, they spare no one at sight. This is a reality of the state of nature in contemporary Nigeria.

The Incidence of Decayed Infrastructure

What quickly comes to mind on this score is road infrastructure. There are very deep gullies at the middle of express roads in Nigeria. In different parts of the country, from east to west, north to south, commuter vehicles and heavy duty trucks frequently plunge into such chasms. Building of durable roads is also rocket science in Nigeria. For each good road that is projected on international television as representative of the standard of life in prosperous Nigeria, there are a hundred others that are death traps and potential scenes of mass destruction, potential hotspots for armed gangs' operations and locations from where floods carry everything that comes its way to the point of "no-return" [21].

Overcrowded Urban and Semi-Urban Settlements Devoid of Infrastructure

As Nigeria's population increases astronomically, the urban and semi-urban settlements are witnessing large influxes of people. But it is not the influx of people that is the problem; the critical issues have to do with the dearth of infrastructure and social services in these locations. Water and electricity are sheer luxuries in these places [22]. The continuing incapability of Nigerians to generate and distribute the minimal level of electricity for adequate domestic services has become well documented. In most of these places there is total darkness at night in the 21st century. Well-lit sections of such places at night are totally negligible. The rest of the segments of all these areas present correct pictures at night that remind observers of the philosophical state of nature. Providing these services and amenities is also rocket science.

Ubiquitous Corruption

Lexically speaking, the synonyms for corruption include: dishonesty, depravity, exploitation, sleaze, bribery, fraud, venality, perversion, immorality, harm, debasement, degeneracy and vice. Truthfully speaking, these are the characteristics of life in that state of nature created by Hobbes, Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. The quantum of lay and scholarly literature that has been produced on corruption in Nigeria is in the egregious dimension. There appears to be a critically cultural dimension to corruption in Nigeria [23]. Despite all pretenses to the contrary or divergences in opinion, the generic Nigerian system seems to tolerate corruption [24]

Universities on Merry-Go-Round

When some Nigerian public institutions are described as universities, it only forms part of the Nigerian way of doing things. National leaders, all stakeholders in education, university administrators, knowledgeable students on campus and nearly everyone involved, operate in full awareness of the reality, that what obtains in the place is not functional university education. Decayed infrastructure, dilapidated roads, monumentally overcrowded and ill-ventilated classrooms are all features of such places [25]. The poverty levels in such locations are unimaginable and unbearable. The putative universities totally lack electricity and water in the areas where academic work takes place and in the domestic zones where students and staff reside. Effective existence of such institutions in the country has also become rocket science.

Then quite frequently, the national university teachers' union embarks on strike actions that incessantly disrupt the schools' calendars [26]. As soon as the students are back on campus, examinations are written and they are graduated for another set of students to begin to enroll in the merry-go-round system of strike actions. Life in the putative university locations are awfully characterized by chaos and disorder [27]. This finally illuminates the scenarios of descent to the state of nature in Nigeria, as the central reality of how the Nigerian nation-state trudges on to an unknown destination.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The exploration of leadership within the metaphorical framework of "Leadership as Rocket Science" and its application to understanding the contextual descent of the Nigerian nation into a state of nature, offers profound insights into the complexities of governance and social order. The case study of the Nigerian nation serves as a sobering reminder of the potential consequences of leadership failures and institutional breakdowns. The state of nature, envisioned by philosophers like Hobbes, resonates as a cautionary tale in the context of Nigeria's challenges, a state characterized by disorder, insecurity, and the erosion of fundamental rights and values. The erosion of trust in institutions, the absence of a shared vision, and the neglect of the common good have contributed to the country's gradual descent into a state resembling the hypothetical state of nature. To address this descent and restore the trajectory toward a prosperous and harmonious society, it is imperative for Nigeria to reevaluate its leadership landscape. Effective leadership requires meticulous planning, visionary guidance, adaptable strategies, and above all, a commitment to the welfare of the populace. By fostering a culture of transparent and accountable governance, nurturing the growth of capable leaders, and fostering collaboration among diverse stakeholders, Nigeria can reverse its trajectory and emerge from the metaphorical state of nature.

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