

THE CABAL METAPHOR AND GOVERNANCE DEFICIT IN NIGERIA’S DEMOCRACY

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ABSTRACT

This study is designed to establish the nexus between the Cabal metaphor in the Presidency and Governance deficit in Nigeria’s democracy. The central argument in the study is that weak political leadership at the Presidency creates a lacuna in governance. This lacuna in turn throws up a Cabal that surreptitiously hijacks the day to day administration of the government while, ostensibly acting in the President’s name. Using the Capture Theory of Politics as a theoretical framework, the study argues that once a Cabal captures the soul of the Presidency, the President loses control of governance. Actions taken in his name even without his knowledge are presented to the public as having Presidential endorsement; reduced to a lame duck, the ship of state flounders. Being a qualitative study, data was generated through documentary method and analyzed using content analysis. The study recommends that for the Cabal contraption to be eliminated from the Presidency, the President has to demonstrate strong leadership by being in effective control of his government. With this done, no lacuna will be left for Cabals to exploit.

Keywords: Cabal, Governance deficit, Presidency, Leadership, Democracy.

Introduction

The terms Cabal and Governance are two concepts that often feature in political discourse among academics, politicians, Civil Society and the general public in Nigeria especially when democracy is the focus of discussion. The meaning and interpretation given to each of them varies according to the perspective of the discussants.

The word Cabal is derived from the esoteric Hebrew word “Kabbalah” meaning a received doctrine, a cult or secret society with mystical powers and often insidious influence (Kwiatkowski, 2010; Albert, 2012). The term is also believed to have gathered its

contemporary momentum from the supposed secretiveness and lack of responsibility of five Privy Councilors who formed the Committee for Foreign Affairs to King Charles 11 of England, Scotland and Ireland from 1668 to circa 1674. The five of them were Sir Thomas Clifford, Lord Arlington, the Duke of Buckingham, Lord Anthony Ashley, and Lord Lauderdale. The initials of the five of them coincidentally spelt **CABAL** (Albert, 2012). They were so labeled primarily because of the problem the people faced coming to terms with the powers of British royalty being exercised by five powerful individuals.

Although there seems to be no universally accepted definition of Governance when used in political literature, the International Centre for Parliamentary Studies (2010) posits that the concept is owed to Plato, the Greek philosopher who is reputed to be the first to use the Greek word “Kubernao”, meaning to steer a ship, metaphorically, in the context of steering men. The centre states that over time, the concept assumed a generic meaning, encapsulating the nexus between stakeholders in multiple set ups.

Scholars and institutions across the globe have given different definitions, some of which we will restate here. Pierre (2002) states that “governance refers to sustaining coordination and coherence among wide range of actors with different purposes and objectives”. Such actors according to him may include political actors and institutions, interest groups, civil society, NGO’s and transnational organizations. The key words in this definition are coordination and coherence and which of course have to be sustained. This definition brings to the fore, elements of governance that draws it closer to the concept of administration.

In his own account, Hirst (2000) defined governance as “the means by which an activity or ensemble of activities is controlled or directed, such that it delivers an acceptable range of outcomes according to some established standard”. Implied in this definition is the issue of service delivery. It is when this qualification is brought to bear on the definition that people begin to apply value judgments to governance leading to such qualifiers as “good governance” and “bad governance”.

Canada’s Institute of Governance (2002) on the other hand, asserts that “governance is the process whereby societies or organizations make important decisions, determine whom they

involve and how they render account”. In this definition, we could see there is an expectation of accountability as a deliverable of governance.

Two multilateral institutions namely the World Bank and United Nations Development Program (UNDP) have also given definitions of governance that are quite similar. First, World Bank (1993) defined governance as “the method through which power is exercised in the management of a country’s political, economic and social resources for development”. While UNDP (1997) states that “governance is the exercise of economic, political and administrative authority to manage a country’s affairs at all levels”. It further states that it comprises the mechanisms, processes and institutions, through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations and mediate their difference.

Probably because the UNDP definition was endorsed by the UN Secretary General’s Inter-Agency Sub-task force to promote integrated responses to UN conferences and summits, it has become the globally accepted definition of governance and the most often cited in the extant literature. The UN went a step further to qualify governance by introducing the concept of good governance. It identified eight characteristics of good governance. These are participatory; consensus-oriented; accountable; transparent; responsive; effective and efficient; equitable and inclusive and which follows the rule of law. What this presupposes is that when these characteristics are lacking either in whole or in part, then there is a deficit. It is in this context that we have appropriated the phrase governance deficit in this study.

Having explicated the concepts of Cabal, Governance and Governance Deficit, the question that naturally arises is: what is the relationship between the Cabal Metaphor in Nigeria’s Presidency and Governance deficit in Nigeria’s democracy? That is the puzzle this study seeks to unravel. The paper is divided into five sections. Section one is this introductory part. In section two, we will articulate the theoretical framework that guides the study. The focus of section three would be on the civilian administrations of President Shehu Shagari, Olusegun Obasanjo, Umaru Musa Yar’Adua/Goodluck Jonathan and the present government of Muhammadu Buhari. Section four discusses the nexus between the Cabal Metaphor and

Governance Deficit and how this weakens democracy in Nigeria. We conclude in section five with our recommendations.

Theoretical Framework

We adopted Regulatory Capture Theory as our framework of analysis. The theory was propounded in 1971 by George Stigler, a Nobel Laureate Economist at the University of Chicago, USA. Regulatory Capture also known as Economic Theory of Regulation states that regulatory agencies may come to be dominated by the industries or interests they are charged with regulating. The result is that the agency which is charged with acting in public interest, instead acts in ways that benefit the industry it is supposed to be regulating.

Stigler noted that regulated industries maintain a keen and immediate interest in influencing regulators whereas ordinary citizens are less motivated. In many cases, the regulators themselves come from the pool of industry experts and employees who then return to work in the industry after their government service. This is a version of the system known as the revolving door between public and private interests. In some instances, industry leaders trade the promise of future jobs for regulatory consideration, making revolving doors criminally corrupt.

Stigler further states that Regulatory Agencies that come to be controlled by the industries they are charged with regulating are known as Captured Agencies. Eventually, a captured public-interest agency operates essentially as an advocate for the industries it regulates. Such cases may not be directly corrupt; rather the regulators simply begin thinking like the industries they regulate, due to heavy lobbying.

Other scholars of the Regulatory Capture persuasion who have contributed in advancing the frontiers of the theory include Nash (2010), Thierer (2010) Wilson (2001) and Onuoha (2008). For Nash, a significant insight emerging from Capture Theory is that a regulator may act, either intentionally or unintentionally in a way that result in personal or institutional gain. This can be fostered through a close relationship between industries and regulatory agencies. Thierer posited that Capture Theory is closely related to rent-seeking and political failure theories developed by public choice school of economics. He went further to say that another

term for regulatory capture is Client Politics. While agreeing with Thierer on the concept of Client Politics, Wilson says, it occurs when most or all of the benefits of a program go to some single, reasonably small interest (an industry, profession or locality), but most or all the costs will be borne by a large number of people (example tax payers).

Onuoha applied this theory to explicate why it has been difficult to reposition the Nigerian economy since the 60's in spite of the various economic programs that have been adopted at different times. His argument is that two contending social forces, the nationalists and reformists have been engaged in a struggle for the Capture of the soul of the Nigerian economy. It is this struggle and the consequent capture of the state by a captor that has sustained the economic crisis and made revamping and sustaining the economy impossible, he contends.

Taking a cue from Stigler, Onuoha opines that in Political Science, Capture is said to occur when bureaucrats or politicians who are supposed to be acting in public interest, end up acting systematically to favor vested interests. According to him, the theory suggests that decisions do not just emerge. In every decision, certain vested interests must be protected.

In applying this theory to our study, the first point to make is that in Nigeria's democratic dispensation dating back to the second republic (1979-83) and from 1999 to the present administration of Muhammadu Buhari, Cabals have existed to a lesser or higher degree across different administrations. In some circles, they are referred to as "Mafia" while in some other circles; they are called "Kitchen Cabinet." Whatever nomenclature they bear, their strategic intent is the same, which is to capture the soul of the Presidency. They perfect this by influencing decisions that emanate from the Presidency. In extreme cases, they contrive policy decisions and cause them to be implemented by dropping the President's name. They exploit their affinity and closeness with the President to make their wishes become law.

The second point is that the members of the Cabal are not necessarily political office holders. While some are political aides of the President, some are members of the ruling party apparatchik, yet others are captains of industry. There are still others whose feasible means of

livelihood are questionable, but they wield so much influence in government. There are instances of actions carried out in the name of the Presidency that the latter feigned ignorance of. This is an indication of Capture. The existence of this group in and around the Presidency, coupled with the enormous influence they bring to bear on governance, explains our justification for adopting Capture Theory as our theoretical framework.

The Administration of President Shehu Shagari

Alhaji Shehu Shagari was Nigeria's civilian president from October 1st 1979 to December 31st 1983 when his government was overthrown in a military coup. During his tenure, the term Cabal did not have prominence in Nigeria's political lexicon. Rather Nigerians were more familiar with the concept of Mafia whose power base was domiciled in the northern Nigeria city of Kaduna. Thus, what was often bandied about in discourses was the "Kaduna Mafia", a select group of powerful northerners drawn from the military, politicians and the business community. It was believed that the emergence of Shehu Shagari as the President of Nigeria in 1979 was the handwork of this group. This group also to a large extent influenced the policy direction of his administration. In all intents, purpose and mode of operation, the Kaduna Mafia was a Cabal in the modern sense of the word.

A prominent leader of this Mafia (Cabal) was the late Alhaji Umaru Dikko who was Shagari's Minister of Transport. Others were Senator Uba Ahmed and Yusuf Miatama Sule who served as Nigeria's permanent representative to the United Nations. Dikko was so influential in the cabinet that any pronouncement he made, was regarded as the official government position. Although there was a substantive Minister of Information in the person of Bello Maitama Yusuf and later Garba Wushishi, Dikko usurped the office and became the de facto spokesperson of the federal government.

In 1982/83 when the economy experienced a downturn, the federal government introduced austerity measures. This was greeted with public outcry because of the economic hardship the policy visited on Nigerians. It was Dikko who responded to the agonies expressed by Nigerians by publicly stating that the austerity measures have not become as biting as claimed since Nigerians were not yet eating from the dust bins.

The ruling party at this time was the National Party of Nigeria (NPN). The party's resolution was that after President Shagari must have spent a second term in office, the position of the President will be zoned to Southern Nigeria. This resolution was reaffirmed by President Shagari at the national convention of the NPN held in Ibadan in December 1983. Based on this understanding, the late Chief M.K.O Abiola, a wealthy businessman and prominent member of the party indicated interest in contesting for the exalted office. But in a swift demonstration of how uncomfortable the Kaduna Mafia was with his aspiration, Alhaji Dikko told Chief Abiola point blank that the Presidency was not for sale. That statement, which was a summary of the decision taken by the Mafia, put paid to Abiola's aspiration.

The zoning arrangement would have led to the emergence of the then Vice-President, Dr. Alex Ekwueme as the Presidential candidate of NPN and invariably the President of Nigeria in 1987. It was to ensure that this did not happen that the military arm of the Mafia overthrew the government of President Shehu Shagari on December 31, 1983. This revelation was given by Dikko himself as will be shown in subsequent paragraphs.

Chinweizu (2013) refers to the activities of the Mafia as "Caliphate Colonialism". While shedding light on their discreet activities and in veiled reference to Umaru Dikko, he stated that the 1983 military coup was staged to pre-empt the Caliphate's approaching loss of power in 1987 through the scheduled NPN rotation of the Presidential candidacy to a southerner (Chinweizu, 2013, p.12). In response to an interview by the Nigerian Guardian newspaper that the reason why the military struck in 1983 was to prevent him, an Igbo man from becoming President after Shagari's tenure, the then Vice-President, Dr. Alex Ekwueme had this to say:

I wouldn't know, because I wasn't in the inner caucus that was planning the coup d'état, to know what informed that decision to strike, in December 1983. But I can tell you that one of our colleagues, the Minister of Transport, Alhaji Umaru Dikko, when he arrived London, said during the press conference he gave, that all the talk the military was giving about corruption and all that, was a smokescreen, that the main reason for the coup d'état was to prevent me from becoming President in 1987. That they reached the decision, during the first week of December when, at the Ibadan convention of the NPN, President Shehu Shagari, emphasized that the decision of the party that the Presidency would move to the south in 1987, was irreversible, in the interest of Nigerian unity. They felt that they wouldn't want that to happen and that it was better to

interrupt the process quite early rather than wait till nearer 1987, when it would be obvious what the reasons were...

This scenario which played out in 1983 and which was consummated with the ousting of a democratically elected government was a swift operation by a Cabal.

President Olusegun Obasanjo's Administration

The administration of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo spanned from 1999 to 2007. During his eight year tenure, a Cabal was hardly associated with his government. Being a strong personality, he took effective charge of his government and left no one in doubt that he was in firm control. Although he had a strong economic team made up of technocrats, he did not allow the team to have an overbearing influence on him or to become outlaws. He even told the personal aides he appointed as advisers that he is not bound to take their advice. On all issues, he demonstrated that he had a mind of his own.

Obasanjo brought his military background to bear on governance and applied brute force in dealing with situations when he felt, he needed to. He even used unconstitutional means to orchestrate the removal of some elected governors from office thereby sending strong signal to the GovernorS' Forum that he was in no mood to tolerate their gang up as they tried to constitute themselves into a cabal. He also tried to check mate them through the two anti-graft agencies he set up namely Independent Corrupt Practices and other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) and the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC). No loophole was therefore left that a Cabal would have exploited.

That is not to say that there was no governance deficit during his tenure; however his style of governance and way of handling opposition made those that would have constituted a Cabal to take cover. Albert (2012, p.12) summarized it thus: "no matter how highly placed one was in Obasanjo's regime, his/her status remained that of "Obasanjo boys". Those who tried to constitute themselves into a cabal in his regime or within Peoples Democratic Party were tracked down and harshly dealt with by the President".

President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua/Goodluck Jonathan's Administration

President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua was sworn in on May 29, 2007 and died on May 5, 2010 before he could complete his first term in office. Dr. Goodluck Jonathan served out the remaining tenure of Yar'Adua following his demise and then got elected in 2011 and left office on May 29, 2015. Yar'Adua's predecessor, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo was largely instrumental to his emergence as President. Soon after he assumed office, he tried to sequester himself from Obasanjo in order to establish his own power base. He reversed some of the policy decisions of his predecessor like the sale of Port Harcourt and Kaduna refineries to Alhaji Aliko Dangote, a key player in the private sector.

However, in an attempt to establish his own power base, he got captured by a Cabal. The Cabal had exploited his health challenges to form a pseudo government. Prominent members of the cabal were his Minister of Agriculture, Alhaji Abba Ruma; his Chief Economic Adviser, Tanimu Yakubu; Chief of Army Staff, General Abdurrahman Dambazzau; Chief Security Officer, Yusuf Tilde and his ADC, Mustapha Onovieda (Tribune Newspaper Editorial, October 30, 2016). These were ably supported by the President's wife Turai Yar'Adua and the Attorney General/Minister of Justice Michael Aondoaka.

The intrigues of the cabal came to its head towards the end of 2009 when the President became terminally ill and had to travel to Saudi Arabia on medical vacation without transmitting a letter to the National Assembly. The President travelled to Saudi Arabia on November 23, 2009 and did not return to the country until February 24, 2010. Section 145 of 1999 constitution as amended provides that:

whenever the President transmits to the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives a written declaration that he is proceeding on vacation or that he is otherwise unable to discharge the functions of his office, until he transmits to them a written declaration to the contrary, such functions shall be discharged by the Vice-President as Acting President.

It is noteworthy that the President did not comply with this constitutional provision. This was a game plan by the cabal to be ruling the country by proxy in the President's absence thereby making the Vice-President a mere figure head. Omotola (2011, p.1) captured this scenario succinctly when he stated: "there was a cabalistic politicization of his unconstitutional

absence from duty, and the attendant unconstitutional efforts to sustain an absentee President”.

While this intrigue lasted, Vice-President Jonathan was prevented by the cabal from performing the role of Acting President. All information concerning the President’s health condition was shielded from the Vice-President. He only relied on information that filtered in from some foreign governments who were monitoring the situation. The Vice-President was also not privy to the information and arrangement made to fly President Yar’Adua back to Nigeria from Saudi Arabia on February 24, 2010 under the cover of darkness. Yet there was a full complement of military and security operatives who took charge during the covert operation. Ironically, the Vice-President had by February 9, 2010 assumed Presidential powers as acting President following the invocation of the Doctrine of Necessity by the National Assembly. Yet information on the President’s impending and actual return was shielded from him, courtesy of the cabal.

In an interview with Punch newspaper on November 24, 2018, a federal law maker, Senator Enyinnaya Abaribe revealed that during the impasse, a group in the Senate under the aegis of Nigeria Interest Group was holding secret meetings to pressure the Senate to resolve the logjam. Members of the group were drawn from the six geo-political zones. One remarkable thing he said in the interview is that the group changed their meeting venues frequently to avoid intimidation by the cabal.

Prior to the President’s return to the country, the then Information Minister, late Professor Dora Akunyili had on February 17, 2010 presented an Executive Memo to the Federal Executive Council praying the Council to declare President Yar’Adua unfit to govern. She also alleged that a cabal did not want Vice-President Jonathan to become Acting President and they were frustrating him from exercising full Presidential powers. The Council rejected the memo, deciding instead to send a delegation to Saudi Arabia for an update on the President’s health (<https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-nigeria-president-events/timeline-president>.retrieved 24/6/19).

President Goodluck Jonathan’s Administration.

Whether a cabal existed under Jonathan’s Presidency is a moot question. The incidence may not be as pronounced as it was during his predecessor’s. Yet political commentators often make allusions to the fact that a cabal existed during his administration. The names often cited as members of this cabal are Chief Edwin Clark, a prominent Ijaw leader from the same geo-political zone with the President. The second is Diezani Allison-Madueke, Jonathan’s Petroleum Minister.

Chief Clark was always defending the President’s actions. He was also in the habit of making inciting and provocative statements against those he believed were undermining the administration. Never once did the Presidency caution him or call him to order. Likewise when it was alleged by the then Central Bank Governor, Sanusi Lamido Sanusi that Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC), a parastatal under the Petroleum Ministry headed by Allison-Madueke failed to remit USD 20 million to the Central Bank, the Presidency did not query the Minister to account for the money. It was that allegation and a constellation of other factors that culminated in the suspension of the CBN Governor.

One of the things that happen when a cabal captures the government is that they become outlaws and are not sanctioned for infractions against the law. The cases of Chief Edwin Clark and Diezani Allison-Madueke cited above are good reference points. In comparing the prevalence of cabals under Yar’Adua/Jonathan’s administration with Obasanjo’s administration, Albert (2012, p.10) had this to say:

The prevalence of cabals in the administration of Yar’Adua and Jonathan is largely because of the inability of the two of them to exercise the kind of extralegal powers that Obasanjo enjoyed while in office. They also did not have the kind of deep political and security pedigrees of Obasanjo, but at the same time, did not want to end up being seen as Obasanjo’s godsons.

President Muhammadu Buhari’s Administration

The President does not know 45 out of the 50 people he appointed to political positions; neither do I know them despite being his wife for 27 years. His government has been hijacked by a cabal who are behind presidential appointments” (Aisha Buhari, President Muhammadu Buhari’s wife, BBC Hausa Service Interview. October, 2016).

President Muhammadu Buhari assumed office on May 29, 2015 and is currently serving his second term in office. The above statement by his wife, eighteen months after he assumed office is indicative of how early Buhari's presidency was captured by a cabal. Ojo (2018) observes that government apparatuses in Nigeria are run in shriveled caucuses and cabal assemblages. As is typical with cabals, they exploit the weakness of the President to perpetrate their actions and make themselves relevant. Buhari like Yar'Adua have had serious health challenges, necessitating his prolonged medical vacation in London. Unlike Yar'Adua however, each time he had to travel, he transmitted a letter to the National Assembly as required by the constitution. With that transmission, Presidential powers were ceded to the Vice-President as Acting President.

The President travelled to London for a 6 day medical vacation on February 5 2016 and returned on February 10. Again on June 6, 2016, he travelled for what was initially a 10 day vacation to attend to a persistent ear infection. However, he returned on June 19, after spending 14 days. On January 19, 2017, he undertook another medical vacation and returned on March 10, after spending 49 days. Then came the trip he embarked on May 17, 2017. His prolonged stay incurred the wrath of the Nigerian Civil Society which launched an international campaign code-named "Return or Resign". The President finally returned on August 19, 2017 after spending 104 days in London (Punch Newspaper, August 20, 2017).

At the instance of the Cabal, the President's health status was never disclosed to Nigerians and they kept insisting that the President was hale and hearty. But their treachery was exposed when the President on return told Nigerians that he has never been that sick in his life. Some of the actions of the cabal also showed that they were not deferring to the Acting President. In one instance, while the President was on medical vacation in London in 2018, the Director General of the Department of State Service (DSS) sent masked security operatives to seal the National Assembly Complex, preventing law makers from accessing their offices. He did this without the authorization of the acting President. Incidentally, the action cost him his job as he was removed from office by the acting President.

There were things that happened under Buhari's Presidency that he feigned ignorance of; a testament that his administration has been captured by a cabal. As an illustration, the

President did not know that his Chief of Staff was on the board of Nigeria National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC). NNPC is a parastatal under the Ministry of Petroleum with responsibility for managing the country's oil proceeds and President Buhari is the Minister of Petroleum Resources.

There was also the case of Alhaji Abdulahi Abdurashied Maina a civil servant and former Chairman of Presidential Task Force on Pension Reforms. Maina was dismissed from service in 2013 by the Federal Civil Service Commission following the recommendation of the Office of Head of Service. He was accused by the Nigerian Police authorities of misappropriating one hundred billion naira belonging to the Police pension fund. Following attempts made by Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) to arrest and prosecute him, he fled the country. He was therefore dismissed for absconding from duty. However, in October 2017, he sneaked back to the country, got reinstated to his job, promoted to the rank of Director, posted to the Federal Ministry of Interior and paid salary arrears from 2013, all without the knowledge of the Office of the Head of Service and the President. The President only knew about his reinstatement through the media.

Those fingered in the reinstatement were, the Chief of Staff to the President, the Minister of Interior, the Director of the Department of State Security (DSS) and the Attorney General of the Federation. While the Minister of Interior blamed the recall on the Office of the Head of Service and Federal Civil Service Commission, the Head of Service in a press statement denied that his recall emanated from her office. When the Head of Service eventually appeared before the House of Representatives Adhoc Committee that investigated the reinstatement, she revealed that there was a letter addressed to her office by the Federal Civil Service Commission, requesting for Maina's reinstatement, but that she did not act on the letter because of the anti-corruption stance of the President. Yet Maina resumed duties without the authorization of the Office of the Head of Service. It was further revealed that the legal advice for Maina's reinstatement was given to the Federal Civil Service Commission by the Attorney General of the Federation. Although President Buhari ordered for Maina's sack after his reinstatement became public knowledge, it is instructive that the President was not kept in the loop over his recall and reinstatement. Furthermore, the dramatis personae

involved in the whole saga were never sanctioned by the President; an evidence of a President at the mercy of a cabal.

Again the Vice-President, Professor Yomi Osinbajo had on January 16, 2019 at the one day conference of Online Publishers Association held in Abuja told his audience that President Buhari did not know that the suspended Chief Justice of Nigeria, Justice Walter Onnoghen was to be arraigned at the Code of Conduct Tribunal for false declaration of assets until Saturday evening preceding the Monday of arraignment. This is typically the kind of things that happen when a cabal is at work and lays further credence to our position that when a cabal captures the Presidency, actions are taken in the name of the President even without his knowledge, yet he does not reverse some of such actions. The names often mentioned as members of the cabal are Alhaji Abba Kyari, the President's Chief of Staff, Mr. Lawan Daura, the former DSS boss and Mamman Daura, a relation of the President who though is not holding any political appointment but is very influential in the administration. He is known to have regularly accompanied the President on his foreign trips.

The nexus between Cabal Metaphor and Governance Deficit in Nigeria's Democracy

No administration bargains from the onset to be captured by a cabal. However, as an administration enunciates policies and implements programs, a compass that points to the direction the administration is headed becomes glaring. Once this policy direction is set, the cabal surreptitiously works their way into the leadership by presenting themselves as partners in progress who want to help the government to succeed. With this rapport established, they discreetly begin to circumvent government policies that are not favorable to their political and business interests, while enjoying government protection. Their closeness to the seat of power gives them the leeway to identify the weaknesses of the leader which they exploit to their advantage.

In some instances, they could go the extra mile to create a false sense of insecurity around the President, thereby warding off those that they don't want to get close to the President. With this kind of situation created around the President, the latter becomes vulnerable to their machinations. Posturing as critical stake holders in the administration, the cabal deludes the President to see them as indispensable and once they get this recognition, they remotely begin

to control what the President does. This intrigue works best when the President is weak as a leader. In this wise, the President inadvertently becomes captured without being conscious of it.

Our central argument in this study is that weak leadership by a President renders him vulnerable to capture by a cabal. It is when a leader is weak, that a lacuna is created and this lacuna is exploited by a cabal to make itself relevant in an administration. A captured Presidency by extension engenders governance deficit. In the introductory part of this study, we listed eight characteristics of good governance as espoused by the United Nations. To recap, they are: participatory; consensus-oriented; accountable; transparent; responsive; effective and efficient; equitable and inclusive and which follows the rule of law.

A test on Nigeria's governance which uses these eight performance indicators as criteria for assessment will post a poor result. In terms of being participatory, periodic elections provide a semblance of participation, yet votes rarely count in the selection process. Often times, elections are conducted with predetermined outcomes in mind. The opposition is demonized as enemies of the ruling party and attempts made to muzzle them. Rather than governance being consensus-oriented, there is a dichotomy of consensus-dicensus. Government is anything but accountable, neither is it transparent. Accountability for conducting the public's business is increasingly about performance, rather than discharging a specific policy goal within the confines of the law (UN Economic and Social Council, 2006).

Government programs are not informed by the needs of the people, and to that extent, they are not responsive. Government neither does the right things nor do things right, which is what effectiveness and efficiency is about. Nepotism and cronyism have been elevated to a norm, rather than equity and inclusiveness. Rule of law is adhered to when it is convenient for the government. Thus, weak leadership throws up cabals who undermine Nigeria's democracy and this finds expression in governance deficit. UN Economic and Social Council (2006) observes that the fact that good governance is now being championed globally can be attributed to the renewed interest that development partners like IMF and World Bank have taken in probing events in developing countries. Having realized that the crises in developing countries are of a governance nature, they now emphasize governance issues such as

transparency, accountability and judicial reform as conditions precedent to accessing adjustment packages.

The governance deficit in Nigeria's democracy attracted the attention of the government of the United States under President Obama when Umaru Musa Yar'Adua was Nigeria's President. His then Secretary of State, Hilary Clinton had at a Town Hall Meeting held in August 2009 at Shehu Musa Yar'Adua Centre Abuja with Civil Society Representatives on good governance and transparency stated that "the most immediate source of the disconnect between Nigeria's wealth and its poverty is a failure of governance at the local, state and federal level, And some of that is due to corruption, others due to lack of capacity or mismanagement".

She singled out lack of transparency and accountability as two factors that have eroded the legitimacy of government and contributed to the rise of groups that embrace violence and reject the authority of the state. It is important to restate here that transparency and accountability are among the eight characteristics of good governance identified by the UNDP. Unfortunately, these are lacking in Nigeria's democracy. It is the position of Clinton that without good governance, no amount of oil, no amount of Aid can guarantee Nigeria's success. But with good governance, nothing can stop Nigeria. Achebe (1983) had thirty six years ago identified leadership as the trouble with Nigeria. He stated "the trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership...the Nigerian problem is the unwillingness or inability of its leaders to rise to the responsibility, to the challenge of personal example which is the hallmarks of true leadership" (Achebe, 1983, p.1).

Conclusion and Recommendations

In this study we set out to establish the relationship between the cabal metaphor which is a feature of Nigeria's Presidency and governance deficit as witnessed in Nigeria's democracy , using Regulatory Capture Theory as our framework of analysis. Our study revealed that going by the eight characteristics of good governance espoused by the UNDP, there is no gainsaying that there is governance deficit in Nigeria. The governance deficit is more glaring when cabals capture the soul of the Presidency. This is demonstrated by the impunity with which the cabals operate. If there is strict observance of the rule of law, a prerequisite for

good governance, the impunity with which they operate will be contained. However, as demonstrated in this study, it is weak leadership at the level of the Presidency that creates a space for cabals to operate. When a leader does not take effective charge of his administration, a void is created which cabals quickly fill. This has been our democratic experience since 1979, save for the administration of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo who checkmated every move made by cabals to rear their heads in his administration.

In all intents and purposes, the activities of cabals undermine Nigeria's democracy. By their nature, the agenda they pursue never reflects the common good, but are rather self-serving almost always. Their personal interests are masked as public interest and the President deluded to believe that they are working in his interest and taking some "official load" off him. Due to the fact that Nigerian leaders hardly connect with the people, they are often faced with legitimacy crisis. This is what cabals exploit by posturing as stakeholders that want the government to succeed, while demonizing those that offer constructive criticisms as enemies that want to pull the administration down. It is this dummy, that they sell to the President and once the President keys into this delusion, he becomes captured and loses control of his administration.

We recommend that first; whoever is occupying the office of the President at any given time should demonstrate strong leadership. This does not call for dictatorship, rather it demands being decisive and taking tough decisions when duty calls, not minding whose ox is gored. Prevarication on decisions is one thing Nigerian leaders should avoid. There should also be clear vision and a sense of mission that points to the direction, the leader is headed. Secondly, the civil society should always mobilize Nigerians in protest against the activities of cabals whenever they capture a President. Such protests will put a serving President on his toes and perhaps help him to rediscover himself. Finally, Nigeria's democracy should be practiced according to international best practice. Nigeria belongs to the comity of nations, therefore the eight principles of good governance should be its guiding principles and leaders assessed on their abilities to observe those principles. Periodic elections should not be used as yardstick for measuring how matured or successful Nigeria's democracy has become, because even the best of elections can still produce the worst government.

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