

LEADERSHIP CHARACTER AND HUMAN SECURITY IMPLICATIONS IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Nigeria's leadership character has continued to record deficits despite regimes' contrary claims. The attendant adverse effects have created stringent socio-economic and political conditions for Nigerians. Imperatively, this paper examined three key leadership character indicators: human rights abuse, corruption and democratic dictatorship of civilian administrations in the period under investigation. The study is qualitative and descriptive in orientation. Data gathering was based on documented evidence and informant interview. Thomas Carlyle's Trait Image Theory of Leadership served as theoretical framework for the explanation. The study revealed that Nigeria's leadership character from 1999 to 2021 was depicted on official abuse of human rights, official corruption and democratic dictatorship. The paper enjoined Nigerian Government to step up in attitudinal prerequisites for best international behaviour in governance; strictly adhere to the rule of law, and prosecute fraudulent government officials lawfully.

Keywords: Leadership, Leadership Character, Human Rights Violation, Corruption, Dictatorship

INTRODUCTION

Leadership character is a determinant of national development, citizens' support and good international image status. There is a positive connection between good leadership character on one hand and effective leadership and good domestic and external image on the other hand. Leadership character of Olusegun Obasanjo administration was depicted in official abuse of human rights. There were political and other extrajudicial killings (USA Human Rights Report on Nigeria, 2000,). The report showed that the administration made use of the police, army and other security agents to commit extrajudicial killings and quell civil unrest. This was reported as the 28 Niger Delta youths killed during a conflict, protest, and suspected vandalization near oil flow stations in 2000; the killings, destructions and arrests during a protest march by Ogoni people in April 2000; the Odi Massacre of 1999 involving 2,500 deaths, in Bayelsa State (Fawehinmi, 2007). Other human violations include, but not limited to: denial of fair public trial, torture and inhuman treatment of prisoners, etcetera.

The character of Yar'Adua/Jonathan administration was described as corrupt, the E.U and other international observers specifically termed the election that brought Yar'Adua into power as flawed, faulty and lacking in international standards. Again, the administration through the office of the then Attorney

General of the Federation made frantic efforts to prevent James Ibori, the former Governor of Delta State charged with money laundry in London from being prosecuted and jailed. Nuhu Ribadu, the then EFCC chairman, was sacked two weeks into Ibori's prosecution (Human Rights Watch, 2011). In Jonathan administration, corruption was carried out with impunity leading to total loss of war against corruption (Falana, 2012). The diversion of \$2.2million vaccination medicine funded by the Ministry of Health, the diversion of 1.9 billion Naira anti-Ebola fund, the BMW purchase by the aviation minister in the tune of N255m, 60 million barrels of oil valued at \$13.7bstolen under the watch of NNPC from 2009 to 2012, are all indicators of this argument.

The Buhari administration is accused of dictatorship in a democracy. The #EndSARS massacre of October 20th 2020, the Nigeria's twitter ban, the unlawful arrests and detention of journalists and activists, the killings and terrorist labeling of the IPOB group who are fighting for their right to self-determination, etcetera (Amnesty International, 2021). A good leadership character forms an essential element in the strategy for Image-building and is a catalyst for a good formulation and implementation of both domestic and foreign policies. Many administrations in the Nigeria lack leadership character (Ezenwaka, 2016). Character is the foundation of effective leadership, and there would be no successful leadership without character. Only leaders with good characters stimulate good foreign policies. There is certainly dearth and drought of true leadership in Nigeria (Ademola, 2019). Accordingly, the paper is billed to examine how leadership character contributed to human right violation, corruption and dictatorship in Nigeria.

METHODOLOGY

The study is qualitative and descriptive. It relied on documented evidence, such as annual security report, corruption perception index, democratic rating index, human rights report, journal articles, media publications and textbooks. Data were presented using tabular and textual tools while Trait theory of leadership was used in explicating the study. The theory developed from 'the great man theory' which was popularized by the Scottish philosopher and teacher, Thomas Carlyle, in the 1840s. Trait theory of leadership is one of the first academic theories of leadership that attempts to answer why some people are good leaders and others are not. In fact, the theory can be traced back to the nineteenth century, when Thomas Carlyle used such understanding to identify the talents, skills and characteristics of men who rose to power. According to Carlyle, history is shaped by extraordinary leaders. This ability to lead, Carlyle observed, has some inborn traits that if well developed can make a difference in a personality. Carlyle's ideas inspired early research on leadership, which almost entirely focused on inheritable traits. Carlyle's theory of leadership was based on the rationale that: (1) certain traits produce certain patterns of behavior. (2) Patterns are consistent across different situations. (3) People are "born" with leadership traits. The trait theory of leadership is based on the characteristics of many leaders - both successful and unsuccessful - and is used to predict leadership effectiveness. This theory is one of the systematic attempts to study leadership character since early 20th century up to late 1940s. Traits are the distinctive qualities or exclusive set of characteristics, especially of one's individual nature. Trait is an inner characteristic that corresponds to any intense

position on the behavioral dimensions. The most common way to describe leaders is to know the traits inherent in them. Gatewood and Field (1998) considered traits as a permanent dimension being used for explaining the consistency of human behaviors in various situations.

As such, corrupt, dictatorial and human rights violations in Nigeria are the by-products of the leadership traits of the Nigerian government official.

NIGERIAN LEADERSHIP

Leadership is the ability to persuade others to seek defined objectives enthusiastically (Keith, 2012). Leadership plays a pivotal role in the failure and collapse of a nation (Wando, 2014). Considering Nigeria's political history is replete with leadership crisis. Governments are unable to set in place transparent and accountable institutions capable of securing economic progress, governing effectively, and protecting their citizens. This lack of capacity is amplified by recourse to authoritarianism and repression, dramatic economic decline precipitated by indiscriminate corruption and the adoption of exclusive or ethnic tendencies. In the absence of patriotic and charismatic leadership, corrupt elites model the state to serve their narrow interests instead of the interests of the citizens. As a consequence, the state, itself, is unable to fulfill its purpose or provision of institutions to respond to legitimate demands and needs. In assessing the situation in Nigeria, Adejimi (2010) recorded that, in Nigeria, most of the policy makers as well as those involved in decision-making are involved in bribery, egoism, power, and trade liberalization and are distracted to an extent they forget the nation's policies aimed at improving the lives of the people in the society. Judging from the foregoing, it is true that most Nigerian leaders are encapsulated in bribery, egoism, in-depth corruption and maddening disregard for accountability and transparency.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 1997), equated leadership with governance. They argued that leadership/governance is the exercise of economic, political and administrative authority to manage a country's affairs at all levels, and 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 differences. In line with the foregoing, Governance/leadership, among other things, is participatory, transparent and accountable. It is effective and equitable, and it promotes the rule of law. A good governance/leadership ensures that political, social and economic priorities are based on broad consensus in the society, and that the interests of the poorest and the most vulnerable are protected in the course of decision-making over the allocation of resources. Leadership/governance are hinged on three factors namely; economic, political and administrative. Economic government includes the decision-making processes that affect a country's economic activities and its relationship with other countries' economies. It clearly has major implications for equity, poverty and quality of life. Political leadership is the process of decision-making to formulate policy. Administrative governance is the system of policy implementation encompassing all three. Good governance defines the processes and structure that guide political and socio-economic relationships. However, to an average Nigerian, free and fair elections, effective public service delivery rooted in public financial management, creation of employment opportunities

and access to basic infrastructure, security of lives and property and timely dispensation of justice, participation, rule of law, transparency, responsiveness, consensus orientation, equity, effectiveness and efficiency, accountability, strategic vision and platforms where citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations and mediate their difference through institutions provided by leadership are characteristics of good leadership.

In his book "Power and Leadership in Nigeria", Okadigbo (1987) examines the role of leadership in Nigeria and concludes that; The lack of national cohesion, indeed of any bold attempt raising institutions or leaders to really unite Nigeria, is indicative of leadership failure in Nigeria, i.e., of failure of personal leadership as well as institutional or structural failure. (p.134)

Notwithstanding how articulate Okadigbo's argument sounds, it was based mainly on the inadequacy of Nigerian leaders to unite Nigeria, thereby ignoring other areas solely begging for the attention of leadership in Nigeria. From Okadigbo's submission, it is pertinent to note that, the world over, it is servant leaders that have made the difference in the lives of their people and advanced their governments over time through vigorous and sacrificial pursuit of positive change with great respect for acceptable societal values. Effective and productive leadership must be seen to be transparent and accountable to the citizenry. This helps to increase goodwill amongst the people (citizens) and accelerates the chances of elected leaders succeeding in their endeavors. This also promotes legitimacy, acceptance and, most importantly, role modeling.

Available resources must be properly harnessed and used based on the principles of equity and equality so that the impact is felt in the society. The government must be service oriented and promote effective delivery of public services so that local and small-scale economic developments aimed at improving the lot of youths and the poor can be enhanced. Information must also be made available to the people, especially to non-state actors for an enhanced purposeful engagement with leadership.

Achebe (1983) arrived at the same conclusion in his book "*The Trouble with Nigeria*", when he simply identifies the problem of Nigeria as failure of leadership. The Nigerian problem, he concludes, "is the unwillingness or inability of its leaders to rise to the responsibility, to the challenge of personal example, which is the hallmark of true leadership." However, Achebe's argument is very valid because without leadership, people cannot constitute a state, and without good leadership, there can be no developed or integrated technology. Good leadership is interrelated with the other elements of national power because it is one of the measures of the extent to which those elements are utilized. Good leadership helps a country to develop. A good leader who is not selfish is needed to harmonize resources, and harness all the elements of national power. A leader is expected to be foresighted, skilled, a visionary who would be a morale booster to his people. He must fight for the well-being of his people and should never claim to be all-knowing, and must listen to the voice of his people and perform better (where necessary). In Nigeria, most leaders have failed to follow the attitudinal prerequisites of true leadership. When leaders take an active role of styles, patterns, systems and processes of good leadership, they change the

narrative because they become more passionate about the functions attached to their positions and the need to give it their best shot to enhance better living for the people. As Maxwell (2010) noted, "everything rises and falls on leadership" (p.6), the strength of any country is a direct reflection and result of the strength of its leaders. A weak and incompetent leader equals a weak nation. A strong and competent leader equals a strong nation. Leadership is the catalyst of great nations. Big powers such as USA, Britain, Russia, and France, and also some emerging big powers whose influence in world politics is no less important like India, Japan, Germany (today's United Germany) and China couldn't have made their mark without strong and good leadership. Good leadership facilitates the process of governance, which ensures sustainable progress, development and stability in the society and it spurs every other facet of the nation's growth.

NIGERIAN LEADERSHIP CHARACTER

Leaders can be character-based leaders when their character is positive and defining series of traits. Leaders can be made or born. Born leaders possess innate skills and character attributes that draw people to them, but leaders who are made by luck, opportunism or proximity are not so fortunate. They have to count on education, good mentors, broad experience and a willingness to learn from the people they lead. Character involves integrity, trustworthiness, emotional intelligence, openness, motivation, self-awareness, empathy, emotional health, ethics, sense of judgment and intelligence (Meghan, 2019). From the foregoing, Meghan's argument is detailed, but whether or not a leader is made or born, there should be room for constant learning, growth, and improvement. Leadership growth and development are a continuous cycle; that is, it is a never-ending process. Even great leaders improve and develop themselves daily, through healthy books, healthy interactions, communication, a listening ear, seminars, workshops or conferences.

In discussing Nigerian leadership challenge, Ezenwaka (2016) observed that we have so many characters in the Nigerian political drama that lacks character. The government seems not to disappoint when it comes to character deficiency in political leadership. The character deficiency in political leadership has created a psyche of high distrust among the general public, and no matter how good-intentioned a Nigerian politician or political appointee may be, most Nigerians do not trust them. The character of leaders in Nigeria often ends up causing unwarranted deaths, smears the reputation of the country, gives rise to backwardness and underdevelopment, and because of the absence of political leaders with character who are committed to growing the resources and economy and taking care of the people's basic needs, most Nigerians live in abject poverty in the midst of plenty. For Nigeria to grow inestimably into a great nation, we need leaders of impeccable character like Nelson Mandela, Mahatma Gandhi, Winston Churchill, Abraham Lincoln, Jerry Rawlings, Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore, Prof. Dora Akunyili, to mention a few. Nations that have advanced economically, technologically, and politically are nations who have political leaders with character at the helm of affairs at different stages of the life of those nations. Character is therefore, the foundation of all aspects of effective leadership, and there is no substitute for character in leadership. The leadership character in Nigeria is in dire need of reformation. In fact, there should be an in-depth overhaul of leaders without character in the Nigerian political system. In

the words of Dr. Myles Munroe, a leadership author and coach, "because political leadership now gives priority to other qualities of leadership other than character, we've produced charismatic leaders without character, gifted leaders without convictions, powerful leaders without principles, intellectual leaders without morality, visionary leaders without values". Similarly, the President of the Initiative for Leadership Development and Change (ILDC) in 2018 announced that only leaders with proven integrity and character would stimulate good governance in Nigeria. According to him, good governance has no boundaries, no tribe or religion, and only a person with proven integrity can provide it, irrespective of where he comes from. Integrity and character are quintessential attributes of good leaders, irrespective of where they come from. It was Theodore Roosevelt who also stated that, "Character, in the long run, is the decisive factor in the life of an individual and of nations alike". Therefore, Character and integrity are indispensable in leadership. In the words of Sakoh (2016) a good leadership character must entail honesty, communication, delegation, confidence, commitment, positive attitude, creativity, inspiration, approach and political will. These innate qualities, as noted by Sakoh, are very essential for leadership, and when carefully meted, will enhance sustainability of good leadership.

Character is the foundation and the first criteria among the qualities of effective leadership; character is where it all begins because character ultimately defines your success or failure as a leader, and when the leader fails, the entire country fails. The capacity to lead comes from the character. It precedes all other qualities of effective leadership. The people are fractions of the leader and if the leader's character is flawed, the entire populace will be in jeopardy. The ultimate test of leadership is not power, position, money, talent or skill, but character (Philips, 2015). Indeed, there is no aorta of doubt in Philip's submission that character is the foundation of true leadership. Power, money, position, skills are however, important because, for the most part, they help facilitate the works of leadership, but they're not complete and consequential without character. A good leader must be calculative and fast on his feet, and should always be lurking for new grounds to break in a bid to better the lot of the people.

While elucidating on the leadership challenge in Nigeria, Adeoye (2019) in the Nigerian Newspaper "*The tribune*" remarked that there is certainly a dearth and drought of true leadership in Nigeria. Every fiber of our national life is crying for true leaders; leaders who are genuine; leaders who are willing to take responsibility for the present situation and conditions we have found ourselves in Nigeria; leaders who are willing to accept the challenge of nation building, face it head-on with integrity of heart and skillfulness of hands. Every community in Nigeria needs true leaders with great character. The lack of true leadership is a cankerworm eating deeply into the fabrics of the nation's growth. Indeed, we need genuine, responsible, daring leaders to foster positive change in the country, and stimulate good policies. It is vital to note that good policies are the bane of good leadership, and it is not just about the formation because Nigeria has never lacked good policies, but the focus should be in its uncompromising implementations.

HUMAN SECURITY

Human security is paramount and a fundamental responsibility of all stakeholders of society. The existence of society is premised upon the security of people and security is a primary function of the state. Government comes in as a representative of the state and the people. It receives from the state and gives to the people and receives from the people and gives to the state. It operates between the state and citizens. The citizens owe the state loyalty and obedience while in return the state provides security, welfare and a friendly atmosphere for a good living. When the government fails in its responsibility, the security of the people is threatened. Human security could be socioeconomic, physical, political and cultural.

The situation in Nigeria is worrisome. Government's incompetence has resulted in escalated terrorism, kidnapping, human trafficking, arson, reckless killing, arm robbery etcetera. Governments disobey court order and enforce the ones that are favourable to them. Public funds are fraudulently diverted to private treasuries. Processes and procedures of public services are based on favouritism.

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

Classification Sheet: Respondents' Profile

Respondents	Gender	Age	Experience	Location	Source
Cases\\RESPONDENT 1	Female	46	18	Abuja	Public Information Sector
Cases\\RESPONDENT 2	Male	57	28	Abuja	Director in Public information sector
Cases\\RESPONDENT 3	Female	49	20	Abuja	General Manager in public media
Cases\\RESPONDENT 4	Female	29	7	Abuja	Senior Staff in public media
Cases\\RESPONDENT 5	Male	56	29	Imo	Professor of International Relations
Cases\\RESPONDENT 6	Male	41	13	Abuja	Special Assistance on Foreign Affairs
Cases\\RESPONDENT 7	Female	56	32	Abuja	General Manager private media
Cases\\RESPONDENT 8	Male	41	13	Abuja	Head of Publicity/ ICT in private media

Tabulation of Interview Data

Nodes

Name	Description	Files	References
Leadership Character		8	8
The Basic Leadership Characters of Nigerian Administrations from 1999 to 2015.	Research Question: What are the basic leadership characters of Nigerian civilian administrations and implications to human security?	7	7
Corruption	Corruption is a major leadership character of Nigerian administrations within 2009-2015 and it had some adverse effects on human security	5	8
Dictatorship	Nigerian administrations was dictatorial in 2015-2021 and this character was hostile to human security.	5	8
Official Violation of Human Rights	Official violation of human rights by Nigeria Administration within 1999-2007 was detrimental to human security.	3	8

DISCUSSION ON LEADERSHIP CHARACTER

(a) Corruption

Nigerian Administration in 2009-2015 was corrupt and had adverse implications on human security. Evidence was clear in the manner in which interview respondents emphasized corruption as a major character of Nigerian

Administration in this period. The study presented 8 respondents. Each of them responded to the research question on the basic character of Nigerian Administrations and implications to human security. The 8 respondents emphasized that corruption was a basic character of Nigerian Administration. According to them, the implications are evident in the stringent socio-economic and political conditions of the people. These refer to poverty, unemployment and insecurity resulting from the embezzlement of public fund meant for creation of jobs, leadership ineptitude and the attendant failure of infrastructural development and protection of lives and property in the country. Poverty has proliferated begging of different categories. Socio-economic and political conditions of life are no longer conducive for a genuine success in life. Government treasuries are officially porous for fraud. This is particularly with those who belong to the ruling party as they enjoy the reign of impunity. Criminality was trending and an avenue for money making producing 419 fraudsters, Yahoo Boys and other characters of financial misconduct. The situation has continued and worsened up to this present day. Human security has been mortgaged to the extents that kidnapping, banditry and general threats to lives and security has out-weighed economic poverty.

Respondent 1 observed that Yar'Adua/Goodluck Administration was built on the goodwill of Obasanjo Administration but missed it along the line as corruption became the order of the day and given the illness of Yar'Adua and the so-called cabal efforts to hold onto power, Nigeria's image became poor, weak, suspicion based on the prevailing level of corruption. The entry of Muhammad Buhari had a lot of expectations with the integrity mantra but two years into the tenure, the swan soup was terribly changed. The anti-corruption stance became merely a smokescreen to pursue perceived political enemies while keeping safe cohorts who were partners in crime.

(b) Dictatorship

Nigerian Administration in 2015-2021 was dictatorial and hostile to human security. The entire 8 respondents presented with the question on the leadership character of Nigerian Administration during this period concurred. While some of them believed that this administration was vindictive, tribal bigoted, biased and clueless, they all observed that the basic character of the administration was dictatorial. The government dictatorial behavior and insistent on getting what it wanted no matter whose ox is gored did not allow for public freedom. Disobedience to court order and manipulation of public institutions to achieve parochial interest kept the administration dictating for the people. Human security was undermined even in the presence and existence of human right laws. As worrisome as it was, the dictatorial tendency and actions of government were not extended to its responses to terrorism. There were expectations that the government could as well dictate for the bandits and terrorist torment the lives of Nigerian citizen and met them with corresponding hostility. Instead, insecurity pervaded the entire nation; the pre-meditated blood-letting pogrom of the herdsmen became tacitly supported and aggravated by presidential in action. Nigeria logistics place of pride in the international arena and the international image crisis set in.

(c) Violation of Human Rights

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) was a milestone document in the history of human rights. Sections 33-44 of the Constitution of the Federal

Republic of Nigeria domesticated its content, yet human rights violation was commonplace in Nigeria during the period under review. Human rights are rights that every human being has by virtue of his or her human dignity. Human rights are rights inherent to all human beings. They define relationships between individuals and power structures, especially the State. Human rights delimit State power and, at the same time, require States to take positive measures ensuring an environment that enables all people to enjoy their human rights. History in the past 250 years has been shaped by the struggle to create such an environment. Starting with the French and American revolutions in the late eighteenth century, the idea of human rights has driven many revolutionary movements for empowerment and for control over the wielders of power, governments in particular (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2016). The principle of universality of human rights is the cornerstone of international human rights law. International human rights law lays down obligations of governments to act in certain ways or to refrain from certain acts in order to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms of all individuals or groups.

Leadership Character and Human Security

(a). Corruption and Human Security

Fraudulent manipulation of public institutions, offices, personnel and procedures for personal and group gain in Nigeria is at the root of insecurity in the polity. Attempts to satisfy greed, self-importance, accumulation of wealth and powers have set individuals and groups against the society. Corruption in Nigeria has been a major hindrance to human security. It diverted public funds which resulted in government's failures to provide welfare, pay salary, and provide infrastructural development. Corrupt practices resulted in the employment of incompetent hands into public offices in Nigeria. It landed innocent citizens in detention and diluted the independence of the Legislature and the Judicial and made the Executive arm of government vindictive, dictatorial and impunity-exhibitor.

(b). Dictatorship and Human Security

Failure to govern within the arm-bit of the law, and the command and obey attitude in governance in Nigeria amounts to dictatorship. Militarization of Nigerian polity is a handiwork of the military incursion into the Nigerian politics and the long military leadership of the country. In addition, most of the Nigeria's Presidents, Heads of State and Commanders-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic within the time under investigation were either serving or retired military generals. The military involvement in the Nigerian politics is rooted in the forceful invasion and the colonization of the country by Britain and subsequent military colonial leadership that gave birth to the nation. So, military tendency in Nigeria's governance is a historical trait in the character of the nation. Thus, government found it difficult to obey court orders, respect the rule of law and they command citizens with impunity. Yet same, governments frown at criticism to government policies.

(c). Human Rights Violation and Human Security

Violation of natural, national or international human rights is detrimental to human security. It puts the individual in a tight socioeconomic and political space and amounts to illiberal governance. Nigerian governments in Nigeria

have violated human rights to the extent that many citizens were imprisoned without justice, social and human rights activists were detained illegal; there were Odi Massacre, rendition of Nnamdi Kanu etcetera. These culminated from natural traits of the military officers and their civilian counterparts who used power arbitrarily. These misbehaviours have generated enormous fear, threat and death of many Nigerians thereby jeopardizing human security.

CONCLUSION

Nigeria's leadership character has continued to record deficits despite regimes' contrary claims. The attendant adverse effects have created stringent socio-economic and political conditions for Nigerians. Imperatively, this paper examined key leadership character of the nation's civilian administrations with emphasis on – human rights abuse, corruption and democratic dictatorship with a view to unraveling their effects on human security. The study unveiled that Nigeria's leadership character from 1999 to 2021 was depicted in official abuse of human rights, official corruption and democratic dictatorship. The situation is detrimental to human security in Nigeria. The inherent corruption, dictatorial and human rights violation traits in Nigeria government's officials were traced to colonialism and capitalist production and developed by human greed among the Nigerian politician.

RECOMMENDATIONS

(a) The paper enjoined the Nigerian government to step up in attitudinal prerequisites for best international practice in governance; strictly adhere to the rule of law, and prosecute fraudulent government officials lawfully. This will sanitize the system, and ensure acceptable behavior in governance. This is achievable through recruitment of competent individual in public offices. Individual that will not compromise their official principles and ethic of duty.

(b) More so, international organizations: United Nations, African Union, ECOWAS should cooperative in sanctioning corrupt leaders violating human rights, and disobeying the rule of law of their nations. Foreign indirect intervention is needed in response to early warning signal of such undemocratic behaviours. The conflagrant killings of peaceful protesters, high level of corruption, kidnapping, banditry and terrorism in Nigeria are against the provisions and standards of the UN charter. Sanction and condemnation of these undemocratic behaviours by relevant international organizations is a viable option for a change in behaviour among erring government officials.

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