

Political Leadership and Infrastructural Development in Taraba State, 2015-2019

¹Gamboro Bitrus Adi, ²Joseph Manga, ³Ibrahim Ibn Mohammed & ⁴Williams Yakubu

¹Department of Political Science and International Relations, Taraba State University, Jalingo, Nigeria

²Department of Political Science, Federal University Wukari, Nigeria

³Department of Political Science, Moddibo Adama University, Yola, Nigeria

⁴Department of Political Science, College of Education, Zing, Nigeria

Abstract

Recent studies have revealed that Taraba State is more of consumer economy than productive economy due to poor internally generated revenue capacity and meagre statutory allocation from the federal government. While neighbouring states, particularly Gombe State with a similar situation have achieved a remarkable level of infrastructural development, the case of Taraba State appears to be different. This study was specifically carried out to determine the relationship between political leadership and the development of infrastructure in Taraba State. The study relied on documented evidence, interviews and questionnaire for data generation and statistical analysis. The theoretical framework for the study is public choice theory. Findings of the study were that the poor state of infrastructural development in Taraba State is a political leadership challenge. This challenge stems from factors such as misappropriations of funds, high-level recurrent expenditure, poor expenses, corruption, wastage of resources, and the lack of continuity in governance. The study recommended the minimization of overhead spending on elected and appointed political officeholders and right-sizing of the number of senior assistants and special advisers to governors. It also suggests that government should deal with corrupt leaders as enshrined in the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, and attention should also be given to internally generated revenue by leveraging on the state's abundant untapped resources to bring about infrastructural development in the state.

Keywords: Governance infrastructural development, internally generated revenue, political leadership, Taraba State

Introduction

The management of a state's resources rests squarely on the leadership of the state. It is, therefore, not out of place to attribute Taraba State's level of development to the crops of leaders that have governed the state since its creation on August 27, 1991. For a state to achieve any meaningful development, Kuada (2010, p.9-24) stated that "leaders articulate vision, encourage innovative thinking and motivate individuals and groups to exert themselves beyond the normal call of duty." It is adequate to state, according to Maxwell (1995) that everything depends on leadership because the leaders reproduce themselves in the process of governance. As Cole (1996) noted, the leaders influence the efforts of others towards achieving certain goals in any given circumstances. The result of leadership manifests in the pattern the leader manages the external boundaries of the group, as well as dealing constructively with members of internal responsibilities, roles and relationship.

The centrality of leadership to achieving set goals, whether it is in a formal or informal organization is an understatement. In the formal institutional setting of a country or state, the leadership is expected to aspire and inspire governance that will generate and achieve meaningful development (Keohane, 2010). In Taraba State, leadership has not been unidirectional but focusing

on different perspectives as its idiosyncrasies direct. Whether Taraba State is developed in terms of infrastructure has remained a contending debate among Tarabans when comparing the state with other states created in the same period or after it. There has also been an unending debate over the performances of the various administrations in terms of infrastructural development in Taraba State given the capacity of internally generated revenue and the statutory allocation from the Federation Account.

However, in this study attention is given to the role of political leadership in infrastructural development between 2015 and 2019; that is, the study is poised to assess the five year period of the Governor Darius Ishaku's administration. The justification is to appraise strictly the performance of the administration, because it is the period that Taraba State received unprecedented statutory allocation and other finances from the federal government, including refund on the federal road constructions undertaken by the late Danbaba Suntai's administration. This administration is also singled out for interrogation because of the availability of data and for the avoidance of complexities involved in a comparative study.

Methodology

This is a qualitative study based on documented evidence, observation and interview methods of data collection. The documented evidence, involved both primary (unpublished accounts of events) and secondary existing literatures (published information on government records, such as internally generated revenues, cash flow from the federal government, budgetary allocations and expenditure, etc.).

Also, the study obtained data from interviews carried out with the people in government and within the state on the performance of the government within the period under study. The people interviewed pleaded anonymity as they could not allow their names to be mentioned in the study. Data obtained through documented evidence were compared with the one obtained through interviews to determine similarities and differences in the viewpoints presented by the different sources. In this way reliability of data was measured and determined (Ezeibe, Nzeadibe, Ali, Udeogu, Nwankwo & Chinedu, 2017; Bjerkli, 2013).

Theoretical Framework

This study is based on the public choice theory developed originally by Duncan Black in 1940. The theory was popularized by James Buchanan and Gordon Tullock (Rowley, 2003). Other contributors to the public choice theory are Kenneth Arrow, Willians Niskanen, Anthony Downs, amongst others (Willians, 2008). As a branch of economics, the public choice theory was developed from the study of taxation and spending in the 1950s, but have since 1986 been accepted widely and embraced into other disciplines, such as political science to study and analyse political behaviour (Shaw, 2002; Mueller, 2003). It is variously described as rational choice, social choice or positive political economy (Wright, 1993; Watkins, n.d). The theory establishes a correlation between politics and economics, particularly in the context of how political leaders make use of economic cost and benefit analysis in political decisions.

The basic assumptions of the public choice theory are that (1) the community faces a binary choice, with only one of the two choices being the "right" choice for the community; (2) everyone in the community wants to make the right choice, and (3) the probability that a citizen vote for the right choice is greater. From this context, the choices people make are motivated by egoistic, rationality, and the need to maximize utility. After choices have been made through the electoral process in a

democratic setting, political leaders and bureaucrats aspire to maximize their satisfaction (Wright, 1993; Watkins, n.d).

Deducing from their behaviour, while serving as public policymakers, political leaders and bureaucrats largely consider their interest or benefit before arriving at decisions on what is popularly referred to as “public policy”. It means that it is difficult to separate between personal interest and public interest in the decision-making process. In the event where the decision by political leaders and bureaucrats reflect public interest is merely a coincidence. Therefore, any decision arising from the government is primarily to meets first the interests of the decision-makers but makes secondary the interests of those who voted them to represent them. In this context, what is termed as “public good” is in the real sense “private good” in public management.

Logical deductions from the theoretical framework while applying it to the study of political leadership and infrastructural development in Taraba State, reveals that whatever the government is executing does not, in essence, reflect public interests but personal interests of those in control of the government. In a nutshell, the policy frameworks of the government at any level in Nigeria take a top-bottom approach in that they are based on their dispositions and availability of resources at their disposal. How decisions are conceived, legislated upon, implemented and executed by the government is interrogated within the frame of public choice theory to understand the role of political leadership and infrastructural development in Taraba State between 2015 and 2019.

Conceptual Clarification

Political Leadership

In this study, three concepts are considered essential to be operationalized in the study. These include political leadership, infrastructure and infrastructural development. To start with, Howard Elcock stated that “political leadership is a concept central to understanding political processes and outcomes, yet its definition is elusive”. However, political leadership is a conceptual construct that reflects leadership practice in a civil administration, organization or society. It is a leadership that comes about as a result of politics, particularly through democratic means, say for example the electoral process (Kane & Patapan, 2012). In a democratic setting, political leadership is not expected to be autocratic or *laissez fares* in governance, but is expected to be the type that takes account of expert opinion, but inevitably takes much more interest in public opinion and particularly the views of opinion leaders in key sectors or constituencies (Keane, 2009; Gbervbie, Shodipo & Oviasogie, 2013). At the same time, political leadership should also inspire and influence the decision-making process to achieve a set goal.

The set goals of a government determined by political leadership are variants depending on the interest of the political leader, whether elected or appointed. One of the goals of political leadership is to create a condition that will bring about, or, generate infrastructural development.

Infrastructure

Infrastructural development is a precursor of the infrastructure itself. Infrastructure includes hard and soft infrastructures. Hard infrastructure refers to the large physical structures and networks necessary for the functioning of a country (Table 1), whereas soft infrastructure refers to all the institutions which are required to maintain the economic, health, cultural and social standards of a country, such as the financial system, the education system, the health care system, the system of government, and law enforcement, as well as emergency services (Adesoji & Chike, 2013; Sullivan & Sheffrin, 2003).

Table 1: Infrastructure and Associated Services

S/N	Infrastructure	Associated Services
1	Transportation	Roads, bridges, tunnels, rail tracks, harbours, etc.
2	Water supply	Dams, reservoirs, pipes, treatment plants, etc.
3	Water disposal	Sewers, used water treatment plants, etc.
4	Irrigation	Dams, canals
5	Garbage disposal	Dumps, incinerators, compost units
6	District heating	Plant, network
7	Telecommunication	Telephone exchanges, telephone lines, etc.
8	Power	Power plants, transmission & distribution lines

Source: Torrance, M. (2008). The Rise of a Global Infrastructure Market through Relational Investing. Economic Geography, 85(1), 75–97.

Torrance (2009) identified three different categories of infrastructure, which include (1) transport infrastructure (roads, rail tracks, and airports with user’s fees); (2) regulated infrastructure (water, electricity and gas distribution networks with regulated service contracts with availability fees); and (3) social infrastructure (schools and hospitals, for which governments pay an availability fee over a 20- to 30-year term) (Torrance, 2009). From the foregoing context, Runde (2017) explicated that “infrastructure is the physical undergirding of any society, and a country’s infrastructure plays a large role in determining its long-term economic and social trajectory”.

Infrastructural development

Infrastructural development is a transformation or improvement that is quantitative, qualitative or both in the level of infrastructure based on the availability of resources (Orji, Worika & Umofia, 2017). In a democratic society, development in infrastructure is one of the bases for determining the performances of political leadership. It is a process of providing infrastructure through a deliberate act of government or governance to the people which is necessary for a good life. Infrastructural development has significant environmental impacts on economic growth and has the capacity of generating economic and social activities and maintaining an inclusive, healthy and productive workforce (Usman, 2014; Isibor, 2013; Babatunde, Afees & Olasunkanmi, 2012). Infrastructural development is meant to address three main concerns which include poverty, inequality and physical structural distribution of infrastructural in a state.

Historical Trajectory of Political Leadership and Infrastructural Development in Taraba State

Whenever Taraba State is discussed or comparison is made on governors who have governed since its creation, the rating of their administrations by the people is usually not the same. Some of these leaders have been rated as performers while most of them have been rated below average. The rating includes both for the military and civilian regimes of the state. The ratings are based on the ground of evidence of the projects or initiatives they left behind after expiration of their tenures. In comparison with other states created on 27 August 1991 or after this date, it is generally conceived that Taraba State has not witnessed the much-needed infrastructural development. Under the military regime, the military administrators that ruled the state were unconstitutional. Therefore, people could not hold them accountable for their actions in government. They governed, although, not without consultations with the stakeholders of the state, but also according to their dispositions. Of the four military administrators which include Navy Captain Ambrose Afolahan, Col. Yohana Mamman Dickson, Cmpl. Ameh Ehdohere Oyakhere and Col. A. J. Awoniyi, two of them, Navy Captain Ambrose Afolahan and Cmpl Ameh Adohore Oyakhere were

notable for infrastructural development. They were able to construct official and residential quarters, which are up to date housing the estate for the Taraba State workforce.

Intermittently, the former Governor of Taraba State, Reverend Jolly Nyame had governed the state for nine years. The first period was halted by the military under the leadership of General Sani Abacha in 1995, while the second period was after the return to democracy in May 1999. Put together, Rev. Nyame had governed Taraba State for about 12 years. His administration had a mixed assessment from the people of the state. Many Tarabans hold the view that Rev. Nyame was consistent in terms of payment of salaries and entitlements due for civil servants, however, performed poorly in terms of infrastructural development. Another assessment about Rev. Nyame's administration is that it was only toward the expiration of his tenure that Taraba State witnessed some level of infrastructural development which included the construction of referral hospitals in the three Senatorial Districts and the Specialist Hospital in Jalingo, Taraba State Capital. Other infrastructures also included the Housing Estate in Mile-Six, the Jolly Nyame Stadium and so on (Anonymous, 2019a).

Notwithstanding, Taraba State was considered still an underdeveloped state in terms of infrastructures in the northeast zone of Nigeria. Some stakeholders attributed the abysmal level of performance by the Rev. Nyame's administration to low generation of internal revenues and statutory allocation from the Federal Government of Nigeria. However, other people have attributed the abysmal performance in terms of infrastructural development to the extravagance spending and mismanagement of funds by the administration.¹

The Rev. Nyame administration mortgaged the future of Taraba State to endemic corruption, bank loans and overdrafts. A political stakeholder stated:

There has been evidence of endemic corruption as those senior civil servants who served in the Nyame administration are far richer than the Taraba State Government. They can boast of big and well-furnished mansions which are by far better than the Taraba State Government House. Their fleets of flashy cars are no match for government vehicles and most often compete with the Governor's official cars (Anonymous, 2019b).

The foregoing assertion about governance in Taraba State is still evident in contemporary time. However, the pattern of governance took a twist at the assumption of office by Governor Danbaba Danfulani Suntai. His radical approach to governance was evidenced in the crop of Senior Government Officials that constituted part of the administration. Many people in Taraba State believe that Governor Suntai had a progressive team and it is the reason for the level of infrastructural development witnessed in Taraba State. An elder statesman stated that:

Before Pharmacist Danbaba Suntai was elected as governor, Taraba State was poorly developed in terms of infrastructure. Governor Suntai transformed the State Capital City, Jalingo, by constructing motorable roads that link the various parts of the city. In all the 16 Local Government Areas, the government constructed 10-kilometre roads, and there were roads constructed linking other LGAs from Jalingo. He also awarded the contract for the construction of the Mararaba into Baissa in Kurmi LGA. The road to Sardauna LGA was also under construction. Other roads to be constructed were identified and planning was on

¹ The information generated from personal discussions with some stakeholders on the reflection of past and present political leadership and the state of infrastructural development in Taraba State.

before the governor became incapacitated due to air crash and subsequent death (Anonymous, 2019c).

Governor Suntai's achievement was not limited to only road construction, but it was a factor that speeded the level of infrastructural development in Jalingo and the surrounding environs. Because of the performances of Governor Suntai, Ganchok (2010) stated that "every society wants good leadership; the kind of leadership that is visionary, sensitive, receptive, progressive, accountable and geared towards the common good of all. Comparatively, we are beginning to see a leadership style that is heading towards these qualities."

It suffices to state that after Governor Suntai's air crash, Taraba State started experiencing setbacks in terms of infrastructural development. Subsequent political leaders could not sustain the tempo of infrastructural development which Governor Suntai started. Till today, some of the projects have not been completed, for example, the road to Sardauna LGA and Kurmi LGA. Several other projects started by the Suntai's administration have been abandoned. In this connection, Akwa (2019) stated that those privileged to hold political leadership have displayed an unusual penchant for ineptitude and it explains why the citizens of the state constantly fail in their civic duties, particularly voting for good leaders. It also explains the abhorrent state of underdevelopment in Taraba State. Taraba State is largely a consumer economy rather than a production economy due to the moribund nature of its few industries.

Leadership performance and infrastructural development in Taraba State, 2015-2019

The period leading to 2015 general elections in Taraba State was full of crises along with competing interests among politicians and citizens. To many Tarabans, Governor Darius Ishaku was not their preferred candidate, but an imposition by the political elite, specifically Gen. Theophilus Yakubu Danjuma (ret'd) on the people. The reason attributed to Arch. Ishaku's election as Governor of Taraba State was ethnicity and religion, which was deeply entrenched during the electoral process (Anonymous, 2020). However, politics in Taraba State is driven mainly by religious and ethnic consciousness. Although many Tarabans never preferred Arch. Ishaku, the use of religious institution such as the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) to prevail on the people's political consciousness led to Ishaku's victory in the 2015 governorship election. Governor Ishaku is re-elected in 2019 was also based on religion (Anonymous, 2020).

The political slogan of the Arch. Ishaku's administration had remained "Operation Rescue Taraba" and "Give me Peace and I will give you Development". Many Tarabans, particularly some of the politically motivated Christians and Muslims considered Arch. Ishaku contesting on the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) platform as coming to rescue Taraba State. As an architect, the feelings among many Tarabans were that Governor Ishaku's administration would deliver on infrastructural development.² The 100 days for political leaders in the office is phenomenal because it is used to demonstrate their commitments to development. Often, it is the physical infrastructures of the political leadership that are assessed. According to Ganchok (2010), millions of naira of taxpayers' fund is spent to commemorate this day. After the celebration, no one hears of it again, until the end of the political leader's tenure. It is usually accompanied by propaganda

² Personal conversation with an array of individuals to gather their opinions/perceptions on the election of Arch. Ishaku as Governor of Taraba State on the party platform of the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) in 2015 General Elections.

without anything on ground to present to the citizens who voted them into leadership positions. This was perhaps what characterized the Ishaku's first tenure since the 2015 general election.

Year	Statutory Allocation (₦)	Value Added Tax (₦)	Excess Crude (₦)	Paris Club (₦)	IGR* (₦)	Details of Revenue (₦)
2015	44,029,812,047.05	7,407,545,579.13	198,971,853.75	0.00	6,033,772,104.04	57,670,101,583.94
2016	24,064,352,803.01	7,461,826,522.11	448,335,667.38	0.00	5,689,865,372.57	37,664,380,365.07
2017	31,116,437,121.14	9,124,184,047.50	0.00	14,152,940,437.71	6,441,443,522.65	60,835,005,129.00
2018	43,710,867,679.78	17,893,345,563.46	2,699,725,955.70	0.00	6,922,496,761.49	71,226,435,960.63
Total	142,921,469,650.98	41,886,901,712.20	3,347,033,476.83	14,152,940,437.71	25,087,577,760.75	227,395,923,038.64
Grand total						1,855,932,949,410.40

Under Governor Ishaku's administration, Taraba State had received and generated finances from different sources among which included the Statutory Allocation (₦142,921,469,650.98), Value Added Tax (₦41,886,901,712.20), Excess Crude (₦3,347,033,476.83), Paris Club (₦14,152,940,437.70), and the Internally Generated Revenue (₦25,087,577,760.75), with the total revenue of ₦227,395,923,038.64. All the funds from these different sources were between 2015 and 2018 (Table 2). Of these finances, the Taraba State government was able to pay monthly salaries worth over two billion naira (Ministry of Finance, 2019).

The statutory allocation from the Federation Account and revenue sources accruing to Taraba State were used to meet different needs of the state. This was reflected in the budget of the government which was presented to the State House of Assembly each year for approval. The budget of Taraba State was over 217trillion naira in 4years between 2015 and 2018 (Table 3).

Table 2: Different sources of fund accrued to Taraba State, 2015-2018

*IGR-Internally Generated Revenue

Source: The Report of the Accountant-General, Taraba State 2015-2018

Table 3: Taraba State Budget and Actual Expenditure 2015-2018

S/N	Year	Budget (₦)	Actual Expenditure (₦)
1	2015	56,715,147,549.00	57,670,101,583.97
2	2016	62,595,227,727.00	60,835,005,129.00
3	2017	50,746,152,517.00	37,663,885,365.07
4	2018	47,119,846,464.00	71,226,435,960.63
Total		217,176,374,257	227,395,428,038.67

Source: The Report of the Accountant-General, Taraba State 2015-2018

The Ishaku's administration during this period placed a high premium on nine sectors which included agriculture, industrialization, water and rural development, road construction and transportation, poverty alleviation and youth empowerment, health (General), housing and urban development, environmental improvement and education (enhancing schools and knowledge) (Table 4). According to Ishaku's government, these were the critical sectors capable of generating development in the state.

Table 4: Taraba State Expenditure, 2015-2018

Expenditure	2015 (₦)	2016 (₦)	2017 (₦)	2018 (₦)
Agriculture	1,331,924,012.51	1,616,366,243.75	3,359,874,142.02	4,146,885,041.42
Industrialization	0.00	0.00	7,000,000.00	8,458,327.00
Water & Rural Development	1,487,742,211.87	1,487,742,211.87	6,005,149,571.83	3,423,325,266.34
Road construction and transportation	14,693,190,411.79	3,399,308,735.86	9,219,562,231.40	9,035,829,155.58
Poverty alleviation and youth empowerment	33,141,000.00	0.00	0.00	2,642,572,384.00
Health (General)	3,520,071,268.71	1,320,254,294.39	4,240,037,880.74	5,526,067,294.66
Housing and urban development	0.00	902,370.00	3,247,237,291.00	1,790,023,333.96
Environmental improvement (General)	957,458,275.12	1,361,815,040.07	3,840,888,459.30	
Education (Enhancing schools and knowledge)	21,690,000.00	264,210,032.00	2,421,855,302.00	4,288,259,541.41
Total	22,045,217,180.59	9,449,666,557.94	34,351,601,878.29	29,240,399,407.96

Source: The Report of the Accountant-General, Taraba State 2015-2018

In Table 4, the government of Taraba State expended the sum of ₦22,045,217,180.59 in 2015, ₦9,449,666,557.94 in 2016, ₦34,351,601,878.29 in 2017, and ₦29,240,399,407.96 in 2018. Of these years, the priority of the government included road construction and transportation, agriculture, health, education, and water and rural development. Sectors such as poverty alleviation and youth empowerment, environmental improvement, industrialization, housing and urban development did not receive the much-needed attention. The achievement of the state government between 2015 and 2019 is presented in Table 5.

Some infrastructural development projects executed by Taraba State Government, 2015-2019

Date	MDA	Contract awarded	Contractor	Procurement type	Amount	Remark
04/11/2015	Min of Health	Construction of College of Nursing & Midwifery, Jalingo	Min of Health	Work	₦ 2,206,445,331.85	Completed
09/11/2015	Min of Works & Transport	Construction of Civil Works at Jalingo Airport.	Min of Works & Transport	Works	₦ 156,970,454.55	Completed
09/11/2015	Min of Works & Transport	Consultancy Services on Takum-Bissaula Road In Kurmi L.G.A	Min of Works & Transport	Service	₦ 51,016,805.91	Completed
18/12/2015	Min of Health/ T.A.C.A. Jalingo	Upward review of Contract Sum & additional Work in T.A.C.A	Min of Health/ T.A.C.A. Jalingo	Service	₦ 13,102,331.00	Completed
08/12/2015	Min of Education, Jalingo.	Reconstruction of A4 Bedroom flat for W.A.E.C	Min of Education, Jalingo.	Works	₦ 11,530,462.15	Completed
06/12/2016	Min of Water Supply Agency, Jalingo.	Continuation of the ongoing TRSG/JIKA Rural Water Supply Project in the State	Min of Water Supply Agency, Jalingo.	Service	₦ 185,759,892.50	Completed
25/07/2016	Min of Works & Transport	Consultancy Services on Donga Mararraba Road, In Donga L.G.A	Min of Works & Transport	Service	₦ 32,279,857.16	On-going
25/07/2016	Min of Works & Transport	Consultancy Services on Pantisawa Road Project In Yorro L.G.A	Min of Works & Transport	Service	₦ 19,225,001.25	On-going

04/08/2016	Min of Works & Transport	Construction Of Children's Amusement Park.	Min of Works & Transport	Work	₦ 1, 111, 887. 30	On-going
05/08/2016	Min of Works & Transport	Compensation of 6.7 Km Magami Road Network In Jalingo	Min of Works & Transport	Work	₦ 78, 509, 213. 69	
08/11/2016	Min of Works & Transport	Additional Work on Magami Road Network Project	Min of Works & Transport	Work	₦ 174, 920, 212. 00	Completed
20/12/2016	Min of Works & Transport	Reconstruction and Rehabilitation of Bali-Serti-Gembu road for Additional Work.	Min of Works & Transport	Work	₦ 420, 174, 013. 85	Completed
20/02/2017	Min of Works & Transport	Reconstruction & Rehabilitation of 23 Km Mararaba Kunini Road	Min of Works & Transport	Service	₦ 107, 756, 250, 215. 00	
09/11/2018	Min of Works & Transport	Residents supervision of Mararaban Pantisawa (Lacheke) - Pantisawa Road.	MEER,S Gaiwa and Associate Limited	Services	₦ 50, 478, 969.11	Completed
14/02/2018	Min of Works & Transport	Residents supervision of Wukari-Tsonkundi road	MEER,S Team Work and Associate Limited	Services	₦ 50, 542, 700. 00	On-going
23/03/2018	Min of Works & Transport	Installation of Solar Powered Street Light Along Road Blocks Kona Village(6.5 KM) & G/House	WIZ China World Wide Engineering	Goods	₦ 454,889,436.61	Completed
20/03/2018	Min of Works & Transport	Construction of TSBS Anguwan Kassa-Mile Six Bye Passes.	Taraba state Road Construction & Maintenance.	Works	₦ 447, 409, 52.25	Completed
28/06/2018	Min of Works & Transport	Overlaying of asphalt on Buba and Ibrahim Roads	WIZ China World Wide Engineering	Works	₦ 102, 842, 680.40	Completed
09/08/2018	Min of Works & Transport	Construction Of Marraban Baissa-Abong-Roads	LOTI CGC NIG, LTD	Works	₦ 6,942,552,304.89	On-going
24/08/2018	Min of Works & Transport	Construction Of Marraban Baissa-Abong-Roads	China Zhanghan Nig. Ltd.	Works	₦ 6,239,751,581.71	On-going
24/08/2018	Min of Works & Transport	Construction Of Marraban Baissa-Abong-Roads	CCECC Nig. Ltd	Works	₦ 5,361,708,022.13	On-going
11/09/2018	Min of Works & Transport	Resident supervision for the Construction of Carriage Way Jauro Yinu City Gate (along Wukari Road) Pantinapu City Gate (along Yola Road) with A Bridge Across Nukkai River (13 KM)	Thamar Engineering Company Ltd	Works	₦ 102,743,424.08	On-going
11/09/2018	Min of Works & Transport	Construction of Magami Road Network	Wiz China World Wide	Work	₦ 399, 021,704.60	Completed

Source: Bureau for Public Procurement (2017 & 2019) Taraba State Public Procurement Journal, Quarterly Journal 1st & 2nd Edition.

Note: On-going projects are projects that are spilled over into 2019 and mostly will continue into subsequent years.

Despite the numerous indicators of achievements recorded by the Taraba State government, there are different opinions about infrastructural development in the state under the leadership of Arch. Ishaku. Akwa (2019) stated that Taraba is a state that is second to none in Nigeria in terms of natural endowments and tourism potentials. With the abundant natural resources that are yet to be harnessed, Taraba State has no business to rely solely on federal allocation to generate infrastructural development in the state. The government has developed inaptitude toward transforming the state in terms of infrastructure. This conception about the Arch. Ishaku's administration applies to previous political leadership in Taraba State as majority of them who

governed the state, elected or appointed did not pay much attention to infrastructural development in the state.

While other opinions hold that the presentation of roads claimed to have been constructed by Arch. Ishaku to mark and celebrate his 100 days in 2015 was rather propaganda as the government merely constructed road shoulders. The government also claimed to have spent hugely on agriculture, particularly with the construction of the Green House for the farming and production of cucumber, which generated employment for many unemployed youthful populations. The claim by the government to have transformed the agricultural economy in Taraba State has been refuted by many who claimed that agricultural sector has thrived through personal efforts of the farmers as it is difficult to access farming incentives or support from the government.³

Even though the Arch. Ishaku's administration also provided pipe-borne water in the state, some people claim that the water which was considered as Arch. Ishaku's water achievement was part of the World Bank project which Taraba State was lucky to have benefitted from before his administration. This assertion contradicts the basis for the award received by Arch. Ishaku as the "water man" of the 2019.

The road constructions which the government have awarded, for example, the Mararaban Yorro to Pantisawa in Yorro LGA also agitated some people. The concern raised was in the amount of money for which the contract of the six-kilometre road was awarded; the road is still under construction since 2018. There are also concerns over the road construction of Wukari-Ibi road. Towards the end of 2019, the state government under Arch. Ishaku's leadership declared constructed and expanded the highway from the entrance to the exit of Jalingo town.⁴

Despite these efforts by the state government under Arch. Ishaku's leadership in terms of infrastructural development, claims continue to resonate that the administration performed less in terms of infrastructural development.

Factors Militating against Infrastructural Development in Taraba State

Infrastructures like industries, buildings, roads, bridges, and health services, etc are the basic things that are needed for survival and development of any society. Moreover, infrastructural development can also be said to be an enterprise or the products, services and facilities necessary for an economy to function (Sullivan & Sheffrin, 2003). Infrastructure generally sets out the interconnectedness of structural elements that provide the framework for supporting an entire structure of development (Fulmer, 2009). The achievements of the leadership of any state are measured by the level and type of infrastructural development the leaders or those in the position of authority provide for the people (Gberevbie, Shodipo & Oviasogie, 2013; Adebayo, 1985). The challenges faced by the current administration in terms of delivering infrastructural development stems from several factors among which include the high cost of governance, mismanagement and misappropriation of funds and corruption. These challenges are explained below:

³ The data were generated from different opinions/perceptions of the interviewees on the performances of the Arch. Ishaku, the Governor of Taraba State since 2015. (Interviews, November-December, 2019).

⁴ The data were generated from different opinions/perceptions of the interviewees on the performances of the Arch. Ishaku, the Governor of Taraba State since 2015. (Interviews, November-December, 2019).

Cost of Governance and Recurrent Expenditure

The cost of governance and recurrent expenditure are so high leaving little for capital expenditure in Taraba State. Since coming to power in 2015 as the governor of the state, Arch. Ishaku appointed about one hundred and fifty (150) Advisers and one hundred (100) Senior Assistants.⁵ These appointees were not in the mainstream of governance. Majority of the advisers were unproductive and had not met the governor after their oath-taking, but were paid monthly.⁶ There were also many Commissioners that were appointed by the governor beside elected political leaders whose remunerations and allowances were on the high side. The money paid to those elected and appointed political leaders and other recurrent expenditure no doubt, undermined the effort toward infrastructural development in the state.

Misappropriation and Mismanagement of Funds

Misappropriation and mismanagement of funds refer to instances where a person fails to observe laws or guidelines when handling finances for another person or organization. Funds can be mismanaged if not directed to the right channel to boost infrastructural development in the state. In Taraba State, mismanagement of funds has remained a hindrance to the development of infrastructures. In most circumstances, funds budgeted for infrastructural development are diverted to meet new ends or to serve other personal purposes. This situation slows the process of infrastructural development and further under develops the people and the entire state. Political leaders in Taraba State are not accountable to those who elect them to power. It explains why political leaders, whose lineages have no history of being rich, are flagrantly rich because of the political positions they occupy in the state.⁷ This explains that majority of past and present political leaders have become rich by relying on state resources. Political positions which the political leaders in the state held or hold provide them with the pathway to wealth and power.

Corruption

Corruption does not only cause the price of infrastructure to rise, but it also reduces the quality of infrastructure investment. The corruption in Nigeria is very high and unbearable for effective infrastructural development. The Bureau of Public Procurement (BPP), the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) and the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) have not been able to eradicate corruption in the country. Corruption deters infrastructural development. Despite the fact that before Ishaku were at different periods arrested and charged to court by the anti-corruption and anti-graft agencies over allegations of corruption, the situation did not change during the administration of Arch. Ishaku as corruption in Taraba State was high to the extent that contracts were awarded to incompetent hands. Professionals were not allowed to handle projects due to corruption. There was no transparency in the collection and remittance of internally generated revenues to the government. This even affected the statutory allocation that used to come from the federation account and the capacity to develop infrastructure in the state.

⁵ The data is as a result of personal observations regarding the number and pattern of appointments of the Advisers and Senior Advisers by Gov. Ishaku after his election in 2015. It is noteworthy that the appointments were to satisfy the various competing interests and social forces coming from the various LGAs. The same pattern is still evident after his return for the second term in office in 2019.

⁶ This perception is a reflection of the views of some individuals over the role of the Advisers and Senior Advisers appointment by the governor since 2015.

⁷ The perceptions of the cross-section of people interviewed revealed that politicians in the Arch. Ishaku's government mismanages resources by enriching themselves more than the services they provide to their constituencies since their election or appointment in 2015.

Conclusion

This study interrogated political leadership and infrastructural development in Taraba State, covering the period between 2015 and 2019. The study from antecedence revealed that generally performances of political office holders, elected and or appointed in the state have performed poorly in terms of infrastructural development. However, it is widely held that the late Suntai's administration was remarkably different. After a tumultuous struggle for power in the 2015 elections, Arch. Ishaku was elected to be the governor of Taraba State. Because of the high premium people placed on the government, it has generated widespread contradicting assessments on the level of performance by the Arch. Ishaku's administration among the people of Taraba State.

The basis of Arch. Ishaku's election was elitist and religiously construed. To many religiously conscious people, Arch. Ishaku portrayed a heroic and messianic posture as a candidate who was coming to rescue and develops the state. Unfortunately, on comparative terms with the late Gov. Suntai's administration, their expectations about infrastructural development in the state have not fully been realised. The challenges associated with the poor level of infrastructure development in Taraba State are many. This is because the demand for infrastructure surpasses the supply of finances necessary to stimulate the effort to provide rapidly the needed infrastructure in the state. Due to the wider gap between the provision and need for infrastructure in the state, it is believed that the political leadership in the state has failed.

In Taraba State, governments do not set the priority right in infrastructure development. Infrastructural projects are supposed to meet certain developmental objectives. However, most of the projects embarked upon are white elephant projects that are difficult to realise within a certain period. Most of the planned or the executed infrastructural projects based on public choice theory are construed by the perception of those in power and not based on people's demand. This provides the ground for the misgivings people have about the Ishaku's government in the state.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are provided to respond to the challenges associated with the delivery of infrastructural development in Taraba State. These include:

- i. Good governance is the only antidote that can bridge the wide gap. Good governance promotes accountability, reduces corruption, and minimises resources wastage. It ensures political and economic stability and reduces the level of risk associated with large and lumpy infrastructure investments.
- ii. The government should cut down the cost of governance and recurrent expenditure by reducing the number of appointees and recurrent expenditures. The employment of the services of many advisers contributes in undermining the effort of the government toward achieving infrastructural development in Taraba State. With the current economic situation in Nigeria, government is required to reduce the number of advisers on its payroll to redirect the surpluses to the development of infrastructure across the state.
- iii. Government should create serious checks on the misappropriation and mismanagement of funds, and activities that subvert finances to concentrate on infrastructural development. Misappropriation and mismanagement of fund does not necessarily imply embezzlement of fund but a misplacement of priority for which the fund was meant for and/or not managed effectively to achieve the purpose for which the government was elected.

- iv. The government should be accountable and responsible to the people. The people are required to know the scorecards in terms of performances from time to time. Accountability and responsiveness are not a matter of rhetoric but accompanied by on the ground evidence.

References

- Adefuye, A. (1992). *Culture and Foreign Policy: The Nigerian Experience* Lagos: Nigeria Institute of International Affairs.
- Adesina, O.S. (2017). Projecting Nigeria's soft power through culinary diplomacy. *African Journal for the Psychological Study of Social Issues*, 20 (1), 14-149.
- Agubamah, E. & Zasha, Z. T. (2013). China's cultural diplomacy in Africa: The trajectories, trends and realities. *Journal of African Politics and Society*, 2(2).
- Agubamah, E. (2014). Bilateral relations; Periscoping Nigeria and China relations. *European Scientific Journal*, 10(14).
- Akinbileje, T.Y. (2014). "Symbolic values of clothing and textiles art in traditional and contemporary Africa". *International Journal of Development and Sustainability*, 3(4), 626-641.
- Anaemene, U.B. *Cultural Imperatives in Foreign Policy: The Case of Nigeria*.
- Ayansina, C. (2014). *Diplomacy-duke/FG to use Nigerian dishes as cultural diplomacy – Duke* Retrieved from <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2014/06/fg-use-nigerian-dishes-cultural-diplomacy-duke/>.
- Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN)(1998). *Cultural policy for Nigeria*. Lagos: Federal Government Press.
- Federal Republic of Nigeria, Constitution 1999. Lagos: Federal government Printer.
- Iorngurum, D.S. & Tsevende, R. (2013). "Nigerian dances and cultural diplomacy". *Global Advanced Research Journal of peace, Gender and Development Studies*, 2 (3), 54-60.
- Iriye, A. (1979). "Culture and power: International relations as intercultural relations". *Diplomatic History*, 3 (2), 115-128.
- Iyorwuese, H. (2011). *The importance of Culture and Cultural Diplomacy in the Foreign Policy of Nigeria*.
- Mahe, I.G. (2012). "Culture and foreign policy". In E. Anyaoku (Ed), *Review of Nigerian foreign policy*. Lagos: Nigerian Institute of International Affairs, 321-344.
- Mark, S. (2009). *A greater role for cultural diplomacy*. Clingenadael: Desktop Publishing.
- Nidhi, A.S.Y. (2015). *India-Nigeria Relations (from Historical Friends to Strategic Partners)*. *International Journal of Political Science and Development*. 3(5), 231-239.
- Nye, J. (2004). The Changing Nature of World Power. *Political Science Quarterly*, 105(2).
- Ofoegbu, R. (1979). *Foreign Policy and Military Rule in Oyediran Oyeleye* (ed) Nigerian Government and Politics Under Military Rule 1966-1979. London: Macmillan Press.
- Ofoegbu, R. (1980). *A Foundation Course in International Relations for African Universities* London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd.

- Ojo, O. (2020). "Nigeria's Foreign Policy under the Administration of President Muhammadu Buhari: An Overview" in Nigeria's Foreign Policy: Under the Administration of President Muhammadu Buhari, 2015-2019 (eds.), Lagos: Nigerian Institute of International Affairs.
- Outgoing British High Commissioner Farewell speech: Punch Newspaper, Retrieved from <http://m.facebook.com/story.php//storyigerian> Nigerian Journal of African Studies 2020. Vol 2. No 1 ISSN 2734-3146.
- Pajtinka, E. (2014). Cultural diplomacy in theory and practice of contemporary international relations. *Politcke vedy. Roc.* 17(4), 95-108.
- Palmer, N.D. & Perkins, H.C. (2007). International relations: *The world community in transition*. 3rd Revised Edition. Delhi: A.I.T.B.S. Publishers.
- Pine, A. (2020). *Cultural diplomacy and Nigeria's Foreign Policy*.
- Ryan, S.B. (2015). *Cultural diplomacy in international relations: Understanding hidden bias in cultural knowledge*, Retrieved from <http://www2.lib.yamagata-u.ac.jp/kiyouh/kiyouh/kiyouh-18-2/image/kiyouh-18-2-063to086.pdf>.
- Udeala, S.O. (2010). Nigeria-China economic relations under the south-south cooperation. *African Journal of International Affairs*, 13(1&2).
- Uji, W.T. (2000). Cultural awakening: A tool for national development. *Benue Valley Journal of Humanities*, 3(2).
- Umaisha, S.I. (2010). *History of Nigerian literature*. Retrieved from <http://everythinginliterature.blogspot.com/2010/12/history-of-nigerian-literature.html>.
- Wapmuk, S., Akinkuotu, O. & Ibonye, V. (2014). "The Nigerian diaspora and national development: Contributions, challenges, and lessons from other countries". *Kritika Kultura*, 23, 292-342.