



DEMOCRACY AND BENEVOLENT DICTATORSHIP GOVERNANCE SYSTEMS: WHICH SHOULD NIGERIA ADOPT?

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Abstract

Democracy has been majorly orchestrated as the best governance system in the world. It has been described as a governance system which ensures freedom, equality and democratic principles. This paper notes the attributes of democracy but doubts its celebrated ability to offer its attributes, especially in Africa and particularly Nigeria. In the logical framework, the paper discusses the source of democratic governance which it ties to the Bible's expose on the struggle for power in Heaven, which led to the sack of Lucifer and angels loyal to him from Heaven to the earth and that they landed in Greece where they began to establish the governance system that they could not establish in Heaven, as they were unable to dethrone God. The paper in its analysis shows that with the political fundamentals of Nigeria, democracy will never lead Nigeria to growth and self-expression as a nation; rather the country will remain in the vicious cycle of democratic mis-governance. The paper suggest strongly that Nigeria should consider adopting the benevolent dictatorship governance system to present the platform that can - in the short run - propel Nigeria to great economic wellness and progress and to be in tune with the governance model in Heaven, as a faith nation.

Keywords: Democracy, Governance, Dictatorship, Governance Systems.

Background

Governance systems define how power is distributed, exercised, and regulated in a society. Two contrasting governance models that interest the researcher are democracy and benevolent dictatorship. Each is known to possess distinct features, advantages, and challenges. Many commentators on Nigeria's development had intentionally identified leadership as the major problem that plagues the country's drive towards high mass development given the country's rich natural resources, population, and exceptional human capital stock. The leadership question had recently been posited around the governance system that Nigeria had implemented over the years. Many researchers and commentators had laid monumental blame on the failure of Nigeria to develop as result of military intervention with its dictatorial tendencies and policies which drove away democratic leadership. They assume that the expected economic transformation of the nation since independence (in 1960) has been interrupted by bouts of military dictatorial governments. However, the reality and confusing trend over time is that since

1999 till date, Nigeria has witnessed an unbroken democratic rule, without any real positive change in her conditions towards economic transformation as other countries that were her contemporaries (Brazil, Singapore, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, among others), and commentators on Nigeria are still identifying leadership failure, even in a democracy, as the problem. With the overt description of democracy as a governing system that brings up people-centered leadership, why is Nigeria's democracy still impotent in solving the leadership problem plaguing the country's development process after over 25 years of unbroken democratic governance?

This paper is concerned that if Nigeria cannot get its leadership art right after over 25 years of unbroken democratic governance, there is need to try other governance models. The realities of uncommon economic transformation of China and the oil rich Arabian countries had informed this paper to consider a comparison between democracy and benevolent dictatorship in order to determine a right governing model that will inspire transformational leadership in Nigeria - as in china and the oil rich Arabian countries. The objective of this paper, therefore, is to assess particular traditional governance systems: democracy and benevolent dictatorship, to determine which of the two can be the right model to lead Nigeria's economic transformation. The paper is arranged in sections thus:

Section 1 – Background

Section 2 – Literature Review

Section 3 – Nigeria's Governance System

Section 4 – Comparison of Economic Growth in Democratic and Benevolent Dictatorships economies

Section 5 – Growth and Sustainability Comparative Analytics

Section 6 – Conclusion

Literature Review

Democracy: Democracy is a political system in which government authority is derived from the people, either directly or through elected representatives. It is built upon principles such as free and fair elections, separation of powers, rule of law, and protection of fundamental rights (Dahl, 1998). Democracies are typically classified into direct and representative forms, with most modern democracies following the latter. Democratic governance is associated with increased political participation, transparency, and accountability, making it a widely accepted form of government (Schmitter & Karl, 1991). However, democracy can face challenges such as political instability, slow decision-making, and susceptibility to populism (Diamond, 2008). Also, the word democracy comes from the Greek words "demos", meaning people, and "kratos" meaning power; so democracy can be thought of as "power of the people": a way of governing which depends on the will of the people (<https://www.coe.int>). In the original Greek sense, democracy was a direct rule, where all citizens were participants in decision making. Modern democracy is, however, characterized by elected representatives, who take decisions on behalf of the people in their representative communities. The original Greek promoters of democracy centered the main tissues of a true democracy to include:

- i. Free, fair, and frequent elections
- ii. Freedom of expression
- iii. Independent sources of information
- iv. Freedom of association

Dictatorship: A dictatorship is a government or a social situation where one person makes all the rules and decisions without input from anyone else. Dictatorship implies absolute power — one

person who takes control — of a political situation, a family, a classroom or even a camping expedition (<https://www.vocabulary.com>). Linz (2000) describe dictatorship is a form of government in which absolute power is concentrated in the hands of a single ruler or a small group, often without constitutional or legal constraints. He further notes that unlike democratic systems, dictatorships typically suppress political opposition, limit civil liberties, and control the media to maintain authority. Dictatorships can take different forms, including military rule, one-party states, and personalist regimes. While some dictatorships claim to promote stability and economic development, they often lack accountability, leading to repression and corruption (Geddes, 1999). Historically, dictatorships have been associated with authoritarianism and the erosion of democratic institutions (Friedrich & Brzezinski, 1956).

Benevolent Dictatorship: Benevolent dictatorship is a theoretical form of government in which an authoritarian leader exercises absolute political power over the state but is seen to do so for the benefit of the population as a whole. A benevolent dictator may allow for some democratic decision-making to exist, such as through public referenda or elected representatives with limited power. It might be seen as a republican form of enlightened despotism/tyranny (Roth, 2007). Cheibub (1998) describes benevolent dictatorship as a form of autocratic rule where a single leader or small group wields absolute power but claims to act in the best interests of the people. That while it lacks democratic processes, a benevolent dictator may implement policies aimed at economic development, social stability, or national progress. He, however, observes the absence of institutional checks and balances makes such systems prone to abuse of power, despite good intentions. Unlike oppressive dictatorships, benevolent dictatorships focus on stability, economic growth, and public welfare. Some historical examples include leaders who implemented rapid modernization or economic reforms in their countries. However, because power is unchecked, even well-intentioned dictatorships can become repressive, undermining civil liberties and leading to corruption (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012). Benevolent dictatorship is said to have been indicated in leaders such as Mustafa Kemal Ataturk (Turkey), Josip Broz Tito (Yugoslavia), Lee Kuan Yew (Singapore), Abdullah II of Jordan, Paul Kagame (Rwanda), Qaboos bin Sain al Said (Oman), and in-fact all the oil-rich Arabian countries. While democracy promotes inclusiveness and individual freedoms, a benevolent dictatorship can enable swift decision-making and policy implementation. However, the latter remains controversial due to its lack of institutional checks and risks of authoritarian abuse.

Theoretical Literature

The debate on whether Nigeria should adopt democracy or a benevolent dictatorship can be examined through several governance and political theory frameworks. The ones adopted for this paper include:

Democratic Theory: The role of citizen participation, free elections, and institutional checks and balances is the anchor of democratic theory as envisioned by Dahl (1998). The theory argues that democracy fosters accountability, political stability, and economic development in the long run. Nigeria's adoption of democracy aligns with modernization theory, which suggests that democratic institutions are essential for sustainable development and social progress (Lipset, 1959).

Authoritarian Developmentalism: The concept of benevolent dictatorship aligns with the theory of authoritarian developmentalism, which posits that an enlightened ruler can drive economic growth and stability more efficiently than democratic systems (Fukuyama, 2014). This theory

argues that in developing nations, strong centralized leadership can overcome bureaucratic inefficiencies and corruption (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012). Some scholars cite cases like Lee Kuan Yew's leadership in Singapore as an example of a successful benevolent dictatorship that led to rapid development (Pei, 2006).

Institutional Theory: Institutional theory, as discussed by North (1990), suggests that the success of any governance system depends on the strength of political and economic institutions. Nigeria's democratic struggles, including electoral malpractice and corruption, indicate weak institutional frameworks that hinder democratic consolidation. However, rather than replacing democracy with dictatorship, this theory argues for institutional reforms to enhance governance effectiveness.

Theoretical Framework

For the scope of this paper, two prominent models, democracy and benevolent dictatorship, which present contrasting approaches to leadership and governance will be considered and discussed. This literature review explores the characteristics, advantages, and limitations of both systems by analyzing scholarly works and empirical studies.

According to Lipset (1959), democracy is positively correlated with economic development, as democratic institutions promote political stability and economic efficiency. Empirical studies, such as Acemoglu and Robinson (2012), argue that democratic nations tend to foster inclusive economic institutions, enabling broad-based development and innovation. Furthermore, democratic systems are associated with lower levels of corruption due to checks and balances and transparency mechanisms (Rose-Ackerman, 1999). However, some scholars highlight democracy's inefficiencies, particularly in decision-making. Downs (1957) notes that democratic governance often results in slow policymaking due to bureaucratic hurdles and the necessity for consensus. Also, democratic institutions can be vulnerable to populism, which may lead to governance congestion and policy reversals (Mounk, 2018). Benevolent dictatorship is a form of autocracy where an individual or small group holds concentrated power but exercises it for the perceived benefit of the populace (Cheibub, Gandhi, & Vreeland, 2010). This system is characterized by rapid decision-making, centralized control, and an emphasis on economic growth and national stability (Bueno de Mesquita & Smith, 2011).

Scholarly discourse on benevolent dictatorships often references historical examples such as Lee Kuan Yew's leadership in Singapore, where a strong, centralized government facilitated rapid economic growth and infrastructural development (Barr, 2000). Similarly, Przeworski et al. (2000) argue that autocratic regimes can drive economic growth, particularly in early development stages, by eliminating political opposition and streamlining policy implementation. Despite these advantages, benevolent dictatorships pose significant risks. The primary concern is the absence of institutional mechanisms to ensure accountability and protect civil liberties (Levitsky & Way, 2010). Furthermore, benevolent dictatorship is often unsustainable, as leadership transitions can lead to instability or authoritarian entrenchment (Gandhi & Lust-Okar, 2009). Comparative studies suggest that while benevolent dictatorships may offer short-term economic advantages, democracies provide long-term stability and protection of individual freedoms (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2006). The success of governance models often depends on contextual factors, including historical legacies, institutional frameworks, and societal structures.

Logical Framework

In Gen. 1:26, God said; Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that crept upon the earth. Who were the 'us' that God referred to? Very obviously, the trinity: the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The contention in the name is: if there is a Father and a Son, will not the third be the Mother? Philosophically, I strongly see and align to the fact that the Holy Spirit so indicated in the Bible is the Mother. Recall that in ancient civilizations, women were not regarded, they were rather only seen as agents of procreation and not to be taken seriously, so the writers would have thought at the time that calling the third 'person' in the Godhead, Mother, would abhor tradition. The Bible reports that there were other beings and entities in heaven apart from the three in the Godhead, mostly noted, the Angels, the most prominent being Lucifer, Michael, Gabriel, Raphael. Why did God ascribe the absoluteness of power around and about the trinity? This indicates that decision making or governance in Heaven is restricted to the trinity or Godhead. The Godhead can only delegate authority. Can this be the reason why ancient civilization's governance system was authoritarian and directional? All Bible descriptions on the fall or sack of Lucifer from Heaven: Isaiah 14: 12-15, Ezekiel 28: 12-18; Revelation 12:9; Matthew 25:41; Luke 10: 17-18, depicts Lucifer committing a treasonable offence: desiring to share power with the Godhead because of his high spiritual development and attainment. Lucifer desired to introduce democratic governance in heaven and wanted to overthrow the Godhead and entrench representative democracy with the legion of angel beings he had convinced for the revolution. In Gen 6: 1-4, it is reported that the evil activities of the angels that God ejected with Lucifer caused God to reduce the lifespan of man.

Literature is replete with the conclusions that the fallen angels landed and domiciled in Greece (Revelation 2:13 calls the location Pergamos, which is a province of ancient Greek), creating a generation of giants that inhabited Greece. While on earth, after being banished from heaven by God, Lucifer and his gang of fallen angels were hell-bent on establishing their governance model on earth. This made them convince people to accept their form of governance, democracy: with the promise of freedom, equality, and preservation of rights. They preached against the abhorrence of the totalitarian governance they were ruled with in heaven, where only the Godhead directed and governed in every situation. The fallen angels therefore first experimented and started their governance system and brand, democracy in Greece that they landed when they were ejected by the Godhead from Heaven. It can be seen that the government of heaven is not democracy but an 'enlightened Benevolent Leadership', EBL, that is run on the wisdom and leadership of the Most High God. Can this explain why most advanced democracies fine-tunes it to maintain stability; or can this explain why most rapid economic transformation in china and Asia had resulted from benevolent leadership or dictatorships? It is notable that democracy is not the governance system in heaven. If we therefore, want to be truthful to "Our Father, who art in Heaven", is it proper to embrace a governance system that is not accepted in his Kingdom? Recall that Exodus 20: 5-6 records that, "Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I, the Lord thy God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the fourth generation of them that hate me." "But showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments. "

Nigeria's Governance System

Nigeria has over the past 25 years implemented a democratic governance structure. The governance structure had been seriously criticized for being ineffective in addressing the core

governance and development needs of the country. Institutions that drive serious democratic governance are either non-existent or very inadequate in driving serious democratic governance, even if one may desire to adopt the system as is in Nigeria.

Character of Democratic Institutions in Nigeria

- i. The institutions that drive the democratic processes in Nigeria are very weak and corrupt – electoral body, judiciary, legislature, security, electorates,
- ii. Leaders are not strong, not benevolent, and do not have the strong political will to force positive change. Every decision towards positive change in Nigeria is viewed as punishment by the citizens.
- iii. Corruption and nepotism are the catch-phrases of every democratic structure in Nigeria
- iv. Nigeria's democracy has been re-branded as 'my or our time' to chop democracy
- v. Rule of law does not exist – the privileged get what they desire and want, while the underprivileged die in squalor and continuously deprived.
- vi. Fundamental Human rights are only for the privileged.
- vii. Citizens are tamed with hunger and poverty to be weak enough for manipulation
- viii. Civil and human rights community competes for corruption medal with the corrupt politicians.
- ix. Multi-sectorial division of country by religion, ethnicity, corruption, is so obvious
- x. Citizens are not allowed to participate in deciding the form of democratic governance of their country – as representatives of the people in parliament have nothing to do with their constituents except when the citizens' votes or mandates are needed.

Nigeria's Current Democratic governance setting

- i. Four years of tenured democratic office for President, Governors, and Legislature.
- ii. Elections are arranged to be so expensive that only the super-rich can afford electoral office
- iii. Almost all rich Nigerian politicians might have been involved in illicit activities to make money
- iv. Politicians who are not rich but popular and willing to play along are many times conscripted to play roles for their sponsors.
- v. The first 2 years of governance for the ambitious Nigerian politician who either sponsored self or was sponsored by others to get to power will be to jump all hurdles planted on the track by gangsters, sycophants, and corrupt businessmen who had been illegally feeding fat from Nigeria. Such hurdles include: ethnic disputes, religious violence, accusations of nepotism, rising crime rates, sponsored international attacks, among others.
- vi. The ambitious political Leader will use the third year to commence financial settlements of these distractions in order to allow him/her deliver his/her mandate to the people
- vii. By that third year, the 'powerful' captors who have now captured the Leader will signal to the Leader that it is time for him/her to start planning for a second term: that it would be done and dusted without him putting any project on ground if their demands (money) were met
- viii. The leader now diverts his attention from the citizens and now works with and for the criminals. Monies meant for development, even those borrowed are diverted to private pockets; citizens' rights are abused and trampled on, etc.
- ix. The leader gets a second term. He is immediately encumbered with fictitious bills of how they handle re-election for him; that he must refund the monies that was used. State money is used to make the refunds.

- x. The criminals – including sycophants and gangsters starts blackmailing government with data they have raised for this through some government agencies to threaten the Leader. The Leader loses confidence and gives in to avert damage to personal integrity. This makes the Leader to divert development funds to seal imaginary loopholes through the criminals
- xi. In the second year of his second term, while still trying to see how to block loopholes, the criminals place before the leader the critical need to sponsor and bring in a successor who will protect him as he vacates office. This song will appeal to the Leader who now throws every advise to the winds and trample on all fronts to replace himself with a supposed crony who was only introduced to him by the criminals. The crony must be a person with suspicious credentials that the cabal can easily manipulate
- xii. This cycle continues ad-infinity!!!

How Benevolent Dictatorship can salvage Nigeria from the vicious cycle of Democratic Booby-trap

In the Nigerian case, a benevolent dictator may not necessarily be military. Notice that the Nigerian military is even more corrupt than the politicians and have been so enmeshed in the ethnic and faith dichotomy of the country. The past military rules have never had the courage to implement any peoples' future liberation economic policies as the current civilian administrations have. After several support of citizens for military take-overs in Nigeria, citizens have been disappointed for supporting the replacement of corrupt regimes (both civilian and military) with another more pervasive corrupt regime. Nigeria's major problems had always been inequality, corruption, benefits capture, oil and solid mineral theft, lack of power, oil subsidy to feed few criminal elements, using our foreign reserves to defend the value of the naira for the highly corrupt and criminals to find easy money to spend on frivolities, the stoppage of refining our crude oil domestically to meet domestic demand but rather opting to shut down our refineries while importing refined products, destroying our public schools and public hospitals, non or dysfunctional infrastructure. Any government Leader that can look into the eyes of the criminals perpetuating these crimes fits the description of that benevolent dictator and should be encouraged to stay on – like Kagame of Rwanda.

Comparison of Economic Growth in Democratic Countries and Benevolent Dictatorships

Economic growth is a critical measure of a country's progress, reflecting increases in productivity, income, and standards of living. Different political systems influence economic growth in varying ways. This note compares the economic performance of democratic countries and benevolent dictatorships, highlighting their strengths, weaknesses, and the factors influencing growth under each system.

Economic Growth in Democratic Countries: Analysis of Strengths and Weaknesses

Strengths

Institutional Stability: Democracies are said to be characterized by rule of law, transparency, and checks and balances. It is therefore contended that these factors foster investor confidence and reduce the risk of corruption. In Nigeria, and in fact many democracies in the world, especially Africa, the reverse is the case. For Nigeria, after subsisting as a democracy since 1999, Democratic institutions in Nigeria remain the most corrupt. It has just been recently reported by NBS (2024) that Judiciary remains the most corrupt institution in Nigeria. Others include the Police, INEC (the chief electoral umpire of the nation). The legislature is also said to be so corrupt, passing Bills without appropriate legislative processes. In Nigeria, the institutional

stability, that arguments are rife about establishing democratic strength, is replaced institutional instability.

Accountability: In democracy, it is argued that elected governments are incentivized to pursue policies that benefit the population to secure re-election. This often leads to investments in infrastructure, education, and healthcare, which are essential for long-term economic growth. In Nigeria elected governments do not worry about spending money to alleviate the lives of citizens, for instance, investing in infrastructure, education, and healthcare, rather they corruptly hold on to those funds, make the people so poor and hungry, and only dash them pittance at the next election cycle as vote-buying fee. The citizens who are so impoverished and hungry cannot afford any action to oust selves from the debacle since they are so weak and are not sure of what the outcome of any action would be; the weaponization of hunger and poverty.

Innovation: In democracy, freedom of speech and protection of intellectual property rights, which is a core value of democratic governance, is said to encourage entrepreneurship and innovation, which drive economic progress. In Nigeria, freedom of speech has brought more negatives to the country than positives. The citizens being unaware of what speech is free are severally goaded into making speeches that they do not have the freedom of making.

Diversified Policies: Democracies are more likely to enact policies that benefit a broad segment of society, reducing inequality and ensuring sustained growth.

Nigeria's democracy works to enunciate policies that deepen inequality and slows growth.

Weaknesses

Short-Term Focus: Politicians often prioritize short-term gains over long-term planning to appeal to voters, which can undermine sustainable development. In Nigeria, this is often followed by policy summersaults, where new governments abandon whatever policies and projects the former governments put in place.

Policy Gridlock: The decision-making process in democracies can be slow due to the need for consensus, potentially delaying critical reforms.

Populism: Policies aimed at immediate voter satisfaction can sometimes lead to fiscal irresponsibility or unsustainable welfare programs.

Economic Growth in Benevolent Dictatorships

Strengths

Decisive Policy Implementation: Benevolent dictatorships can enact economic reforms swiftly without facing opposition from legislative bodies, leading to faster execution of large-scale projects.

Long-Term Vision: Leaders with prolonged tenure can focus on long-term economic strategies without the pressure of electoral cycles.

Stability: The absence of political competition reduces the likelihood of abrupt policy changes, which can create a stable environment for investors.

Targeted Reforms: Benevolent dictatorships can focus resources on specific sectors to drive rapid growth, such as technology, manufacturing, or infrastructure.

Weaknesses

Lack of Accountability: Without democratic oversight, leaders may pursue policies that benefit a select few rather than the broader population.

Dependence on Leadership Quality: Economic success is highly dependent on the competence and intentions of the leader. Poor governance can result in stagnation or collapse.

Limited Innovation: Restricted freedoms and lack of open discourse can stifle creativity and entrepreneurship, essential drivers of modern economic growth.

Corruption Risks: Concentrated power increases the risk of corruption, which can drain public resources and deter investment. The laws in most benevolent dictatorship governments' keeps corruption so low, as marginal cost of corruption far outweighs marginal benefits of corruption – see death sentences for corruption in China and death sentences for hard drug in the benevolent dictatorship governed Arabic countries.

Growth and Sustainability Comparative Analytics

Growth: Benevolent dictatorships often achieve higher short-term growth rates due to their ability to implement sweeping reforms. However, democracies tend to sustain growth over the long term by balancing development with social and economic inclusivity. If Nigeria can attain desired sustainable growth in the short term with benevolent dictatorship, it will be more rewarding and a base to use for further long term development, instead of staying a democratic government with no sustainable growth in sight.

Sustainability: Democracies are more likely to adopt sustainable growth policies due to public pressure and institutional checks. Benevolent dictatorships may prioritize immediate results, sometimes at the cost of environmental or social sustainability. The problem with democracy in Nigeria is that the public is so poor and hungry that any rent could be paid to keep them in check from pressurizing the government, while the institutions are so weak, corrupt, and tools of the government who can never see anything wrong with the government maleficence.

Conclusion: According to Plato, the best form of government is described therein to be one made of Philosopher King. The philosopher king is described as a hypothetical ruler who combines political skill with philosophical knowledge. This government which is depicted by benevolent dictatorship is considered to be the best form of government. Plato sees the philosophers as being free from vices that tempt others to abuse power, and that they are uniquely able to apply their knowledge for the good of the state. Plato indicated the characteristics of the philosopher kings to include:

- i. passionate about truth and wisdom.
- ii. educated in a variety of fields, including military command.
- iii. chosen based on merit, not lineage or popular election
- iv. having absolute or near-absolute power.

Socrates furthers his argument that a state can only be in harmony with the universe when led by superior rulers. A superior ruler by definition would not rule for self-interest and therefore would not be a tyrant. Everyone in the republic simply follows the leadership of the best people because only the Philosopher Kings have the ability to see the universe and how the State, and its citizens, can be at harmony with it. Put into English - the best leaders would be the best and most capable, with enough philosophical insight to bring the best out of any state and its citizens

and not screw it up with self-interested lobbying and other bull. Socrates, in his prediction of the fall of democracy submitted thus, "Democracy must fall because it will try to tailor to everyone... The poor will want the wealth of the rich, and democracy will give it to them. Young people will want to be respected as elderly, and democracy will give it to them. Women will want to be like men, and democracy will give it to them. Foreigners will want the rights of the natives and democracy will give it to them. Thieves and fraudsters will want important government functions, and democracy will give it to them. And at that time, when thieves and fraudsters finally, and democratically take authority; because criminals and evil doers want power, there will be worse dictatorship than in the time of any monarchy or oligarchy" (Socrates, 470-399BC) (<https://www.thecollector.com>).

It is worth noting that Athenian democrats executed Socrates not long after the speech above, 2,400 years ago, by making him drink Cicuta poison (i.e. poison hemlock), on the premise that he is spoiling Athenian youth (forums.obsidian.net). As faith based people, how do we reconcile our deviation from the leadership and ruling structure in God's Kingdom (Heaven) and harkening to a governance system presumably introduced by power seeking Lucifer and his angels that were exited from Heaven? Are we therefore playing double standards with the Almighty God? I strongly therefore recommend a return to benevolent dictatorship leadership in Nigeria.

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