
Governance as a Pancea for the Economic Development in Nigeria (1999-2012)

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Abstract

The challenge of development in Africa is premised around governance and economic growth. This paper will therefore place emphasis on good governance and its impact on the Nigerian economy. This is a veritable way of protecting the different conflicting interests of the various segments in the society which can be achieved through equitable separation of powers, the building of consensus, and respect to one another. This will then provide fertile ground for economic growth and development. The paper notes that lack of accommodation of different shades of opinions, corruption, lack of transparency, and lack of a functional education system, constitute major stumbling blocks to good governance and economic development. The paper therefore posits that for good governance to thrive and economic development to take place in Nigeria, the issue of corruption, kidnapping, transparency, accountability, and the general trends of insecurity must be properly addressed.

Governance is a concept that has increasingly attracted international attention. The African tradition of communalism in which one is his brother's keeper is a typical symbolism of governance. From the extended family system to the centralized forms of human organization, interactions among individuals and communities have been guided by cherished norms that have been conceptualized in our modern world as governance. Although the concept is as old as human development, it has only been recently employed in development circles by international development agencies. Good governance is promoted by international development agencies... "Good governance" has become a condition for accessing international funds, which is a factor that makes it

to assume a Western outlook. “Good” governance is however, a value - laden term that needs to be demystified. In this case the indices of good governance need to be clearly spelt out for clarity and ease of reference.

Olowu and Akinola (2000: 17) posited that governance focuses on the state and institutions as well as the relationship between them and the people. It also emphasizes on how rules are made and implemented in a society. Governance also embraces the values that are sought by individuals and groups within that society. Good governance accords the welfare of the citizen a top priority, promotes political accountability, and establishes a new partnership between the governant and the governed.

Furthermore, Olowu and Akinola (2000: 174), viewed governance as an approach or perspective that focuses on state and institutions crafted by the people. The relationship between them and how rules are made in these societies which are accepted as legitimate by individuals and groups within the society.

According to these analysts, governance could be viewed from two perspectives: the governor(s) or leader(s) whose responsibilities are derived from the principle of effective governmental organization and the governed, that is, the citizens whose responsibilities include participation in the socio-economic and political affairs of their society.

According to The World Bank (1994) governance is “the exercise of economic, political and administrative authority to manage a country’s affairs at all levels. It comprises mechanisms, process, and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations, and mediate differences.” The nature of governance depends on “the form of political regimes” and the “process by which authority is exercised in the management of a country’s economic, social resources for development and “the capacity of government to design, formulate and implement policies and discharge functions.”(The World Bank, 1994).

“Governance” is the manner in which government exercises political power. It is always related to the institutions and structures that are used for exercising power. Governance also suggests that all relevant public decision making processes have to be considered, it also implies the implementation capacity for government action in a country and the relation between the government and the public. Governance is, therefore a multifaceted concept but the levels and actors can be ascertained and evaluated.

Economic development is a process whereby an economy's real national income as well as per capital income increases over a long period of time. This process implies the impact of forces which operate over a long period of time and embody changes in dynamic elements. It contains changes in resource supplies, in the rate of capital formation, in technology, skills and efficiency, and in institutional and organizational set up. It also implies changes in the structure of demand for goods, in the level and pattern of income distribution, in size, and in consumption habits as well as living standards and pattern of social relationships and religious dogmas, ideas and institutions.

According to Anyanwu, (1997), economic development is a process consisting of a long chain of interrelated changes in fundamental factors of supply and in the structure of demand, leading to a rise in the net national product of a country in the long run. Indeed, economic development must break the poverty barrier or the vicious circles and bring into being a self-generating economy so that its growth becomes self-sustained. Economic growth is essentially an increase in a country's population, national income, per capital income, consumption, savings, investment, foreign trade etc. over a period. Economic growth strictly means an increase in real income (gross and per capital). On the other hand, the supply of natural resources and the growth of scientific and technological knowledge, have a strong bearing on the process of economic growth. Hence, for economic growth, investment in human capital in the form of educational and medical and such other social scheme, is very desirable (Olawale: 2003).

Many analysts have undertaken to understand the historical root of Nigerian governance problems, especially the marginalization and weakness of the Nigerian state after independence. Early studies have considered the various roots of the weakness of the Nigerian state as the "independence gap", that is, the Nigerian state was legitimated only by external sovereignty and not by internal popular legitimacy and bureaucratic capacity (USAID, 1991). The weakness of the country after some decades of independence is seen in the implementation of so many development programs which did not impact positively on development but are rather engendered in corruption, lack of transparency, lack of accountability, and a host of others. The economic dependency after independence led to an economic crises imposed by external institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank. This shows that the government lack control over the economy and is being controlled by external forces which have great negative consequences on the citizenry. Nigeria has passed through a weak state in term of its control of its economy and in terms of its capability to develop democratic institutions which is a requirement for good governance and economic development.

Lack of good governance also militates against national development. Where there is no good governance, development becomes a mirage as result of bad leadership in the country. Most of our leaders have no sense of commitment to development. Mimiko (1998) captures the situation as follows: “Decolonization allowed the crop of leaders that aligned with colonial power to take over Nigeria. This ensured the sustenance of a neo-colonial economy even after political independence. These leaders on assumption of power quickly turned up repressive machinery of the colonial state rather than dismantling it. Significantly, they have no vision of development to accompany the efficient instrument of repression they inherited. All they were interested in was access to power and privileges and not development”.

It is therefore necessary to deepen the analysis of governance in order to understand its contribution to development. The fundamental conditions of good governance as it relates to public choice in the selection of leaders, adherence to the rule of law, freedom of association and expression and the overall bureaucratic accountability. Indeed, the issue of “good governance” must, be accorded top priority, because it determines institutional stability which promotes internal political stability.

Challenges of Governance and Economic Development of Nigeria (1999-2012)

2.0 There can be no viable democracy without relative peace. This is powered by ‘good’ governance. Both ‘good’ governance and peace are therefore imperatives for a durable democratic system. One of the basic conditions for democratic rule anywhere in the world is the acceptance of constitutionally imposed limits to the holding of elective office. As many political philosophers have argued over the ages, such limitations are necessary in order to safeguard the sovereignty of the people by constantly reminding leaders in the public service that they are servants of the people not masters. (Mohammed: 2006).

Democracy in Africa has faced many challenges. These challenges include the reluctance of political leaders to separate power, strive to build consensus and show respect to those who challenge them. African leaders must do away with centralization of power and try to build legitimacy by promoting the principles that “the people’s participation must find expression in the political process”. (Mohammed: 2006).

As a result of the above mentioned situation, between May 1999 and May 2012, the country has been engulfed in crisis. The problems included electoral malpractice and fictitious results which ignited violent crisis in most parts of the country. This shows that politics in Nigeria is not a game but a battle. The political exclusion of the opposition in governance has been a major source of conflict. In addition, the blatant rigging of elections creates a reservoir of ill-will for the so called winners. Seeing no prospects of peaceful change, the aggrieved often take the violent

route. The Jos crisis of 2001 and 2008 are good examples of violent conflicts which started because of election issues but later took on ethno-religious coloration. The presidential elections of 2011 witnessed series of crisis in the Northern parts of the country, during which many lives were lost and property were destroyed.

The emergence of militants in the Niger-Delta who could neither be controlled by politicians nor government is traceable to politicians who apparently armed the youths to influence the 2003 elections. It is understood that these youth groups then eventually became 'monsters' and defied control by their political mentors. More so, the insurgency of Boko Haram as a terrorist group in the North came about as a result of dissatisfaction. Boko Haram is an Islamic extremist group founded by Mohammed Yusuf in 2002, it originated in Maiduguri, the capital of Borno State in the North Eastern part of Nigeria. The group seeks to abolish secular education and the current system of government in Nigeria. The movement sees western education as a sacrilege and an aberration. The group first came into limelight following the sectarian violence in Nigeria in 2009. It propagates that not only interaction with the Western world is forbidden but it is also against the Muslim establishment and the government of Nigeria. (Bartolotta: 2011). Until of recent the security of the entire country has been under serious threat as a result of the activities of this group. The government has since taken a more proactive stance against the group.

There is so much intolerance among politicians; which has led to disgusting intra-party squabbles that have led to the death of many politicians who have been assassinated by their opponents, as political violence continues to take place in some parts of the country. In the same vein, the emergence of political thugs sponsored by big weight politicians to defend and intimidate their political opponents and if need be eliminate them, also became rampant.

Another societal ill that is frightening to the society is the kidnapping syndrome. Kidnapping, which involves taking someone hostage, usually for a ransom or in furtherance of another crime, first attracted national attention on 26 February, 2006 when Niger Delta militants randomly kidnapped foreign oil workers to press home their demand for resource control. Today, those behind the recent kidnappings have also changed from being exclusively Niger Delta militants to elements from different walks of life, including armed robbers, the unemployed and fraudsters. (Sam: 2010:19).

Closely related, Nigerian leaders have subjugated the people for too long through economic emasculation and perpetual pilfering of their natural resources. In the people's bid to escape unabated bashings by their leaders, they have become desperate for alternative means of survival often through unthinkable machinations that vary from

advanced fee fraud, ritualism, robbery, ethnic conflict, to religious violence and many other nefarious activities.

Furthermore, most Nigerians live below the poverty line while their leaders and cohorts live at the pinnacle of opulence. Their children and grand-children are in Yale and Harvard universities while their subjects, wards learn under trees. Our economy has defined solution: the exchange rate is perpetually on the high side, inflation still haunts our hopes for a good take home-pay; some banks are still tilting towards collapse, the manufacturing sector has experienced closures in spite of our privatization process (the latest being the textile factories); there seems to be greater invasion of our market by external forces than investment; our infrastructures are dilapidated; our educational system is on the collapse and the health sector is severely in pains (Elaigwu: 2012:24). In the midst of economic hardship including galloping inflation and unemployment, government companies are being sold off in the name of privatization. Companies can no longer produce at their highest capacities, leading to mass sack of workers. While some old companies are closing the new ones are very few. On the other hand, Power Holding Company of Nigeria (PHCN) still remains the ‘god’ of darkness and has adversely affected the production capacities of companies and allied cottage industries.

Poverty and unemployment have also become a cradle and nursery for various violent conflicts in Nigeria with a large reservoir of unemployed and unemployable marginal who are prepared to kill or to be killed for a given course for a token.

Thirteen years after the end of military rule, the conduct of many public officials and government institutions is pervasively marked by violence and corruption resembling more of criminal activity than democratic governance. Indeed, the evil effects of bad governance have brought about corruption, insecurity, and lack of welfare has become part of our daily lives. (Nwokora: 1990).

With the high level of corruption in the country, Nigeria has given a bad image globally to every citizen or any one called a Nigerian. It is disheartening to state that despite the anti-corruption crusade of former President Olusegun Obasanjo’s administration and subsequent crusades by other administrations; corruption has continued to eat deep into the fabric of our society. In other words, from the Local Government Councils to the Federal level, Political, religious and ethnic tension, killing and maiming are still very high. The greedy ones including political office holders and some governors are warlords and beat the drum of ethnic superiority.

Another factor that causes instability in Nigeria is the mono-economic base of the country. The country largely depends on crude oil for her survival to the detriment of other resources. Virtually all other sectors of the economy are neglected. For instance agriculture which constituted the mainstay of the Nigerian economy in the

1950s and 1960s has been thrown into limbo over the years. The government has not been able to export because there is virtually nothing to export? The economy is not diversified and this is not suitable for sustainable development (Mimiko: 1998).

It is worthy of note that during the military regime, Nigeria witnessed many policies that violated the basic freedom and rights of the individual and groups. Throughout these years, Nigerians lost their right to choose their leaders and lacked institutions to enable them associate politically with one another, aggregate and articulate the interests of groups. Democracy provides rights of individuals and groups. It presupposes the right or freedom of expression by the individual. Under military rule, the expression of such rights meant incarceration and inhuman treatment (Elaigwu: 2012).

Despite the aforementioned challenges, the dividends of democracy which Nigeria got since May 29, 1999, include greater freedom of speech, thought, worship, movement and association. Similarly, the platforms for political contestation through political parties have witnessed positive changes although the political parties may not necessarily be democratic in their internal structure. (Elaigwu: 2012).

Good Governance and Socio-Economic Development in Nigeria

The search for good governance seems to be Nigeria's most urgent need at this point of its history. Most Nigerians believe very strongly that the factor which has crippled the country's progress in virtually every field of human endeavour is poor leadership and bad governance (Nkom: 2000:75). As the country staggers from one crisis to another, nobody is left in doubt that a lot of homework still needs to be done on how to fashion a more effective and acceptable way of managing public affairs in the country. Most intellectual and political discourse on Nigeria have understandably, been pre-occupied with this dilemma of poor governance. Nigeria with a population of over one hundred and sixty million people is the most populous African country and the biggest black nation on earth. The country is blessed with abundant human, material, and financial resources and yet, it is a country afflicted with mass poverty, alarming and widespread unemployment, and a declining quality of education, health and social indicators that should enhance the lives of the people.

Improving the quality of governance is one of the major preconditions for arresting this situation of political inertia and economic stagnation. It is one of the important requirements for moving the country forward and transforming its immense potentialities into reality. What must be avoided in this search for good governance is the temptation to go for easy solutions. To search for a way forward, they must be understood and operationalized within the context of Nigeria's history, culture and

social realities. Indeed no other country's solutions or institutions will provide an automatic panacea for Nigeria's problem (Adedeji: 2000).

It is, however, imperative to mention that the model of good governance which can work and achieve best results in Nigeria will necessarily require an intelligent and pragmatic blending of the lessons and experiences of other people and the peculiarities of our socio-historical realities. Only political and administrative solutions which are rooted in the country's indigenous culture and experiences have a credible chance of succeeding. This implies that the search for a way forward must involve a return to the grass roots in order to draw from the political traditions, institutions and experiences of Nigeria's communities instead of trying to rely on sophisticated models of engineering fashioned from Europe or America.

In essence, good governance deals with how those who have the authority of the state, make efforts to achieve the goals or the ends of the state, the maintenance of law and order, and the provision of welfare for its citizens as well as the pursuit of national interest in the global arena. Government therefore exists in order to achieve these ends. Western democracy insists that "good governance" entails the existence of democratic institutions and values. Good governance must also be entrenched with zero or minimal tolerance for corruption, promote true participatory democracy and rule of law in which justice would be seen to be available and accessible by all irrespective of their class, creed or ethnic affiliations.

Quoting Olusegun Obasanjo extensively Abubakar S. Mohammed, advocates strongly for democracy and good governance as the basis for our socio-economic development. According to him, the fundamental elements include:-

- i. Periodic elections in which the electorate views the performance of their leaders and renews or terminates the mandate given them.
- ii. Situations where the people have choices between competing alternatives.
- iii. A democracy which is fostered and strengthened by effective and independent non-governmental organizations; the civil society.
- iv. An independent Judiciary that imposes sanctions on unconstitutional transgression of social and political norms and regulations and also puts premium in protecting the rights and liberties of citizens against overzealous and high handed officialdom.

Having articulated these essential elements of democracy and good governance, Olusegun Obasanjo warns that;

"An irresponsible arrogant or careless leadership breeds disenchantment, antiparty and disenfranchisement in the followership"

- v. A free, independent and responsible press is a critical element. He therefore recommended very strongly that:

A democratic government protects the different and most times conflicting interests of the various segments of society. Democracy must strive to include most, if not exactly all segments of society in the run of things. Consensus or compromise must always be sought. A society that is run otherwise risks antiparty from within it. Good governance requires responsible and responsive political leaders at the grassroots. These leaders must not only be elected but also held accountable for their actions by the electorate. (Mohammed, 2006). General Olusegun Obasanjo served as head of state as well as civilian president of Nigeria.

Furthermore, good governance promotes accountability, entails the tolerance of divergent views for the accommodation of political opponents and the widening of the frontiers of politics through inclusiveness but not alienation and exclusion.

Consequently, good governance, must involve some institutionalized mechanism for holding leaders accountable to the people, for renewing or withdrawing the mandate of such leaders, and for ensuring probity and transparency in public affairs. It has often been stated that governance focuses on the state and institutions and the relationship between them and the people. It has also been emphasized on how rules are made and implemented in a society. Good governance also embraces the values that are sought by individuals and group within the society. (Tunde: 2000).

Good governance accords the welfare of the citizens' top priorities, promotes political accountability, and establishes a new partnership between the government and the people. More so, good governance is expected to build an effective relationship between the people and their government. Good governance is also essential for creating an enabling environment for sustainable development. Where good governance prevails, the government is responsive to popular demand. Good governance creates a position to mobilize the people to participate effectively in the implementation of government programs (Yaqub: 2000).

Conclusion

Nigeria has not been able to engender meaningful development in spite of her huge resources. This has greatly affected her quest to improve the quality of life of her citizens. Poverty, unemployment and starvation still pervade the nook and crannies of the country. Developmental plans that were aimed at bringing about improvement in the living conditions of the people have failed woefully. The specific objectives were aim at an increase in the real income of the average citizen; ensure even distribution of income among individuals and socio-economic groups, increase dependence on the country's material and human resources, reduction in the level of unemployment and underemployment. During these periods, Nigeria's enormous oil wealth was not invested to build a viable industrial base for the country for launching an agrarian

revolution to liquidate mass poverty. Instead, our leaders engaged and still engage in squander mania of the highest order.

Government must take proactive steps to rewrite the wrongs by providing conducive enabling environment to operate and to invest in power supply and the refineries, the pivot upon which industrial growth thrives and the provision of an opportunity for good governance and economic development to thrive. Government must take more pragmatic steps towards securing the lives and property of her citizens against the rising wave of violent crimes in order to give foreign investors the confidence to come and invest in the country's economy by equipping the security agencies with modern state of the art arms, security gadgets and patrol vans. Urgent steps must be taken to improve education, which is the bed rock of the country's development. Unfortunately Nigerian universities have been on strike due to government refusal to fulfill its promise for about four months. This is not fair to our teeming youths who are the future of the nation. In the areas of provision of conducive learning environment, learning materials, improved teachers' remuneration and adopting a stable curriculum and system of education for the country, those responsible should rise up to the challenges.

There is an urgent need for a change of heart in governance to ensure probity, accountability, and transparency in other for the country to be better for all of us to live in. Our leaders must cultivate the virtue of patience and honesty, learn to lose gallantly in an election, and inculcate the notion that a good name is better than anything the world can give.

Recommendations

To remedy the negative consequences of electoral malpractice, the emergence of militants in the Niger Delta, the insurgence of the Boko Haram in the North Eastern part of the country, the kidnapping syndrome, the high level of corruption and poverty etc it is hereby recommended that good governance must be pursued with renew vigour to entrench zero tolerance for corruption, transparency promote true participatory democracy and the rule of law in which justice would be seen to be available, accessible by all irrespective of their class,, creed or ethnic affiliations with a high sense of patriotism to change the already negative way things are done in the country.

Good governance will change the attitude, values and provide a strong will power for selfless service for the human, material, political and rapid economic development of the country. Good governances provides legitimacy, committed to improving the public welfare and responsible to the needs of its citizens and create an enabling environment for productive activities and equitable in its conduct.

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