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## **Good Governance in Nigeria: A Catalyst to National Peace, Stability and Development**

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### **Abstract**

Good governance manifesting in areas of rule of law, transparency, accountability, citizens participation among others are *sine qua non* for national peace and development. However, 'poverty of leadership' in most of the Nigeria's 57 years of existence has not only hindered the nation's development, but continued to threaten its peace and stability. While it is widely believed that bad governance is prevalent in autocratic and oligarchic systems, it is evident now that bad governance does exist much more in democracies. Therefore, the study analysed the twin concepts of governance and good governance; assessed the nature of governance offered by the nation's leaders; and its effects on the national peace and development. Using secondary data, the study revealed that, unethical practices, arbitrary rule and corruption which pervade public offices are products of bad governance. The study further revealed that, bad governance in Nigeria has brought about unemployment, poverty, crimes, internal violence, insurgents activities, diseases, loss of lives and

properties, and underdevelopment of the country. The study concluded that until proactive steps are taken for the enthronement of good governance, peace, stability as well as development will continue to elude the nation, beyond this, the corporate existence of the nation remains threatened.

**Key Words:** Governance, Good Governance, Catalyst, National Peace and Development

### **Introduction**

The eventual collapse of the Soviet Union provoked hope in some people that a new age has dawned in areas of democratic development. Yet, many people doubted the ability of democratic government at creating an environment for peaceful coexistence and prosperity (Opello, & Rosow, 1999). Peoples' scepticism about democracy being a road map to peaceful coexistence and prosperity was confirmed by various anomaly that pervades many democratic nations of the world; most especially third world countries. The scepticism is aptly captured by Ssekandi (n.d.) in his work titled *Good Governance: The Way Forward*. According to him

The urgency for reform of the political structures to instill good governance in Africa cannot be underestimated because the number of countries in conflict situations and those, which have experienced violent changes of Government in Africa, is staggering. At the dawn of this millennium, much of sub-Saharan Africa is devoured by warfare. Currently almost two-thirds of its countries are embattled and paralyzed (Ssekandi, n.d., p. 1).

Given the above scenario, it is not surprising that the issue of 'good governance' assume center stage in the global discourse. Had it been that the economy and resources of democratic nations were managed effectively and efficiently, rapid development would have been achieved in the areas of social services delivery, improvement in peoples' standard of living and reduction in poverty level. Besides, peace and political stability would not have been a herculean task in the third world countries. Thus, it is when peoples' expectation from the practice of democracy becomes elusive and that there has not been acceptable alternative system of government to democracy that the issue of good governance gained currency among the academics, donor agencies and institutional bodies among others groups in the world affairs. With the way democracy is being practised in the third world countries, it is evident that nations involved in it for pecuniary purpose. Their interest is not unconnected with the benefits attached to democratic practice by the world powers and powerful organisation in the areas of aid, assistance among other benefits. This is why nations derive joy from claiming to be democratic, even apparently non-democratic countries confessing to be democratic republics (Kolawole, 2017).

Further to the above is the fact that for a nation to achieve sustainable prosperity in the areas of economic growth and social development, such a nation must be up to the task of making strategic decisions about resource control and allocation, on one hand, and efficient utilisation and investment of such resources, on the other hand. The lack of these strategic decisions and planning in the administration of many third world countries necessitates the quest for good governance in nations across the world. In view of the foregoing, the study analyses the twin concept of governance and good governance; assesses the nature of governance offered by the nation's leaders; and

analyses the effects of the governance pattern on the national peace, stability and development.

### **Understanding Governance and Good Governance**

Governance is a concept that is germane and relevant to corporate organisation; regional organisation; international organisations and institutions; among other groups and organisations across the globe. Etymologically speaking, the term “governance” is believed to have originated from the ancient Greek. Semantically, it is being used as a verb *kybernein* (infinitive) or *kybernao* (first person) which literally means ‘steering’, ‘guiding’, or ‘manoeuvring a ship or a land-based vehicle’. Plato was reputed also to have used the word ‘governance’ for the first time ever. Plato had used the word metaphorically to depict ‘the governing of men’ or ‘the governing of people’ (see Campbell & Carayannis, 2013). Accordingly, the concept of governance in relation with “government” or “governs” has for long been around in political and academic discourse, depicting the tasks of carrying on governmental activities or assignment (cited in <http://www.gdrc.org/u-gov/governance-understand.html>).

Governance to the World Bank (1993) is a system through which ‘power is exercised in the management of a country’s political, economic and social resources for development’. The emphasis here, according to the World Bank, is ‘the use of power to control political and economic resources of the nation’. Thus, governance is about securing political power in order to control economic power for the purpose of nation’s development. Put differently, it is about using nation’s wealth for the benefit of the nation only. While the definition is true to the developed nations of the world, it is far from being true in the third world countries, especially in most African nations. Most African leaders cannot differentiate between private and public organisation; they run nation like their personal businesses and corner nation’s wealth for themselves and their cliques. To the IMF (2016) governance is seeing as ‘all aspects of the way a country is governed, its economic policies and regulatory framework’. It can be inferred from the definition that governance has to do with the totality of governmental actions and activities that are geared or directed toward making and realising effective economic policies. The definition lays emphasis on ‘economic policies’ which is regarded as the backbone of the nation’s stability and development. Suffice to say a well-planned economic policy is a precondition for the survival, stability and development of the nation.

Good Governance, on the other hand, has been variously defined often to suit different purposes. The concept of ‘good governance’ came to prominence after the end of the Cold War around 1990 in donor discourse. Such that, the World Bank who was the first major donor institution even adopted ‘good governance’ as a condition for lending to developing countries (cited in Udo, 2004).

The former United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan sees ‘good governance’ as ‘the single most important factor in eradicating poverty and promoting development’ (Annan, cited in UN 1998). To Annan, lack of good governance will continue to promote hunger and underdevelopment. It is through good governance that impact of governmental activities can be felt, particularly in the area of economic growth and development. To the UNDP (2002) ‘good governance’ is about striving for the rule of law, transparency, equity, effectiveness/efficiency, accountability, and strategic vision

in the exercise of political, economic, and administrative authority. In other words, it could be seen as a process where public officers and institutions conduct public affairs, and manage public resources effectively through the above listed conditions.

### **Transparency and Accountability in Public Offices: Nigeria's Experience**

Transparency and accountability are 'two interrelated and complementary concepts' (Ajayi, 2003) that are indispensable to any governance system that will be termed 'good'. Transparency and accountability remain requisite for the nation's development. This is because they provide the basis for 'good' policies formulation and implementation; emphasise the strategies for economic growth and development; and enhance efficient management of resources for the nation's sustenance and general development.

Transparency in public offices means openness in governance, where the ruled can trust the rulers and be able to predict the rulers to some extent. Transparent governance could be said to be existing when the ruled have a very clear idea of what their government is doing. Transparent governance allows for transparent decisions and implementation; as well as enhances decisions made to be understood by those whom the decisions are binding on. It also enhances the decisions taken to be enforced in a manner that follows rules and regulations. Transparency brings about openness in governance and administration, and allows free flow of information on the nation's economic matters, such that the citizens are briefed from time to time about precise information on nation's state of economy. Put differently, transparent governance provides a forum whereby fiscal (monetary) operations and activities of government are reported to the public with absolute sincerity. Through open operation of activities, government can secure the trust and confidence of the people in whom sovereignty lies.

Accountability, on the other hand, means 'responsibility' and 'answerability', where public officers are expected to perform their constitutional duties for the benefit of all the citizenry freely without discrimination. Accountability is about holding public officers accountable for their actions and inactions either while in the office or after leaving the office. Accountability enforces on public officers to give accounts of their stewardship and being held responsible for mistake(s) committed while performing their duties as public officers. Accountability has to do with maintaining honesty and probity in governmental businesses. Accountability reflects the need for government and its representatives to serve the public effectively and diligently.

One of the major facilitators of transparency and accountability is the media, especially an independent media. A media that is reliable and competent, that can monitor and give accurate reports on government's actions and activities. A media that is completely free from government's interference and control. That is, an unbiased media that can provide needed and up-to-date information for the people. The media can perform effectively well, when it is allowed to perform their duties without hindrances. When media is operating under a conducive atmosphere, it can constitute a check or watchdog on government; and provide information on any anti-people policies of government. However, in Nigeria there is information restriction. That is, there is an extent to which information about the government can be divulged or disseminated to the people. Information about government and its activities is most of the time censored before feeding with the people.

Civil Society Organisation (CSO) on the other hand also facilitates transparency and accountability in government. Civil Society Organisation functions as intermediary between the people and the State. CSO is seen as an agent which helps in the promotion of good governance. CSO achieves this by monitoring the State performance, as well as the activities of the officeholders. CSO can mobilise organised protests against unfavourable governmental policies. However, the power of CSO could be curtailed by the government especially when government feels that the CSO activities could make people to rise against them. Thus, government could hide under reasons associated with threat to the nation's security; vis-à-vis threat to national peace, lives and corporate existence of the nation to weaken or clamp down on the activities of the CSO.

In spite of the importance of transparency and accountability to good governance and nation's development, it has not been given a serious attention it deserves in the country by the successive government. This is because most of the political leaders that have emerged and even the present ones are greedy and self-centred, as a result, they have continued to cost the nation its development. For that reason, Ake (1996) described them as 'the wealthiest people in Nigeria'. Their wealth is acquired through the use of state power. Many of these leaders perpetrated corruption with impunity vis-à-vis awarding inflated contracts to themselves and cliques, as well as converting the nation's resources to their own. It was as a result of the foregoing that Annan, the then Secretary-General of United Nations (UN), declares that political leaders contributed to the underdevelopment nature of their various states by the pattern of governance they offered for their countries. According to him, "power gets personalized in the winner-takes-all kind of politics...there are insufficient accountability of leaders, lack of transparency in regimes, inadequate checks and balances, non-adherence to the rule of law...and excessive political control" (Annan, 2012 cited in Mbah, 2013).

The position of Annan is not at variance with that of Adegami and Uche (2016). They asserted thus:

Most of the political leaders in Nigeria could best be described as political merchants. This is because; they see politics as a business deal that brings forth huge profits. Nigeria's political leaders do not believe in service to the people; instead they are self-serving as they serve themselves more than the governed, hence always play politics of wealth acquisition. Many of these so-called leaders came to power without "shoe" but after spending few years in the offices, they would not only have acquired many shoes, but would have garnered fleet of cars, private jets, and different mansions in choice areas of Nigeria and abroad. They equally would have owned fat bank accounts in Nigeria as well as foreign accounts across the world. This type of politics thus, becoming the bane of Nigeria's efforts at developments.

Although, steps are being taken to curb corruption and foster transparency in governance. One of such steps is asset declaration by the political officeholders. For instance, the late President, Musa Yar'adua publicly declared his assets along with the Vice-President Goodluck Jonathan in 2007. Their successors President Muhammadu Buhari and Vice-President Yemi Osibajo had also followed suit. However, officeholders' sincerity about the declaration of assets cannot be ascertained, going by the recent development in governmental circle where the sitting Senate President,

Senator Bukola Saraki is being tried by the Code of Conduct Tribunal (CCT). Saraki is being alleged to have made false declaration of assets as well as acquired assets more than his legitimate earnings while serving as the governor of Kwara State (Owete and Akinwumi, 2015). The initial refusal of Saraki to appear before the Code of Conduct Tribunal, when he was summoned and by approaching the Courts for injunctions to restrict the Tribunal from trying him was an indication that public officers in Nigeria still treat the issue of transparency and accountability with levity (Makinde, 2015). Apart from the Senate President, other members of the present administration who have been facing corrupt charges include the Secretary to the Government of Federation (SGF), Mr. Babachir Lawal who was accused of lack of transparency in the award of contracts to the tune of N2.5bn for the care of Internally Displaced Persons, (IDPs) without following due process. Mr. Ibrahim Magu, the Chairman of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), the commission saddled with the responsibility of waging war against corruption was also alleged of lack of transparency and accountability in the management of the activities of the commission. His accusation follows the investigation carried out by the Department of State Security (DSS) which indicted him of anomaly in the conduct of the affairs of the EFCC. Other public officers who were alleged alongside Mr. Babachir Lawal and Mr. Ibrahim Magu are – The Chief of Army Staff, Lt General Tukur Buratai, and the President’s Chief of Staff, Alhaji Abba Kyari. While there is the tendency of political games in the accusation levied against these officers, the reluctance of the government to institute and immediate probe of the activities of the alleged officers make one to doubt the seriousness of the government at stamping out corruption in Nigeria (Umoru & Erunke, 2016).

### **Nigeria’s Governance System and its Implication on the National Peace, Stability and Development**

Unarguably, a strong correlation exists among governance, peace, stability and development. Thus, the developmental failure being witnessed in Nigeria is a direct consequence of the pattern of governance offered by the successive nation’s managers. The governance method adopted by the Nigeria’s political leaders negates all known prescriptions of good governance. A critical view of system of governance in Nigeria revealed an aberration of global acceptable governance norms. In other words, governance system in Nigeria is a complete departure from governance indicators (see The World Bank: Worldwide Governance Indicators; <http://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/index.asp>; Kaufmann, Kraay, and Mastruzzi, 2010).

Arising from deficit and anomaly in governance is the erosion of internal security across the country. Security lapses have continued to manifest in the areas of grave activities of insurgents. The insurgents such as the dreadful Boko haram with its series of bombing, and violent attack, have succeeded in mass destruction of lives and properties especially in the North-eastern part of the country. There is also emergence of different insurgents in the Niger Delta areas which engage in kidnapping of peoples and destruction of oil installations. Besides are anti-insurgents’ activities of the Nigeria security agencies which have equally led to killings of peoples and destructions of properties. All these activities have continued to fuel the wave of crimes among the teeming youths of the nation. It is not surprising therefore that, the vibrant youths’

population have their energies misdirected to negativity because people managing the nation have no plan for them and their future. Thus, the youth are easily recruited into different insurgents group or into any other veritable crimes activities that will earn them incomes for their survival.

The gigantic debt in which the nation finds itself is connected with poor governance. Ordinarily the nation should not have had cause to go about borrowing, given the enormous wealth that is naturally endowed with the country, especially the crude oil. What the nation's managers have done with the nation wealth could be better understood by the assertion made by Amundsen (2010) who avows that the between 1960 and 1999 the sum of \$380 billion had vanished into the pockets of the nation managers. Amundsen (2010) further assertively claims thus:

Nigeria is heavily affected by the so-called 'resource curse': despite an estimated USD 400 billion in oil income since independence in 1960, the country has experienced...a very poor economic development, and it has a population more impoverished now than it was 50 years ago (Amundsen, 2010, p. ix).

Thus, it could be rightly deduced that the major bane to the nation's development is the political and public officers who use public offices not for the services delivery for peoples, but for their selfish interest (Obo, Coker & Omenka, 2014). For this reason, Agagu and Ola (2011) referred to them as harbingers of "the scourge of poverty and crisis" that pervades the nations' and inhibiting its developments. Corruption and unethical practices have continued to hinder public officers from meeting up with their responsibilities to the people they always professed they are serving. Corruption impedes economic development, the growth of democratic institutions, and the ability of developing countries to attract foreign investment (Ssekandi, n.d.).

The laxity in governance has also culminated into the declining industries. For instance, poor governance resulting in creating hostile business environment have been one the reasons that led to relocation or folding up of businesses in the country. Gone are the days when companies and organisation such as Peugeot Automobile Nigeria; Volkswagen Nigeria; Dunlop Nigeria Limited; Michellin Nigeria; BATA; Lennards; Kingsway; A.G. Leventis; and Phillip Nigeria among others were flourishing in Nigerian, but now these companies and organisations are not in the country again. In a similar vein, industries such as Steel Rolling Mill, Osogbo; Steel Rolling Mill, Ajaokuta; Arewa Textile Mill; Nigeria Airways all are now moribund. For not making Nigeria Airways to work, the nation is losing as much as \$2 billion to foreign airlines annually (Tokunbo, 2017). And of recent are such companies especially airlines who are pulling out of Nigeria with the reason of unfavourable economic policy by the government. These airlines include United Airlines, British Airways, Spanish National Airline Iberia, Air France-KLM, Qatar Air, and Etihad. Besides, are oil companies including Chevron, ExxonMobil, Ground Petroleum, and Pan Ocean among others. Consequently, many people have continued to lose their jobs. For instance, within these oil companies alone more than 3,000 oil workers have been sacked (see <http://punchng.com/3000-sacked-multinational-oil-companies-pull/>). This is adding to the already escalated number of unemployed youths. As at 2016, the Youth Unemployment/Underemployment rate stood at 42.24 % as at the first quarter of 2016 (National Bureau of Statistics, 2016), with the continuous sack of workers by different

companies and organisations, the tempo at which the rate of unemployment is going can be detrimental to the national peace and stability, as ‘the youths can be ignited anytime’ (Obasanjo, 2013), and destabilised the fragile peace of the nation. The unpalatable problem of joblessness has made the youths to involve daily in crimes as economic activities, viz money laundering, drugs peddling and trafficking in people (The Endowment of the United States Institute of Peace, 2010).

Another resultant effect of the system of governance on Nigerians is the perceptions of government by the people. Government are seen as an unreliable propagandist which cannot be trusted for its words. People have developed a kind of mistrust in government, as government promises are seen as rhetoric or utopian. People ‘in whom political power reside’ could no longer believe whatever government is saying. They are reneging to participate in political activities especially in voting during elections as there has not being anything to show for their political activities. This, perhaps, accounted for low turnout of voters in many of the recent elections in the country.

Government’s ineptitude and lack of concern for the people has culminated in a situation where the people are deprived of social infrastructures and amenities. Where there are claims of the provision of amenities by the government, most of these amenities are either substandard or has already collapsed. Poor governance equally reflects in the area of poor placement of priorities by the government; a situation where leaders prefer to spend public scarce resources on uneconomic projects. These-so-called leaders prefer to embark on such projects that will earn them immediate monetary gains, instead of investing on peoples’ dire-need infrastructures such as schools, hospitals, portable water, and accessible roads. Besides, basic infrastructure such as regular electricity supply is lacking, consequently many production industries are running at a loss. This has led to the closure of businesses in Nigeria, while others have relocated to other nations with relative regular supply of electricity.

In addition to the above are poor road networks. Roads construction and maintenance are always budgeted for on yearly basis, but the money budgeted always ends up in public officers’ personal pockets, while roads are only built and maintained on papers. Even, few of the roads being constructed across the nation are substandard, that collapse easily after few months of the completion. It is not news that most of the nation’s highways are death traps. Many of the accidents that have occurred on these roads that have led to loss of peoples’ lives and their properties could have been averted if the roads are well constructed and properly maintained.

Poor, irregular and inadequate water supply is also a result of poor governance. In addition, water supply is another project which the public officers are using to siphon the public money. Most of the politicians do embark on water projects as their communities or constituency projects. Many of them normally construct bore holes which would supply water for few days before the bore holes stop supplying water to the people.

Further to the foregoing are poor health services and health facilities. It is a known fact that most of the government hospitals can only be likened to mere consulting clinics. That is why public officeholders do fly abroad for medical attention. Although huge amount of money is always reflected in the nation’s annual budget for hospitals maintenance, but substantial part of the monies is always diverted and mismanaged,

leaving paltry sum of money for the hospitals need. For instance, despite the money voted for Aso Rock clinics and other federal government hospitals, the reigning President of Nigeria, Muhammadu Buhari still prefer seeking medical attention abroad. Suffice to say that, it is the masses of the nation that poorly funded hospitals are reserved for.

The nation's education sectors are not excluded from the effect of poor governance. The educational sectors are suffering from underfunding and poor funding. Many primary and secondary schools in Nigeria are not good shape due to neglect by the successive governments. This has led to the proliferation of private schools that are mainly for profits and thus, run schools as business ventures. In the tertiary institutions, the story is not different. The academic and their non-academic counterparts in the higher institutions, from time to time embark on strike action for reasons related to funding of the institutions and salaries and allowances for the staff. The resultant effect is the continuous falling in the standards of higher education in Nigeria. This was why none of the nation's universities was listed among the first one thousand university in the world. The first Nigeria's university listed was the University of Ibadan, the oldest university in Nigeria, which was on number 1032nd in the July edition of the Ranking Web of Universities in the world (see <http://www.webometrics.info/en/world?page=10>, 2017).

The governance pattern has impoverished the large number of the nation's citizens. The poverty continues to deal ruthlessly with majority of Nigerians. The outstanding revelation from nation number two citizen, Vice-President Yemi Osinbajo that about 110 million Nigerians (61%) are still living below poverty line testifies to the fact that poverty is really ravaging the nation while the masses appears helpless (Osibanjo, 2015).

It should be noted, however, that there are some parts of the country where all necessary amenities are being put in place. These are reserved areas for the wealthy political class and their allies under different names, such as Government Reservation Areas (GRA's), Banana Island, Victoria Island, Ikoyi, Lekki Beach areas, Maitama, Asokoro villa among others. Social amenities are concentrated in all these reserved areas to the detriment of other places populated by ordinary Nigerian citizens. Besides social amenities are the heavy presence of securities and security apparatuses to monitor and to make the environment secure appropriately.

### **Summary Conclusion and Recommendations**

The type of governance so far rendered to Nigeria is not 'good'. This has continued to manifest in the areas of nation's development viz – bad roads networks, epileptic electricity supply, lack of portable water, poor healthcare delivery, falling educational system among others. Poor governance is also manifest in the areas of unemployment, poverty, hunger, diseases, violent, loss of dearly ones, loss of properties, and dislocation from one's home as results of insurgents' activities. The seeming inability to redeem the situation by the crop of leaders ascending the throne of governance in Nigeria poses danger for the future of the nation.

The study concluded that only the practice of good governance, manifesting in the areas of rule of law, transparency, accountability, citizens' participation among other can guarantee national peace, stability and development in Nigeria. The study thus

recommended that proactive steps should be taken for the enthronement of good governance. This could be achieved if people in whom power reside can unite and design active methods of exposing corrupt public officeholders whether when they are in offices or after they have left. Forming and designing peoples' oriented code of ethical behaviour which the people themselves will be able to enforce its provisions will be helpful.

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