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# Democracy and good governance: Nigeria's dilemma

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**Despite its enormous resources and huge potentialities, Nigeria remains grossly undeveloped. Consequently, political instability, abject poverty, acute youth unemployment, heightened crime rate, poor health prospects and widespread malnourishment have been the main features of Nigeria's political economy. The development tragedy in Nigeria fits into the trends of political instability for which Africa has become infamous for in the past three decades. This further lends credence to the arguments by some students of African politics that governance is one of the major problems in Africa. This paper argues that the problem of development in Nigeria is a problem of governance; when defined in term of the proper, fair and equitable allocation of resources for the achievement of the end or purposes of the state, which is the promotion of the common good. The paper submits that for good governance to be feasible in Nigeria, sound anti-corruption policies devoid of mere speeches must be put in place. Furthermore, the paper recommends a functional legislature, a viable and independent judiciary, and the attitudinal transformation on the part of the political elite, the absence of which good governance and development will continue to be a mirage.**

**Key words:** Corruption, instability, underdevelopment, democracy, good governance.

## INTRODUCTION

Despite all social and economic policies that have been implemented by successive administrations, Nigeria has remained a laggard in social, economic and political developments. Subsequently, political instability, abject poverty, acute youth unemployment, heightened crime rate, poor health prospects, widespread malnourishment have been the main features of Nigeria's political economy. One of the major explanations for the failure of all development programmes in Nigeria has been the absence of democracy and the intermittent military intervention in politics. However, with the benefit of hindsight and as demonstrated by the current experience, even the periods of civil rule (1960-1966, 1979-1983 and 1999 to date) failed to produce any positive or better results. This assertion is vindicated by the report of a survey conducted by Simbine (2000) which showed that, in term of performance, respondents in her study gave higher ranks to three military regimes (General Murtala Muhammed 1975-1976, General Muhammad Buhari 1983-1985 and General Yakubu Gowon, respectively), even though the two civilian administrations of Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, 1960-1966 and Alhaji Shehu Shagari, 1979-1983 were included. This shows that there is no automatic connection between democracy and

development. Secondly, though discussable, the result implies, in the context of the Nigerian experience, that the record of the military is a bit better than that of their civilian counterpart. Nevertheless, over generalisation may be dangerous in this regard, every indicators pointed to the fact that Nigerians were worse off during Shagari's administrations. Meanwhile, it is not an overstatement to contend that the return of the country to electoral democracy in 1999 has not made significant impact on the economic and social well-being of the people. Several other factors explain the development tragedy in Nigeria. These are: the colonial legacy, bureaucratic and political corruption, poor labour disciplines, globalisation and unfavourable international environment, unpatriotic followers and bad leadership to mention a few. This paper examines the nexus of democracy and good governance. It also provides explanations on why democracy has not engendered good governance in Nigeria. It is argued that democracy cannot engender good governance in a state where it is yet to make sense of, most especially the contending political elites. Therefore, the major point of this thesis is that the failure of governance in Nigeria is a function of the nature and character of the political elite. Ironically, the problem of

development is both a symptom and consequence of bad governance.

### **GOOD GOVERNANCE: CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL DISCOURSE**

Politically, people may disagree about the best means of achieving good governance, but they quite agreed that good governance is absolutely imperative for social and economic progress (Oburota, 2003). Then what is governance and what makes governance a good or a bad one? This is perhaps a philosophical question which may attract endless and multifarious answers. Fundamentally, the question of good and bad is ethical/moral. According to Madhav (2007) good governance has much to do with the ethical grounding of governance and must be evaluated with reference to specific norms and objectives as may be laid down. It looks at the functioning of the given segment of the society from the point of view of its acknowledged stakeholders, beneficiaries and customers. It must have firm moorings to certain moral values and principles. The question dealing with governance, though significantly related to democracy, is culture specific and system bound. It depends to a large extent on the historical experiences of a nation, its cultural mores, aspiration of the people and the stated political and economic objectives of the state, including individual and group preferences, current issues, the expectations of the governed, the nature and type of the political system, the ideological and religious predisposition of the state and a host of others. For instance, the fundamental objective principle entrenched in the Nigerian constitution provides the yardstick for measuring good governance. Section 14(1) states that, "the Federal Republic of Nigeria shall be a state based on the principles of democracy and social justice". This is further strengthened in Section 16 (1 and 2) of the 1999 Nigerian Constitution. Section 16 (1) a, b, c and d, says that, "The state shall, within the context of the ideals and objectives for which provisions are made in this constitution - Harness the resources of the nation and promote national prosperity and an efficient, dynamic and self-reliant economy; Control the national economy in such manner as to secure the maximum welfare, freedom and happiness of every citizen on the basis of social justice and equality of status and opportunity; without prejudice to its right to operate or participate in areas of the economy, other than the major sectors of the economy, manage and operate the major sectors of the economy; Without prejudice to the right of any person to participate in areas of the economy within the major sector of the economy, protect the right of every citizen to engage in any economic activities outside the major sectors of the economy. Section 16(2) states that, "the state shall direct its policy towards - The promotion of a planned and balanced economic

development; That the material resources of the nation are harnessed and distributed as best as possible to serve the common good; That the economic system is not operated in such a manner as to permit the concentration of wealth or the means of production and exchange in the hands of few individuals or of a group; and that suitable and adequate shelter, suitable and adequate food, reasonable national minimum living wage, old age care and pensions, and unemployment, sick benefits and welfare of the disabled are provided for all citizens.

Fundamentally therefore, to describe governance as a good one and to determine whether it is a bad one requires the understanding of the essence of the state which are not only embedded in the constitution but also a function of the religious ideals and the nature of current problems confronting the state. The question about the essence of the state formed the major preoccupation of the earlier philosophers like Aristotle, Plato, Rousseau and others. The essence of the state to these early thinkers is to promote the common good as acknowledged in section 16(2 'b') of the Nigerian constitution. Thus, public authorities have the common good of the state as their prime responsibilities. The common good stands in opposition to the good of rulers or of a ruling group. It implies that every individual, no matter how high or low, has a duty to share in promoting the welfare of the community as well as a right to benefit from that welfare (Eboh, 2003). Common implies that the "good" is all inclusive. In essence, the common good cannot exclude or exempt any section of the population. If any section of the population is in fact excluded from participating in the life of the community, even at a minimal level, then that is a contradiction to the concept of the common good (Eboh, 2003). Then what is governance?

Governance can be defined as the process that is employed to achieve the noble end of the state. Thus, governance simply implies the art of governing a people within a given territory or a state. It consists of two essential elements of the state, namely the structure of the state and the procedures of the legislative, judicial and those of the executive and administrative bodies at all the tiers of government. In one word, governance remains a state in action. Hirst and Thompson (1996) define governance as "the control of an activity by some means such that a range of desired outcomes is attained". Thus, governance in a political sense is a more complex activity. Secondly, political governance is service oriented. Governance is better conceived from Lasswell traditional definition of politics as who gets what, when and how and perhaps how much. Thus, governance has a lot to do with the allocation of values in the society, which to a large extent is political in nature. Although governance is related to politics, it is conceptually different. However, as a human phenomenon, governance is exercised within a given

socio-cultural context and belongs to a broader department of politics. While politics is the authoritative allocation of values or who gets what, when and how, governance is the process and mechanisms of allocating the values without jeopardising the principle of equity, justice and fairness. Therefore, it is through the practical application of the authority and the processes of governance that the powers of the state acquire meaning and substance. In this regard the World Bank view governance as, "the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources for development (Odunuga, 2003). The Bank further identified the following three key aspects of governance: the form of a political regime; the process by which authority is exercised in the management of a country's social and economic resources and the capacity of governance to design, formulate and implement policies and discharge functions. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP 1999) sees government and governance as being synonymous. Accordingly, it define governance as a complex mechanisms, process, relationships and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations and mediate their differences. It is important to note that government and governance are interconnected. Government, as an art of governance, enjoys four important attributes which include sovereignty, power, authority and legitimacy (Ekei, 2003). All these elements or attributes are the instruments of effective governance in the sense that they provide the necessary anchor and legal/moral justifications to the government.

Governance in the context of this paper is defined as the process of allocating resources, through the instrumentalities of the state, for the attainment of public good. Thus, governance includes institutional and structural arrangements, decision making processes, policy formulation and implementation capacity, development of personnel, information flows and the nature and style of leadership within a political system. Hence, governance is largely about problem identification and solving. It is also about social, economic and political progress or advancement. Consequently, governance has social, economic, administrative and political dimensions (World Bank Institute, 2003).

Economic governance includes processes of decision-making that directly or indirectly affect a country's economic activities or its relationships with other economies. Generally, economic governance has a major influence on societal issues, such as equity, poverty and quality of life. Political governance refers to decision-making and policy implementation of a legitimate and authoritative state. The state should consist of separate legislative, executive and judicial branches, represent the interests of a pluralist polity, and allow citizens to freely elect their representatives. Administrative governance, to the World Bank, is a system of policy implementation

carried out through an efficient, independent, accountable and open public sector. These elements constitute the governance system, that is, the formal institutional and organisational structure of authoritative decision-making in the modern state. Systemic governance encompasses the processes and structures of society that guide political and socioeconomic relationships to protect cultural and religious beliefs and values, create and maintain an environment of health, freedom, security and with the opportunity to exercise personal capabilities that lead to a better life for all people (World Bank Institute, 2003).

By governance therefore, we mean the manner in which power is exercised by governments in the management and distribution of a country's social and economic resources. The nature and manner of this distribution makes governance a bad or a good one. Thus, when resources are distributed to promote inequality or to achieve personal or group ambitions, the essence of governance which coincides with the essence of politics and essence of the state is defeated. Therefore, resources must be distributed responsibly, equitably and fairly for the realization of the essence of the state. This brings us to the idea that governance can be aptly described as good or bad. It is significant to note however, that good governance as a norm cannot make sense unless it is predicated on the presupposition that the experience and knowledge of bad governance is possible and real. On this basis, the norm of good governance is the political ethic that intends to challenge and replace the reality of bad governance (Mogobe, 2003).

Good governance, as a concept, is applicable to all sections of society such as the government, legislature, judiciary, media, private sector, corporate sector, trade unions and lastly non-government organisations (NGOs). Public accountability and transparency are as relevant for the one as for the other. It is only when all these and various other sections of society conduct their affairs in a socially responsible manner that the objective of achieving larger good of the largest number of people in society can be achieved (Madhav, 2007).

The African Development Bank views good governance as one that embodies and promotes effective states, mobilised civil societies and productive private sectors. While the United Nations development programme (UNDP, 1996) sees good governance as a commitment and the capability to effectively address the allocation and management of resources to respond to collective problems. According to organisation for economic co-operation and development (OECD) (UNESCO, 2005) good governance has eight major characteristics. It is participatory, consensus oriented, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective and efficient, equitable and inclusive and follows the rule of law. It assures that corruption is minimized, the views of minorities are taken into account and that the voices of the most vulnerable in

society are heard in decision-making (OECD, 2001). Within this purview, Nigeria's Vision 2010 document defined good governance thus; Good governance means accountability in all its ramifications. It also means the rule of law and an unfettered judiciary; that is freedom of expression and choice in political association. Good governance means transparency, equity and honesty in public office. In the Nigerian context, good governance calls for constitutional rule and a true federal system. These are the basic pedestals on which any vision of development rests on.

Remarkably, it is only when we appraise the manner in which the affairs of a country are run that we can discern which government is good or bad or which has been a success or failure. Failure of governance implies that those in political control have not properly managed the economy and other social institutions. According to the World Bank (1992) bad governance has many features, among which are: failure to make a clear separation between what is public and what is private, hence a tendency to divert public resources for private gain; failure to establish a predictable framework for law and government behaviour in a manner that is conducive to development, or arbitrariness in the application of rules and laws; excessive rules, regulations, licensing requirements, etc, which impede the functioning of markets and encourage rent-seeking; priorities that are inconsistent with development, thus, resulting in a misallocation of resources and excessively narrow base for, or non-transparencies, decision-making.

According to Obadan (1998) when these features occur together they create an environment that is hostile to development. In such circumstances, he further argued that the authority of governments over their peoples tends to be progressively eroded. This reduces compliance with decisions and regulations. Government then tend to respond through populist measures or, as in some authoritarian regimes, resort to coercion. Either way, the economic cost tends to be high, including a diversion of resources to internal security and escalating corruption.

In essence, bad governance is the absence of good governance and may not necessarily mean the absence of democracy. It is evident in the inability of a state to achieve or realise the essence of the state at a particular time. Also bad governance by entailing corruption, and lack of accountability and transparency, provides opportunities for the well connected elites and interest groups in the society to corner for themselves a sizeable proportion of the society's resources at the expense of the masses (Obadan, 1998). Thus, bad governance is contrapuntal to a nation's socio-economic and political development.

Therefore, resources of the state must be managed in such a manner as to achieve the desired level of socio-economic progress for all members of the political community. It is important to note that the resource

utilized must also be commensurate with the level of development attained. In short, good governance is about the performance capacity of a government or as it relates to leadership capability. Failure of governance therefore, could expressly mean failure of leadership. Indeed, the best governors are those who met their society in a condition of social and political nadir and are able to save the society or lift it up from doldrums to the position of fame and prosperity.

Governance is good provided it is able to achieve the desired end of the state defined in terms of justice, equity, protection of life and property, enhanced participation, preservation of the rule of law and improved living standard of the populace. Governance is termed bad when it fails to achieve the purpose(s) of the state.

### **THE NEXUS OF DEMOCRACY AND GOOD GOVERNANCE**

Democracy has become the most fashionable form of governance in the world. In all societies of the world today, the issue is not which political system is appropriate but rather when will society become democratised or fully democratic. The democratisation project is therefore, regarded as the age of civilization that every society should strive to attain rather than a political option among many others (Owolabi, 2001). Democracy has thus been recognized as the only moral and legitimate way through which a society can be administered.

Thus, theoretically, scholars and international financial institutions like the World Bank have established an inextricable connection between democracy and good governance. Democracy, adequately understood, is a theory that sets some basic principles according to which a good government, whatever its form, must be run (Oluwole, 2003). Such principles include those of justice, equity, freedom, liberty, accountability, openness and transparency in government. Indeed, effective democratic forms of governance rely on public participation, accountability and transparency. In most countries today, it is these principles that are used as criteria for distinguishing between good and bad governments. In this regard, democracy not only prescribes how political power should be acquired but also what to do with it or how it should be exercised. Therefore, democracy specifies who constitutes the legitimate government and wields the authority inherent in the state (the elected representatives), how they acquire authority (free and fair elections, choice between parties) and how they are to exercise it (in broad harmony with public good) (Parekh, 1993). This makes democracy amenable to moral and ethical justifications or judgments. Hence, good governance forms the philosophical foundation upon which democracy and democratic theories are built. In his confession before the United Nations in October 1991

Thomas Pickering, the United States Ambassador, declared, "The bottom line of good governance is democracy itself" (Skinner, 1970). Many scholars who shared this view have associated the tragedy of development in Africa, Nigeria inclusive, to the absence of democratic rule and or prolonged military hegemony (Ake, 1996).

It is worrisome however, that almost two decades after the "third wave" of democracy has blown across the continent of Africa, democratisation has not produced the expected result. Rather than engender development and good governance, it has led to anarchy, civil wars, genocide and general political instabilities as have been seen in Rwanda, Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Uganda, Zimbabwe, Sierra Leone and Nigeria. In Nigeria for instance, political assassinations, ethno-religious conflicts, abject poverty, acute youth unemployment and general economic and political decay have been the major dividends of democracy since 1999 when the country returned to democracy. All these suggest that there is no automatic connection between democracy and good governance but there is an intrinsic socio-cultural value that enhances democratic performance. Why has democracy failed to engender good governance? The answer to this question relates to another fundamental but hidden question that must be answered by the Africans, their political leaders and its foreign allies- Democracy for who and democracy for what? It is clear that the form of democracy as it is practiced in Africa today is an imposed one. Most African states are forced to democratise in order to be able to access foreign loans and aid. Therefore, the third wave was not a natural wave. Democracy is adopted to suit the desire of foreign donors and advanced capitalist democracies. The problem here is that liberal democracy does not evolve, as it was in the west, with the African societies. The argument here is that there is a serious need to "domesticate" western liberal democracies in order to enhance its benefits in Africa. Therefore, Nigeria and the rest of Africa should, like Gyekye has argued, "find ingenious ways and means of hammering the autochthonous democratic element as well as elements inherited from alien sources into an acceptable and viable democratic form in the setting of the modern world" (Gyekye, 1997). Other reasons why democracy could not engender good governance are discussed below.

### **DEMOCRACY AND GOOD GOVERNANCE: NIGERIA'S DILEMMA**

Opinions converged that democracy as is currently practised in Nigeria has produced unpalatable results. This is associated with the nature of the Nigerian state and the character of its elites. This has often times made it difficult for some scholars (Toyo, 1994; Nwigwe, 2003) to see Nigeria as a non-democratic state. Eskor Toyo

(1994), a decade ago critically pointed out that Nigeria had never experienced democracy. He argues instead of the return to civil rule, we Nigerians, find ourselves talking of return to democracy thus falling into presumption that a democracy had existed in Nigeria. The press, for instance, is incessantly drumming into our ears that "we are a democratic country" and bellowing that "in a democratic country like Nigeria", this or that should not happen. It thus, seems completely unaware of the cardinal fact that neither during colonial rule nor since independence has Nigeria been a democratic country. In the far years of the Balewa's and Shagari's civilian interludes, Nigeria strove to be a democracy but was never.

This argument is still forceful today. In a similar vein, Nwigwe (2003) contends that it would constitute a very difficult problem for political theorist to determine the classification of Nigeria's type of governments. It is not a monarchy, even though there are so many monarchs in the policy making positions. It is definitely not an aristocracy, because by its very definition, aristocracy means government by the best. It is of course not democracy because at least in its modern understanding, democracy is government of the people by the people and for the people. What then is it? If we go by St Augustine's definition - government that Nigeria ever had could qualify as "Mafia Government". The word "mafia" within the paper's context means government infested with power drunken, self seeking, ideology-barren, orientation less operatives; usually selected by their kind and of course scarcely ever elected by the people. Even in the guise of multi-party election, those to rule are clearly predetermined and chosen even before elections takes place.

This assertion is still plausible today. The reason for Toyo and Nwigwe's conclusion is not far-fetched. In terms of outcome, Nigerians have not significantly reaped the dividends of democracy. Secondly, Nigeria's democracy has been violent ridden characterized with wanton destruction of lives and properties (Ogundiya and Baba, 2005). More importantly, the peoples' vote seems not to count in determining who governs as elections are rigged or its outcome determined before the poll. Therefore, procedurally, democracy in Nigeria is lamed and in terms of its conceptual outcome has failed to meet the expectations of the people. Furthermore, Nigeria's democracy (if it could be so described) has tended to promote inequality rather than equality. Toyo's (1994) comment is also instructive; there can be no genuine democracy in a country where citizens are grossly unequal in wealth and the poor who are invariably the majority, are dependent on the wealthy. Due to the fact that wealth is power, where such a cleavage and dependency exist, political power is inevitably in the hands of the wealthy. In this scenario, democracy ceases to be democracy in reality; in effect it is a plutocracy.

In essence, a responsible and accountable leadership

that would characterise good governance in Nigeria is patently absent. Nigerian political elites, almost without exception, have an insatiable capacity to steal from the commonwealth and leave the people more impoverished. Unrestrained by any real accountability to the electorate, many of those elected officials who came to power in fraudulent elections have committed abuses against their constituents and engaged in the large-scale looting of public resources (Human Rights Watch, 2007). Therefore, there is a very wide hiatus between the rich and the poor masses. In Nigeria today, what we have is democracy without social, economic and political development.

The legislative arm of government that would have provided adequate checks on abuses of power by the executive and recklessness of the opportunistic politicians is also inefficient and ineffective. Effective legislature contributes to good governance. This is done by the performance of legislative oversight over the finances of government, which serves as a catalyst for the sustainability of a democratic governance. It is also important to note that the responsibilities of the legislature in a democratic society have gone beyond mere rule making and representation. They are now involved in administrative and financial matters. Legislatures are now saddle with the role of keeping close watch and control over the executive arm of government and the control of public expenditures and taxation. In summary, a legislative house must not only be capable of making laws for the safety and general wellbeing of the people, but must also be able to manage funds in order to provide good life for the entire citizenry.

To perform its oversight function effectively, every legislature needs power to shape the budget and means of overseeing or checking the executive power beyond the ultimate power of impeachment. A legislature that is capable of oversight function is more likely to manage the available funds to achieve the objectives of the state with minimal or no wastages, and this engenders transparency, openness, accountability which represent the tripod of good governance. The failure of the legislature to perform this important function in Nigeria has denied the people the gains of democratic governance. Rather than enhance good governance through equity in the distribution of resources legislature in Nigeria have been preoccupied with how to amass wealth to them at the peril of Nigerian. The case of the 2009 budgetary allocation is a typical example. A breakdown of the 2009 National Budget shows that members of the National Assembly and the personnel of a part of the Presidency will be paid 47.8 billion naira as emoluments during the year. The 360 members of the House of Representatives were to receive 26.67 billion naira while the 109 Senators were to get 16.3 billion naira. When provisions for legislative aides, the National Assembly Service Commission and the National Assembly Office are factored in, the total allocation to the federal legislature

stands at 61.6 billion naira. In its analysis, the editorial comment in the Nigerian Tribune of December 11, 2008 notes that "an infinitesimal percentage of the citizenry will be pocketing 2.9% of the total provision made for the recurrent expenditure of Federal Government". Hence, the national assemblies have failed to provide selfless, purposeful and democratic legislative leadership.

This is so because Nigerian legislators are not qualitatively appointed through competitive, fair and free elections. The situation in Nigeria lends credence to Ogban's (1996) proposition that; When a few people control the governance of a polity and have the preponderance of force to continue to maintain such control, a national assembly that emerges from the dictation of such a group is likely to be more corrupt and subversive of democracy and democratisation than the one that emerges from the dictates of the popular forces.

It is incontrovertible that the States and the National Houses of Assembly in Nigeria are products of corrupt and undemocratic procedures and processes. Hence, it is not surprising that its activities subverts rather than promotes democracy and good governance. This is actually the dilemma of democracy in Nigeria.

Furthermore, the judicial arm, an indispensable complement to good governance is also lame. In the Nigerian context, it is no exaggeration that the notion of the judiciary as *primus inter pares* is one that is yet to be fully imbibed by the political elite, irrespective of the recent popular judgement over some contested gubernatorial seats in Edo, Imo and Rivers states. The judiciary in Nigeria is to a large extent subject to the whims and caprices of the executive arm. This is so because the judiciary is not only financially dependent on the executive but has also been excessively politicised. The upshot of this state of affairs has been the corruption of the judiciary. While judiciary corruption relates to unprofessional or infamous conduct by judicial officers, it is also taken to mean attempts by extraneous bodies to undermine the judiciary either through inducement, cajoling, intimidation, or some other means (Oyebode, 1996). Undoubtedly, a financially dependent judiciary cannot enjoy full autonomy neither can it dispense justice without fear or favour.

Consequently, while the Nigerian masses might historically perceived the judiciary as 'the last hope of the common man', the political elite have sought to humiliate, exploit or marginalise the judiciary, almost totally oblivious of the class suicide potential of such attitudes. The situation is compounded by the country's economic wretchedness which makes an individual susceptible to corruption. In a society bedevilled by social insecurity, political instability and economic woes, it "require near superhuman guts to be upright and stand firm on the side of judicial integrity, independence, due process of the law and kindred virtues of democratic polity" (Oyebode, 1996). Thus, the rule of law becomes the rule of the jungle and good governance is jeopardised. Aristotle

(Udo, 2003) maintained, "In all well attempted governments there is nothing which should be more jealously maintained than the spirit of obedience to law". All over the world the rule of law is inseparable from good governance, it invariably points to a government established by the will of the people; one in which there are laid down procedures for an orderly change of government and legal procedures for the settling of conflicts etc. Therefore, a free and independent judiciary is a sine qua non for good governance. This is currently, a mirage in Nigeria. Another complement to good governance is a virile media and active civil society organisations. While the Nigerian press is considered to be one of the freest in the world, it is also observable that it is more amenable to control and manipulation by the political moneybags. Thus, mass media in Nigeria is to a large extent sycophantic. An obsequious and toadying media cannot provide the required supportive base for good governance. Another reason for the failure of the media as the fourth estate of the realm is the unwarranted protection of the public official by the constitution or the media limited access to information. A curtailed media is nothing but a dormant media which cannot actively protect the citizens when their rights are infringed upon. By implication, rule of law cannot be preserved by a controllable or ingratiating media. The proposed freedom of information bill (FIB) which would have guaranteed citizen's access to information and rescued the media from the problem of access to official information has been frustrated by the refusal of the executive to endorse the bill and also the lack of political will on the part of the legislature to enforce executive endorsement. This is done to subject the media to further manipulation of the political class.

The idea that civil society is sacrosanct to good governance is incontestable. In Nigeria, the civil society has been central to the democratic struggles, more especially the human right groups. Surprisingly, the civil society on the whole has become moribund or less aggressive (except few foreign human right groups) after the country re-democratised in 1999. This seriously portends ills for good and responsible governance in the country. Consolidation of democracy via good governance rests primarily on a virile and agile civil society which is currently deficient in the country.

## **SYMPTOMS AND CONSEQUENCES OF BAD GOVERNANCE IN NIGERIA**

The consequences of unaccountable governance in Nigeria have been severe. As documented by Human Rights Watch (HRW), human rights abuses remain pervasive in Nigeria (HRW, 2002; 2003; 2006). Injustices have become the permanent feature of the Nigeria's political system. Aristotle said that "no government can stand which is not founded upon justice" (Politics VII, 14:

4). That would seem to imply that justice is the surest foundation on which to build a good and successful government (Etuk, 2003).

Another evidence and consequence of failure of governance in Nigeria is political and bureaucratic corruption. Corruption is an aspect of poor governance and is defined as the abuse of public office for private gain. In Nigeria, corruption has assumed eccentric and ludicrous proportions; what Gunnar Myrdal calls "folklore of corruption" (Amuwo, 2005). To date, a total of about \$380 billion have been reported stolen by former military and political leaders. This amount is equivalent to all the western aid given to Africa in almost four decades and also equivalent to 300 years of British aid for the continent. It is also said to be six times the American help given to post-war Europe under the Marshall plan (Blair, 2005). Between 1970 and 2000, the number of Nigerians subsisting on less than one dollar a day grew from 36% to more than 70%, that is, from 19 million to a staggering 90 million people (Watts, 2007). Nigeria is a nation where corruption thrives. From 1999 to date, Nigeria consistently ranked as one of the most corrupt countries in the world (Transparency International, [www.transparency.org](http://www.transparency.org)).

Corruption is rampant at all levels of government, crippling basic health and education services and other social infrastructures. Good governance is an illusion in a state where corruption is endemic and persistent. When corruption is prevalent as witnessed in the last decade, instructions of governance are abused by illicit and self-serving behaviours of political leaders. The consequence – poverty - is unavoidable. Poverty has been and is still a major problem in Nigeria. The statistics is staggering despite the political clamour against poverty. Nigeria harbours one of the largest numbers of the poor in Africa. There is gross inability of most Nigerians to achieve a certain minimal standard of living. Statistics have indicated that 70.8% of Nigerians live below the poverty-line of \$1 a day and up to 92.4% live below \$2 a day at year 2003 (The United Nations International Children's Fund, 2003; World Bank, 2006). This is compounded by acute youth unemployment. Various estimates put unemployment rate in the country at between 20 and 50% (Asemota, 2005). Among graduates of tertiary institution, unemployment rate is put at between 50 and 75%. This has resulted to general insecurity and high crime rate in the Nigerian society.

All state youth empowerment programmes and other employment generating policies of successive administrations like Operation Feed the Nation (OFN), Green Revolution (GR), Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI), The Peoples Bank, Better Life for Rural Women (BLP), Family Support Programme (FSP), Peoples Bank and other poverty reduction programmes from 1999 to date have failed to achieve their founder's vision because of gross mismanagement and rampant corruption. Other symptoms and

consequences of bad governance are: incessant religious crisis, persistent ethnic and sectional conflicts, separatist movements and gross social, economic and political instabilities and deepened legitimacy crisis. Generally, a profile of the Nigerian political economy, past and present, is a testimony of a state in search of good, efficient and effective governance.

## CONCLUSION: TOWARDS ENSURING GOOD AND DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

The symptoms and consequences of bad governance are corruption, injustices, inequity, integration crisis, ethno-religious feuds and a host of others. Among these, however, in the matter of governance the most critical issues of morality are the issues of corruption. Corruption has generated unimaginable level of poverty. This has further destroyed good governance. Poverty of the vast majority of the populace makes it nearly impossible for them to see their problems clearly, let alone think of their solution. It makes them vulnerable and easy to manipulate. Due to the fact that poverty is also a weapon in the hands of the political elite for further manipulation and exploitation, it is further perpetuated to maintain the grips of the political elites on the society. Therefore, to promote good governance sound anti-corruption policies devoid of rhetoric must be put in place. In addition, the legislature and the judicial arm must be functional and alive to their responsibilities, since a healthy and sound judiciary and legislature are sine qua non for good and democratic governance.

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