

Original Paper

Good Governance and National Development: Nigeria in Perspective

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Abstract

Issues relating to good governance and development have been pushed to the forefront of world affairs, largely because of the wave of the democracy movement now blowing soothingly across the whole length and breadth of the international community. Good governance and development are dividends of democracy that are of great interest to the democratic family. The paper attempts to critically examine the intimate relationship between good governance and development with particular reference to Nigeria as a case study. Abundant literature on the subject matter reveals that democracy and good governance provide an enabling environment for development to take place, and that the role of political leadership in realizing all of this is critical. It is recommended, among other things, that (1) the intellectual class should be involved in the country's development plan; (2) there is the urgent need to create a virile but flexible work force that can initiate and execute development plans; and (3) efforts must be made to embark on capacity building of all the institutions of governance so that they can perform their roles optimally for the benefit of the country.

Keywords

good governance, national development, democracy, leadership

1. Introduction

The call for good governance has been the major aspirations of citizens of every country across the globe. Its effect is widely understood to bring justice, equity and fair distribution of the wealth of nations to all and sundry hence, every citizen takes to holding government accountable on the mandate. There are different perspectives to measure good governance taking into cognisance the peculiarities of each country. This paper takes a look at good governance within the context of governmental policies in Nigeria as enshrined in the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The relationship between good governance and other key factors such as leadership and democracy will be considered which are critical to growth and National development.

2. Theoretical Issues

Questions have often been asked about what parameters to use to determine what good governance is and what bad governance is. Reacting to this question, Madhav (2007) argues that good governance can only be determined within the context of the value system of the people in terms of the historical background, the culture, the aspirations, and the nature of the political system, the religious and ideological predisposition, and the declared political and economic objectives of the people. The logic in this is that for good governance to be so-called, it must conform to certain values.

According to Ogundiya (2010, p. 202), governance is “the process that is employed to achieve the noble end of the state”. From the liberal conception of the state, it means that governance is meant to actualize the purposes for which the state is instituted. Such philosopher Kings as Aristotle, Plato, Locke and Hobbes advanced various reasons for the existence of the state. But in all, one can clearly infer from their theories that the essence of the state is to provide protection, order, and justice for the citizens. It is in the light of this that Oburola (2003) says that “good governance is absolutely imperative for social and economic progress”.

In the specific case of Nigeria, the fundamental objective principles of state entrenched in section 14(1) of the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic provides a basis for determining good governance in the country: “the Federal Republic of Nigeria shall be a state based on the principles of democracy and social justice”. These principles are re-enforced in section 16(1) and 16(2) of the same 1999 constitution. Section 16(1) states: “The State Shall, within the context of the ideals and objectives for which provisions are made in this constitution”:

- 1) harness the resources of the nation and promote national prosperity, an efficient, a dynamic and self-reliant economy for every citizen on the basis of social justice and equality of status and opportunity;
- 2) control the national economy in such a 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;

3) 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;

4) 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;

16(2) The State shall direct its policy towards ensuring:

(a) the promotion of a planned and balanced economic development;

(b) that the material resources of the nation are harnessed and distributed as best as possible to serve the common good;

(c) 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;

(d) 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.

Thus in Nigeria, good governance can be measured by and large by the extent to which the political leadership succeeds in pursuing these principles for the overall good of the citizenry. Generally, it is when governance is geared towards ensuring justice and equity in the distribution of the nation's natural resources that good governance can be seen to exist in the country. The World Bank, like most international organizations, attaches a lot of importance to good governance as a yardstick for giving financial assistance to needy nations. The Bank defines 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 identifies three key elements that can be used as a yardstick for measuring good governance. These are: (i) the form of a political regime; (ii) the process by which authority is exercised in the management of a Nigeria's social and economic resources; (iii) the capability of governance to design, formulate and implement policies and discharge functions (Odunuga, 2003).

It is important to note that good governance must be carried to all sections of society, such as the three arms of government (the Executive, the Legislature, and the Judiciary), the private sector, the media, the corporate sector, trade unions, and even Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs). In all of this, public accountability and transparency are critical elements. It is when all sections of society and organs of government conduct their affairs in a socially responsible manner towards achieving common good that good governance can be achieved (Madhav, 2007).

For the African Development Bank (ADB), good governance is one that strengthens the capacity and capability of the state, mobilizes civil societies and energises the private sector. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), on the other hand, sees good governance as “a commitment and the

capability to effectively address the allocation and management of resources to respond to collective problems” (UNDP). On its own part, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), identifies 8 elements as integral components of good governance: Participation, consensus-oriented, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective, effective and efficient, equitable and inclusive and respect for the rule of law (UNESCO, 2005).

It is interesting to note that Nigeria’s VISION 2010 document provides a definition of good governance:

Good governance means accountability in all its ramifications. It also means the real 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 (VISION, 2010).

In his good will message to the people of Osun State, the State Governor Aregbesola, among other things, promised the people of the State good governance. The Governor made reference to the definition of good governance given by the Commission on Human Rights which identifies the following as key attributes of good governance:

Transparency

Responsibility

Participation

Responsiveness (to the needs of the people).

The Governor emphasized that when an enabling environment devoid of corruption is created for these attributes to thrive, sustainable development will be facilitated for the benefit of all.

3. Method of the Study

The paper adopts qualitative research method. It is instructive to mention that qualitative research is primarily exploratory research. It is used to gain an understanding of underlying reasons, opinions, and motivations. The three variables that are essential to the advancement of a nation are therefore considered.

3.1 Leadership, Democracy and Good Governance

The three variables—leadership, democracy and good governance—are critical to the survival and development of any nation. For the state to carry out its functions effectively and efficiently there must be an enabling environment for the three variables to combine, and work in a mutually re-enforcing manner.

The whole question of good governance revolves around the nature and style of leadership. It is the manner in which the political leadership of a country conducts itself that determines whether or not there is good or bad governance. It has been established that the character and style of leadership goes a

long way in determining the level and scope of democracy and good governance. This implies that the degree to which the ideals of democracy are allowed to flourish and the nature of governance generally will depend on whether or not the political leader is a dictator, autocratic, participatory, or laissez faire. Major socio-economic transformation of any society requires servant leadership. According to Oloko (ND, 104), a servant leader must possess the following attributes:

- (i) Participatory and visionary style
- (ii) Knowledge and use of appropriate policies and implementation strategies
- (iii) Knowing the needs of the people
- (iv) Ability to move the society forward

The effect of leadership style on the lives and welfare of the people is enormous. A leadership style that is democratic, non-punitive, participatory and follower-oriented enhances democracy and good governance for the benefit of the citizenry. For example, in a country where the press is censored and information flow is hampered, or fundamental human rights of the people are trampled upon, social and economic progress will be impeded.

A good leader is known by the extent to which he provides social and economic welfare for the people, his judicious use of the resources of the nation, and the extent to which he is able to transform the nation. Hitler of Germany, John F. Kennedy of the USA, Chairman Mao of China, and more recently Professor Mill of Ghana, and Yar'adua of Nigeria were World leaders who were able to take their respective countries to great heights due to their effective leadership.

Democracy is the bedrock of good governance. Espousing this, Thomas Pickering, a onetime United States Ambassador, declared that "the bottom line of good governance is democracy itself" (Skinner, 1970). In view of this, many scholars in Africa and in the rest of the Third World have said that the stunted growth and snail speed development of the developing world is as a result of the absence of the culture of democracy in the area. What is Democracy? The term "democracy" is pregnant with meanings; it is a term that is on the tips of powerful people, particularly statesmen and political leaders who lay claim to democratic governance regardless of the type of government they are running. Consequently, virtually all the definitions of democracy given by different scholars and political actors over the years are value-laden and nebulous in that the definitions are coloured by their individual subjective perceptions of democracy relative to the ethical and ideological leanings of their respective societies.

Today, democracy has certainly developed beyond the level of direct practice as conducted in the Greek city-state of Athens upon which it was defined by Abraham Lincoln as "**government of the people for the people and by the people**". Accordingly, most definitions of democracy at the present time take cognizance of the representative nature of modern democracy. Thus Black (1979, p. 388) has defined democracy as "that form of government in which the sovereign power resides in and is exercised by the

whole body of free citizens directly or indirectly through a system of representation as distinguished from a monarchy, aristocracy, or; oligarchy”.

The definition given by Professor L. M. Lipset is particularly illuminating in that it sufficiently highlights the fundamental features of the representative democracy that is now in vogue in the world.

A political system which supplies regular constitutional opportunities for changing governing officials and a social mechanism which permits the largest possible part of the population to influence major decisions by choosing from contenders of political officers (Lipset).

Essentially, democracy is founded on the popular will of the people and this is expressed at periodic elections. Thus, “the primary criterion for democracy is therefore an equitable and open competition for votes between and among political parties without government manipulation, harassment or restrictions of opposition parties (Chichana, 1999, p. 39). Democracy is a system of choice by electorate who constitutes the political sovereign. It originated from Athens, a Greek city-state, and has become a form of government universally accepted as the best in the modern world; The application of the principles of democracy may vary slightly from society to society due to peculiar historical and social circumstances, but the culture and essential elements of democracy remain basically the same all over the world. These include:

- (1) the centrality of the people in the determination of what Harold Lasswell termed “who gets what, when and how?”
- (2) Free and fair elections and periodic change of government;
- (3) Independent judiciary, guaranteeing of fundamental human rights and freedoms as well as the rule of law.

Modern democracy can be conceptualized in three inter-related ways (Nzongola-Vtalaja, 2001, p. 20).

These are:

- a) Democracy as a moral imperative;
- b) Democracy as a social process;
- c) Democracy as a political practice.

Democracy as a moral imperative relates to the quest for a congenial atmosphere for men to develop their potentials to the fullest and have good life. To this end, Aristotle had said that “for the sake of good life” the establishment of democratic form of good is imperative in human society. In the same vein, Thomas Hobbes emphasized that an effective and responsible form of government is a necessary condition for men to exhibit their inherent virtues and also demonstrate the law of nature-modesty, justice, mercy, and equity. Indeed, it is only under a peaceful and stable democratic system that men can enjoy their freedoms, pursue their aspirations and build an egalitarian society. Any government that claims to be democratic must demonstrate the moral obligation to facilitate the attainment of these aspirations. No doubt, there is a positive correlation between peace, democracy, and national

development.

Democracy as a social process is a mechanism for protecting and promoting the fundamental human rights and civil liberties of citizens. Experiences all over the world have shown unequivocally that democracy is the form of government that best guarantees the inalienable rights and liberties of citizens. In a democratic system, these rights are eloquently written into the constitution for avoidance of doubt, and they are legally and morally binding on government to guarantee. The adoption and consolidation of democracy in most parts of the world today is a reaction to the failure of the military and other forms of authoritarian governments to guarantee these basic social needs.

As a political practice, democracy is a mode of governance based on the principles of the sovereignty of the people, the rule of law, accountability, participation, and periodic change of government. The existence of political institutions such as the Executive, the Legislature, the Judiciary as well as the Armed forces each of which is charged with: A specific political function is a manifestation of the existence of a national government in society.

Democracy has clearly emerged as the form of government that most significantly takes cognizance of the interests and welfare of the masses. Among other things, it provides social opportunities likely to enhance the capabilities of individuals to develop their potentials. For the common man, democracy increases his capacity to overcome poverty, protest against unemployment and social exclusion, and increase the ability to take advantage of the favorable economic environment to improve his standard of living. Politically, even the poor are empowered in a democratic system. This means that they are included in the concept of power-sharing in such a way that they take part in the development process through a system of self-management akin to the now famous model of the Brazilian city of Porto Alegre, where neighborhood residents can, through a "participatory budget" engage in determining how municipal funds are allocated to their development needs. This is illustrative of the agitation for resource control by some states in Nigeria.

All of this symbolizes the beauty of democracy, and it is the passion and struggle to embrace this beauty that has today made democracy a worldwide movement. However, there are major defects in democracy, some of which are the inability of the majority of citizens to understand the extremely difficult and complicated issues of social and economic policies involved in modern government, the constant danger of their being deluded by unscrupulous politicians and leaders to support policies that are irrational, their poor sense of judgment in deciding who to vote for, and their ignorance and general gullibility.

The nexus between democracy and good governance is incontrovertible. Fundamentally, democracy provides a congenial atmosphere for both human rights and fundamental human rights to be enjoyed by the citizenry, which itself, is a measure of good governance.

The western liberal democracy demands that such things as right to life, freedom of association,

freedom of worship and expressions are recognized by government as inalienable rights of the citizenry. Fundamental human rights also extend to the rule of law which insists on conformity with the provisions of the law of the land. Under the rule of law, the law of the land must be seen and recognized by individuals and government as supreme. The principle of equality before the law must be obeyed; and the fundamental human rights of citizens must be allowed to prevail. Any government, military or civilian, which claims to be democratic must not only give verbal and rhetoric recognition to these rights, but must also be seen to promote them in the interest of the people.

Governor Aregbesola of Osun State has identified four major links between democracy and good governance, especially as it relates to human rights. These are:

- (i) Democratic institutions
- (ii) Service delivery
- (iii) Rule of law
- (iv) Anti-corruption

On democratic institutions, the Governor argues that democratic institutions should be structured in a manner to accommodate popular participation, especially in decision-making process. Such participation, according to him, should also include the contributions of civil society organizations and local communities.

Service delivery, accordingly to him, is a necessary ingredient of democracy and good governance. He therefore insists that infrastructural facilities, education, health, and food must be major priorities of any responsible government. Public accountability and transparency, according to Aregbesola, are a *sine qua non* for good governance.

Rule of law is unequivocally an integral part of good governance. It therefore behooves on any democratic government to respect the rule of law, initiate reforms in critical institutions of government such as the judiciary and the legislature, and capacity building of human resources and institutions of governance generally.

Anti-corruption measures must be pursued vigorously by any democratic people-oriented government so as to create an enabling environment for sustainable development. In Nigeria, for example, the establishment of Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) and Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) are commendable efforts towards fighting corruption in high places so that development and social progress can be enhanced.

In the light of the above analysis, good governance can only be achieved in an atmosphere of effective and visionary leadership and a government that embraces the tenets of majoritarian democracy.

4. Analysis and Discussion

4.1 Good Governance as Key to National Development: Nigeria in Perspective

Good governance manifests itself in all facets of society and the economy. Development cannot take place in an atmosphere of insecurity and unstable political system. It is in view of this that the World Bank has said that lack of development is a direct consequence of bad governance, emphasizing that bad governance inhibits the growth of the economy. 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 gain; failure to establish a predictable framework for law and government behavior in a manner that conducive to development; or arbitrariness in the application of rules and law; 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 excessive narrow base for, or non-transparencies, decision-making.

As Obadan (1998) argues, where all these problems exist there is little or no room for development. Thus, bad governance hinders socio-economic and political development anywhere in the world. There is no doubt that national development can only be achieved where there is good governance and stable polity. Thus, Todaro (1986) asserts that there is a positive correlation between good governance and national economic development. Since governance in Nigeria and much of Africa has been pathetically bad, it is not surprising that national development has been correspondingly very slow, especially where there has been a long period of military interregnum as was the case in Nigeria.

Ogbu (1998) argues that inept political leadership and lack of organization constitutes a stumbling block to national development in Africa and the rest of the Third world. He says that these two variables provide a useful framework for appreciating and analyzing the internal dimension of the problem of national development in Nigeria and the rest of Africa. Ogbu argues further that the task of defining and pursuing national goals is carried out only by a relatively few political leaders who represent a small percentage of the total population of the country. The active involvement of the intellectual class will go a long way in defining appropriate goals and objectives and in also charting a clear course for development.

Poverty and unemployment rates are very high in Nigeria and the rest of Africa as a direct consequence of bad governance. Statistics show that 70.8% of Nigerians live below the poverty line of \$1 a day and up to 92.4% live below \$2 a day (The United Nations International Children's Fund, 2003; World Bank, 2006). The high rate of youth unemployment of between 20 and 75% of Nigerian youths who graduate from tertiary institutions year by year contributes to insecurity and high rate of crimes in the country. The springing up of the Boko Haram sect made up of idle Muslim youths in Nigeria is not unconnected with the usual frustration arising from unemployment. Public Policies such as 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) and the Family Support Programme (FSP), Peoples Bank and other such policies have failed to improve the living standard of the people in the country largely because of gross mismanagement of resources and official corruption.

For all these problems to be achieved, good governance is indispensable. Part of Nigeria's problem is that the country's development objectives and strategies have more often than not been set externally, and therefore not capable of addressing the peculiar problems and needs of the country. This problem has now been compounded by the phenomenon of globalization. There is an urgent need to create a virile but flexible workforce that can initiate development momentum in the new world economic order that is driven by globalization. This underscores the need to create a congenial atmosphere for enduring good governance in Nigeria and the rest of the Third World countries that are saddled with the problem of underdevelopment.

5. Conclusion

In the light of the issues raised and discussed in the paper, it is obvious that a lot still needs to be done in Nigeria and Africa as a whole in terms of instituting a mechanism for good governance that will eliminate corruption in the high places and facilitate development.

Deliberate efforts must be made to embark on capacity building of all the institutions of governance, especially the Executive, the Legislature, and the Judiciary. There is also the urgent need to mobilize and motivate the civil society to collaborate with government in the process of pursuing Nigeria's development goals.

6. Recommendations

6.1 Good Governance

- (i) Far-reaching electoral reforms are necessary to create room for free and fair elections that will pave way for the emergence of credible leaders and hence good governance.
- (ii) Deliberate efforts should be made at all levels of government to allow for popular participation in decision- making process.
- (iii) Promotion of press freedom to articulate issues of governance.
- (iv) Empowering the legislature and judiciary to carry out their functions unhindered and without fear or favour.
- (v) Civic education is critical to active participation and in bringing issues of good governance to the fore.

6.2 National Development

- (i) There is an urgent need to develop functional education and adopt human resource strategies that will reflect national priorities and deal with the challenges of development.

- (ii) Government should provide enough fund for research and development.
- (iii) Greater application of technology.
- (iv) More and better focused investment (foreign and domestic).
- (v) Development of adequate infrastructure.
- (vi) Economic diversification.
- (vii) Empowering the private sector which is supposed to be the engine of growth.

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