

THE CHALLENGES OF GOOD GOVERNANCE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents an appraisal of the challenges of Governance and Sustainable Development in Nigeria. Since the early 1990s, the issue of Good Governance has become an important concept in the International Development debates and Policy discourse. Over the last decade however, the gradual accumulation of indicators and research based on them has provided broad support for the arguments that good governance is necessary to achieve sustainable growth and development, particularly in Developing Countries. Nigeria nation, more than anything else, the greatest obstacle to the nascent democracy and survival of the institution of good governance is the pervasive insecurity of lives and property, as evidenced by the spate of armed robbery attacks, political assassinations, power distribution coupled with the seeming helplessness of security agencies to handle criminal acts. The situation is worsened by the increasing number of unemployed Nigerians and plight of Nigerian youths, some of whom are ready recruits for criminal activities. The above statement from an editorial comment by a national daily in Nigeria indeed, epitomises the central focus of this paper; the aim of which is to appraise the nexus between current administration in Nigeria and nascent democratic nurturing, sustenance and eventually consolidation vis-a-vis the battles with one of the major ills of Nigeria nation. Fifty-six year after Independence, and 103 year of its existence, Nigeria still battles with one of the major fall-outs of practical good governance, sustainable development, nascent democratic dispensation, administrative inefficiency, corruption in all facet of economy, and the politics of trying to appease all sectors of the polity. This paper highlights and assesses the nature, quality and plight of Nigerians to practical good governance and sustainable development in Nigeria that have dominated the Nigerian Federal polity which have created untold unpleasant experiences and pains at one point or the other since independence. This paper however, painstakingly appraises several of these issues and concludes that all stakeholders in the federal polity should thread softly, be objective, rational, altruistic and magnanimous in order not to make the existence of true federalism (social, political and economic cohesive existence of the people, peace and tranquility) a fleeting illusion and a mirage.

Keywords: Youths, Democracy, Governance, Effective, Nigeria, Administration.

INTRODUCTION

Since the early 1990s, the issue of Good Governance has become an important concept in the International Development debates and Policy discourse. Over the last decade however, the gradual accumulation of indicators and research based on them has provided broad support for the arguments that good governance is necessary to achieve sustainable growth and development, particularly in Developing Countries. According to Nature (2006), the issue of good and effective governance has gained universal currency as Nations and International Institutions seek appropriate mechanisms to enhance the role of government by making it more transparent, accountable, responsive and responsible to the constituencies. We will take cursory view of the concept and juxtapose it with the functions of politics. This general theoretical escapade will set the stage for zeroing in on Nigeria as a focal point for the 21st Century. The intent is to identify gaps in the Nigerian polity and prescribe some remedial measures to bridge those gaps. Etymologically, the word governance derives from the Greek verb (*kubernáo*) which means *to steer* and was used for the first time in a metaphorical sense by Plato and adopted by other languages (Web, 2011). Ever since, Governance has come to mean the act of governing and relates to decisions that define *expectations*, grant power, or verify performance; consists of either a separate process or part of management or leadership processes; involve processes and systems that are typically administered by a government (Igbinedion, 2013). Simply put, "governance" is what a "government" does. It might be a Geo-Political Government (Nation-State), a Corporate Government (Business Entity), a Socio-Political Government (tribe, family *etc.*), or any number of different kinds of government. While Governance is the physical exercise of management of power and policy, Government is the instrument (usually collective) that does so. Government refers to the

“structure of principles and rules determining how a state or organization is regulated...; the sovereign power in a nation or state; and an organization through which a body of people exercises political authority” (Igbinedion, 2013).

Such “body of people”, however, must be recognized or so empowered for it to be legitimate. The term government is also used more abstractly as a synonym for governance. Scholars and writers have passed uncomplimentary remarks about Nigeria. Such derogatory descriptions, unfortunately, reflect the nature of the Nigerian State. Odion-Akhaine et al (2007), described the ‘Nigerian political turf’ as bizarre. Kesselman et al (1996) write: ‘Nigeria today remains essentially an unfinished state characterized by instability and uncertainties’. Ameh (2007) likens the Nigerian State to a diabetic’s patient whose excess sugar in its blood stream served no positive purpose. According to him:

Nigerians are definitely suffering in the midst of plenty, or how do you describe epileptic power failure in a country that have huge natural gas reserve and the giant of Africa, and also the sixth largest exporter of crude oil; lack of potable water in a country with thousands of kilometers of coastline (when landlocked and arid countries have gone beyond this primordial human need) (Amen, 2007).

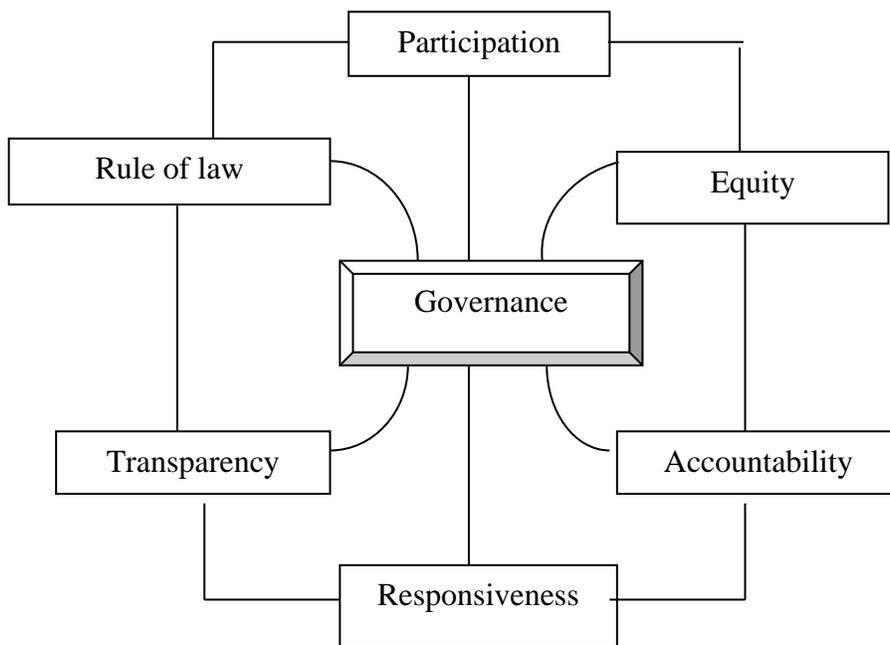
To Kew (2006), 'Nigeria is a truculent African tragedy'. Benn (2005) see Nigeria as a country where dysfunctional politics have drained its potentials for greatness and ability. Kew (2006) posits that Nigeria has lost its pride of place in the African continent to corruption, wasteful management of its enormous oil resources and patron-client politics. A data provided by the World Bank in 2005 listed Nigeria as one of the 46 fragile states in the world (Benn, 2005). In 2006, Nigeria was regarded as one of the 26 Low Income Countries Under Stress (LICUS) (World Bank, 2005). This status remains in 2007, unless the World Bank states otherwise when it is expected to conduct another 'assessment of the nation (Nigeria) with a view to re-classifying it and other countries' (Okwe, 2007). Presently, Nigeria is one of the 20 poorest countries of the world with over 70 percent of the population classified as poor and 35 percent living in absolute poverty (Okwe, 2007). Is Nigeria a fragile or state in failure? With the abundant human and material resources are Nigerians supposed to be living in poverty? What are the factors responsible for the parlous state of Nigeria? Any hope for a reversal?

The size, human and natural resource endowments of Nigeria have combined to place upon it the responsibility of leadership, not only in West Africa but the entire continent. This notwithstanding, Nigeria remains a microcosm of the African continent in terms of health and socio-economic woes, political instability and internal conflicts, and missed opportunities. Africa constitutes 12% of the World Population but accounts for less than 2% of the Global Trade, less than 1% of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). It is the most indebted with many countries requiring as much as 40% GNP to meet Debt Service Obligations. It is also the most infested in terms of HIV/AIDS, Malaria, Polio, Typhoid, Tuberculosis, etc with life expectancy at 48 – 52, and the most vulnerable to natural disasters.

It is ones choice to live long and have a healthy lives, to have access to knowledge and to have access to income and assets and also to enjoy a decent standard of living. In this context, sustainable development becomes a yardstick for measuring good governance in any country as well as the progress of such an economy. On the other hand, assessing governance and its elements provides an insight into how a country's sustainable development efforts are producing or not producing the desired results in terms of securing choices for the citizens whom the government represent.

The diagram below illustrates the linkage among the elements of governance and to the broad concept of governance and sustainable development (Igbinedion, 2013).

Figure 1. Graphical Linkage Among Elements Of Governance And Sustainable Development



Source: Canada Corps Knowledge Sharing Kit (2005)

Following the United Nations Development Programme (1990) conception of development and assuming that the overriding goal of development is to widen peoples choices over their lives, then the major aspect of this is enabling participation (that is, the ability of the citizens to participate in making such choices without any impediment. Rule of Law as a sustainable development issue guarantees freedom of speech and association that will enable the citizens actively participate in making the choices.

However, this paper seeks to address some of these issues and others. In doing this, it is divided into five sections. The foregoing introduction is followed by the conceptual analysis of fragility and state failure. The third section takes a review of the nature of the Nigerian State, and section four centres on the role of corruption in explaining state failure in Nigeria. The contradiction of Nigeria as a country wallowing in abject poverty in the midst of abundant human and material resources concludes the paper.

FRAGILITY AND STATE FAILURE: A CONCEPTUAL EXPLORATION

There are certain characteristics that define a state. These include sovereignty, territory, population, diplomatic recognition, internal organization and domestic support (Rourke, 2008). Thus, state is defined by the identifiable features and responsibilities towards the people. The government of the state is expected to consciously strive to ‘instill a sense of community, a common national identity among the peoples they controlled’. In all, state exists for individual betterment (Rourke, 2008). Classical philosophers like Thomas Hobbes and John Locke, were of the opinion that the state exist as instrument ‘created for a ‘utilitarian purpose’ whose survival depends on the fulfillment of its practical mission and

adherence to the rule of law. Woodrow Wilson (quoted in Rourke, 2008), subscribes to this instrumental theory of government. To him, 'state exists for the sake of the society, not society for the sake of the state' and that government should not be an end but a means to an end.

However, states in the developing world are susceptible to internal and external strains making it difficult for them to fulfill their core responsibilities (Goldstein and Pevehouse, 2009). Ake (2005) blames this on the penetration of Western Capitalism into Africa and the subsequent integration of African economies into the world capitalist system. This facilitated the dependence of their economies on the Western countries. The developing countries, as Goldstein and Pevehouse have rightly noted, lack independent power to transform their natural potentials to strength. In spite of the available wealth, these states tend to fail in their ability to create a national community. Though they possess the characteristics of states, yet they fail to deliver the expected public goods.

Fragile states are defined by their susceptibility to crises in one or more of their sub-systems. They are particularly vulnerable to internal and external shocks and domestic and international conflicts. In such states, institutional arrangements most often promote crises conditions in the social, political and economic spheres. Economically, stagnation, low growth rates, inequality in wealth, such as access to land, and other means of livelihood are the principal characters of the state (Benn, 2005). In social terms, institutions may promote extreme inequality or lack of access altogether to health or education and other social amenities like water, electricity, among others. On the other hand, the political environment may entrench exclusionary coalitions in power (in ethnic, religious, or perhaps regional terms), or extreme factionalism or significantly fragmented security organizations (Khan, 2002). Fragile states, to the World Bank, are countries with

a significant number of the world's poor people, states that create negative spillovers such as conflict, instability and refugee flow for their neighbours ... a country that lacks either the will or the capacity to engage productively with their citizens to ensure security, safeguard human rights and provide the basic institutions for development (World Bank, 2007).

These countries 'pose the most difficult development challenge, with weak institutions and high risks of conflicts constraining poverty reduction and service delivery for their own population' (World Bank, 2007). Torres and Anderson (2004) identify fragile states with difficult environments. Difficult environments, they contend, "are areas where the state is unable or unwilling to harness domestic and international resources effectively for poverty reduction. This definition focuses on the ability of the state to confront the challenges of development and poverty reduction". Such states are identified by the inability or failure of the government to deliver its core functions to the majority of the people. The most important functions of the state for poverty reduction are territorial control, safety and security, capacity to manage public resources, delivery of basic services, and the ability to protect and support the ways in which the poorest people sustain themselves (Benn, 2005). .

An effective state is expected to perform certain functions such as ability to exercise power to achieve public goods, and for the security and well being of its citizens. States that fail to provide adequate public goods to their people, including safety and security, public institutions, economic management and basic social services such as roads and water are classified as fragile operating in a difficult environment (Torres and Anderson 2004:7).

In actual fact, no state irrespective of its ineffectiveness, would want to be labeled as fragile. To the international community and donor agencies, ‘most developing countries are fragile in some ways’ (Benn, 2005). Fragility in this perspective subsumes states ‘where the government cannot or will not deliver (its) core functions to the majority of its people, including the poor’. In this respect, fragility is identified by high mortality rate, low level of literate people, poor access to health care services, high infant mortality rate and very weak political and economic growth (Fagbadebo, 2009). Khan (2002) identifies flawed institution, high level of illiteracy, high infant mortality rate, decaying infrastructure, food shortage and hunger, as the characteristic features of fragile state. According to him, while the ‘poor become more and more impoverished and battered ... states offer unparalleled political and economic opportunity for a privileged few, and nothing much for everyone else’. The central character of fragile states, from the above submissions, emphasizes the failure of the state to perform the identifiable functions meant for the promotion of the welfare of the people. Nigeria presents a case study in this respect, as its abundant human and materials resources could not be prudently harnessed for the well-being of the teeming population. As Odion-Akhaine et al (2007) have rightly noted that in spite of the enormous resources at the disposal of the Nigerian State, “it is behind poor and smaller countries in Africa”, in terms of ranking in sustainable development.

A REVIEW OF THE NIGERIAN STATE

Over the years, the Nigerian government has failed to harness the vast human and material resources at its disposal to break the cycle of poverty and autocracy that has characterized it since independence in 1960. Thus, the Nigerian state has been constantly struggling between the forces of democracy and authoritarianism, ‘the push for development and the pull for underdevelopment, the burden of public corruption and the pressure of accountability’ (Kesselman, et al 1996). And, it has ‘deviated from the known curve of consolidation to de-consolidation’ (Odion-Akhaine et al, 2007). This is understandable. Nigeria is one of the colonial legacies in the African continent. As an offshoot of the colonial praetors, the Nigerian state retains parts of the authoritarian ethos. Rather than being at the service of the people, it is in the service of the ruling oligarchy (Fagbadebo, 2009).

Earlier this year, the Nigeria state celebrated eighteen years of democracy. For many, it is a fresh period of sober reflection and stocktaking. But the question likely agitating the minds of majority of Nigerians is: After almost two decades of democracy, does the nation have any cause to celebrate?

Expectedly, the answer is neither here nor there as it depends on which side of the divide one belongs to. For optimists, the process could be deemed to be on course and there is every reason to pop champagne. Those in this school of thought believe that having come this far without interruption from the “khaki boys”, the fledgling democracy could be safely said to be gradually but steadily taking roots in the nation. To such people, it does not matter the challenges the process has had to

contend with all these years. Arguably, majority of those who would share this view are government functionaries or those who may have held one position or the other since 1999 when democracy was re-introduced in Nigeria. But for the pessimists, rather than celebrate, the situation calls for worry. The nation, in their estimation, has nothing to show for practicing democracy this long. For them, from one sector to the other, Nigeria has arguably fared even better under the protracted military administration. The thinking of those in this group is that the standard of living has worsened under the democratic dispensation. However, in appraising the journey so far, there are several parameters to put in perspective (Ovwasa, 2010).

With a low level of system affect, engendered by lack of accountability, the Nigerian State has been unable to meet the needs of the citizens. A combination of colonial legacy of oppression and the post independent mismanagement of the vast resources are the two fundamental factors that plunge the Nigerian State into the depth of political and economic underdevelopment. While colonialism bequeathed ‘weakening economy’, the corrupt and self-seeking leadership and poor policy decisions had squandered the economic and political potentials. As Kasselmann et al (1996) have rightly noted, ‘many Nigeria’s post independence leaders had been personally more exploitative of the populace than their colonial predecessors’. According to Odion-Akhaine et al (2007:2)

“the Nigerian state has continued to pursue its anti-development agenda through extroverted policies of agencies of global governance such as the IMF and World Bank. These policies while conducive to goals of finance capital and their collaborators are counterproductive to that of national independence and development”.

Abati (2007) specifically identified Nigeria as a country where the political leaders would not allow the institutions of state to function efficiently because this would have made it difficult for them to hold as much power as they do. This situation has made Makinde (2004) to describe Nigeria as ‘a big theatre of contradictions and absurdities’.

MODERN INDICES OF GOOD GOVERNANCE

Since the time of Athenian Democracy, good governance and sustainable development has been associated with several major characteristics. Good governance is articulate, participatory, consensus oriented, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective, efficient, equitable and inclusive and follows the rule of law. It assures that corruption is minimized, that the views of minorities are taken into account, and that the voices or condition of the most vulnerable in society are heard in decision-making. It is also responsive to the present and future needs of society. From the above discussion, it should be noted that Good Governance is an ideal which is difficult to achieve in its totality. Very few countries and societies have come close to achieving good governance in its totality. However, to ensure sustainable human development, actions must be taken to work towards this ideal with the aim of making it a reality everywhere. *Hence*, from Plato, several theoretical alternatives have been proffered.

Drawing extensively from Socrates and his execution in 399, Plato holds that the ruler must govern in virtue of knowledge; he is who has achieved the knowledge of the truth; the man that has the knowledge of the truth is the genuine philosopher

(Rourke, 2008) because he has an acquaintance with the World of Forms. Plato, like Socrates, considered the “democratic” practice of choosing Magistrates, Generals, *etc.*, by lot or according to their rhetorical ability persons who have come to understand the difference between the visible World and the Intelligible World, between the Realm of Opinion and the Realm of Knowledge, between Appearance and Reality; one who has knowledge of the Good - that synoptic vision of the interrelation of all truths to each other. The Ruler would have had the training in censored literature, music, and elementary mathematics, and for the next few years, he goes through extensive physical and military training; and at age twenty, a few of them would be selected to advance a course in mathematics. At age thirty, a five year course in dialectics and moral philosophy would begin. The next fifteen years will be spent gathering practical experience through public service (Afro News, 2008). In the end, at the age of fifty, the ablest men would then be ready for the task of governing the State, making philosophy their chief pursuit and, at any rate, blessed and divine. But Aristotle expects the legislator to possess reasonable practical wisdom and moral virtue founded in the law (Makinde, 2004). Machiavelli and Hobbes do not simply expect the ruler to be absolute and ruthless, but Bentham and Austin add that he is who commands obedience and pronounces the law. Following Locke’s ‘social contract’, a newer approach based on popular participation and consent was canvassed and emerged. Ever since, other approaches to Governance are rooted in democratic, Socialist/Communist (Marxist), Anarchist, Monarchist, and Military Traditions - though with varying degrees of popular acceptability and patronage. However, there are certain general features of governance: The presence of organs of government - commonly legitimate only to Democratic Governance (Uhunmwuango and Epelle, 2007).

CORRUPTION AND THE SCOURGE OF STATE FAILURE IN NIGERIA

The Nigerian State is a victim of high-level corruption: hence, the retardation in national development and the prevalence of poverty and hunger. Corruption has been simply defined as “the abuse of public power for private benefit” (Tanbzi, 1998), or what Kaufmann, (1998) calls “privatization of public policy”. Lipset and Lenz, (2000) defines it as “effort to secure wealth or power through illegal means-private gain at public expense, or a misuse of public power for private benefit”.

It has become an accepted fact in Nigeria that corruption is pervasive and has inflicted untold hardship on the citizens of this country. Corruption has also been institutionalized in Nigeria and has constituted one of the most baneful negative impact on the high mortality rate of various administrations in the country. Corruption, especially public corruption has the following features both at the theoretical and empirical levels:

At the theoretical level:

- (i) It constitutes a drain on the treasury: consequently, it is fiscal leakage and
- (ii) It is a method of allocating resources and
- (iii) It reveals the underlying tension between individual and public interest, or between the market system and government intervention in it (Ackerman, 1978).

At the empirical level, corruption has become a menace in Nigeria, even by government standards. For instance, General Jemibewon, a one time Military Governor of Oyo State and a former Minister of Police Affairs in the past Obasanjo

administration who can therefore be regarded as an insider in government, once wrote to the Gowon's regime that corruption had reached such a pitch that top public functionaries wallowing in it did not bother to take the trouble to conceal the acts of their corruption from public gaze (Jemibewon, 1978).

One can only infer from this statement that the General appeared only to be piqued by the inability of those corrupt public functionaries to hide their acts of corruption from the public gaze, and not by the acts itself (Ovwasa, 2010). And in August 1993, the Interim Government of Chief Ernest Shonekan publicly declared that:

... the total disregard for uprightness in our society has enthroned wealth by all means is quite worrisome ... Thus not are those who defraud our public treasuries honoured, even armed robbers and drug barons are able to buy respectability. Rampant corruption and get rich quickmania therefore, have become cankerworm in all sphere of our national life (Taiwo, 1994).

Phenomenon of corrupts in Nigeria, has become so obvious to the point where every citizen rich and poor, believes that every other Nigerian is corrupt. In 2006 for instance, a former South-East Governor once made an allegation of corruption against the immediate past President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The implication of this is that, if the President of Nigeria can be so accused publicly of corruption, one can then imagine the level of corruption in the country. In fact, the level of corruption in high and low places in Nigeria has consistently be on the increase since independence, even till the present democratic dispensation of President Buhari where Judges and former Ministers of past and present administration are being quizzed by Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) (Uhunmwuango and Epelle, 2007).

Recent reports on corruption in Nigeria revealed that corruption and related crimes in the country have attracted an annual revenue loss of \$25.76 billion to the nation in the last five years or so. On a daily basis, Nigeria is reported to be losing about \$70,575,342 to corruption and related crimes (ThisDay, 2004). Also, a well-known non-governmental organization, called Transparency International (TI), projected Nigeria in its corruption perception index (CPI) as being the third most corrupt nation in the world (131st of 133 countries' surveyed).

On corruption in Nigeria, the reports wrote:

Every single responsible institution in Nigeria is corrupt and has failed to appreciate fully the obligations upon it to do something concrete about corruption. This is to the extent that politicians, government officials, the police and, most saddening of all, the civil society in Nigeria, have all failed to present a genuine attempt to improve the negative image of the country as far as the phenomenon of corruption is concerned. Consequently, the effects of corruption on the state and the society in general are so devastating to the point that the nation's political structures have significantly lost their capacity to perform the constitutional functions (ThisDay, 2004).

The major problem here is that though corruption is not akin to Nigeria, corruption has almost become peculiar to the country so much so that one can hypothesize that Nigeria is perhaps, the most corrupt country in the planet earth in the last decade (Igbinoia, 2003)

First, although Transparency International rated Nigeria as the third most corrupt country in the world in 2004; the country has consistently been at the forefront of the most corrupt nation on the globe from 1996 to 2004. A critical analysis of the ratings of countries by incidences of corruption from 1999 to 2004 is instructive (see Table below).

Table 1: Transparency International's Most Corrupt Three Nations In The World: 1999-2004

Country	Year 1999	Year 2000	Year 2001	Year 2002	Year 2003	Year 2004
Nigeria	2 nd	1 st	2 nd	2 nd	2 nd	3 rd
Cameroon	1 st	2 nd				
Bangladesh			1 st	1 st	1 st	1 st
Haiti						2 nd

Source: Adapted From Benin Journal of Social Sciences, July 2005 p.192

Of the countries ranked above as the three most corrupt countries in the six years under review, Nigeria featured prominently in all the six years (1999: 2nd; 2000:1st; 2001:2nd; 2002:2nd; 2003:2nd and 2004:3rd). Cameroon featured only twice (1999:1st; 2000:2nd), Bangladesh four times (2001-2004:1st), Haiti only once (2004:2nd). While corruption abated in Cameroon from 2001 – 2004, it has remained constant in Nigeria from 1999-2004. Indeed, Transparency International had for previous two consecutive years (1996-1997) ranked Nigeria as the number one corrupt country in the universe. When reviewed holistically, therefore, Nigeria is the most consistently corrupt country in the world (Benin Journal of Social Sciences, 2005) Given the decay in Nigeria in the last decade, Transparency International's ranking of the country as the third most corrupt in 2004 would appear, at best, misleading. If average Nigerians had not been reduced to breathing corpses, bathing to eke out strenuous subsistence under the rumbles of our collapsed humanity, EFCC and ICPC would not have been created (Akpeji, 2007).

Despite President Goodluck Jonathan's pledge that his administration would end the scourge of corruption ravaging the country, Nigeria only performed marginally better than its 2013 rating in the latest Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index. Out of 174 countries evaluated for corruption, Nigeria ranked 136th alongside Russia, Cameroon, Iran, Kyrgyzstan and Lebanon, as the least transparent. That means the six countries, Nigeria inclusive, are the 15th most corrupt in the world. The most corrupt country is Afghanistan, which ranked 172nd, while the most transparent nation in the world is Denmark. Nigeria was 14th most corrupt in 2013. On per 100 score, Nigeria totaled 27 aggregate points, better than 2013 when it scored 25. Though still woeful, the country's scant improvement from last year's survey may be because fewer countries were surveyed in 2014 than 2013. Last year, a total of 177 countries were surveyed as opposed to the 174 countries surveyed in 2014. Transparency International's CPI is the leading indicator of public sector corruption, offering a yearly snapshot of the relative degree of the corruption problem by ranking countries from all over the globe.

The CPI, which relies on expert opinion worldwide, is a measurement of the perceived levels of public sector corruption worldwide. "Corruption is a problem for all countries. A poor score is likely a sign of widespread bribery, lack of punishment

for corruption and public institutions that don't respond to citizens' needs," This is particularly true of Nigeria where several public institutions are a cesspool of fraudulent activities as proven by multiple investigations and reports.

Between 2013 and date, cases of pension scam running to multiple billions of naira at federal and state level were reported. No conviction has been recorded yet. Instead, charges against some of the alleged kingpins were controversially dropped (Premium Times, 2017).

All the above depict the story of the corruption in Nigeria from independence and beyond. Nuhu Ribadu (2006) the then Chairman of Nigeria's EFCC gave a graphic summary of the situation as "the darkest period" as far as Nigeria history of corruption regimes was concerned. Obasanjo was the first Head of State to combine the Oil Minister at the same time, further limiting public scrutiny of the country's oil sector (Compass, 2009). This, to him was to safeguard the corrupt practices in the oil sector. Even at that, the President and his Vice-President were indicted in the Petroleum Trust Development Fund (PTDF) scam which involved billions of Naira (Compass, 2009). On assumption of the plum position, Obasanjo made a lot of pronouncements, which later counted against him. He had assured Nigerians that in just six months his government would fix the nation's epileptic power supply. He had also stated that it would no more be business as usual insisting that there would not be any sacred cows in Nigeria any longer. But it did not take long before Nigerians discovered that he might not live up to their expectation. The first signs of what to expect from his government came to the fore when he constituted his cabinet. Contrary to expectation, he sustained the status quo of recycling leaders as most of those that made his cabinet had been in the corridors of power even during the military era. But many, however, insist that the former head of state did not have a choice than to pander to the wishes of some people, especially members of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), the platform on which he won the election.

At home, his first term was marked by widespread criticism over his government's response to violent crises in the northern states of Kaduna, Kano, Benue, and the oil-rich Niger Delta. Records show that about 10,000 people were killed in violent outbursts during Obasanjo's administration. Nigeria's military was criticised for using tactics of mass suppression, notably in the burning of such towns as Zaki-Biam in Benue and Odi in the Niger Delta state of Bayelsa. Although Obasanjo assured Nigerians of his resolve to fight corruption in his first term and even managed to pass some anti-corruption laws, critics both at home and abroad accused him of not living up to expectation. Some of the public officials like the House of Representatives Speaker and the Senate President were involved in conflicts with the President, who had to battle many impeachment moves from both legislative houses (Uhunmwangho and Epelle, 2007).

In 2010, the furore over the state of the Presidents health had created bad blood within the government, leading to the recent sack of the former Secretary to the Government of the Federation Ambassador Babagana Kingibe, allegedly because he tried to exploit the situation to his advantage. The government did not give a reason for Kingibe's sack, and the former SGF did not publicly deny the allegations against him. This is unhealthy as the whole nation is sick when President of the country is sick. His state of health from inception has also not helped matters and many believe that it has largely affected Yar'Adua's performance. Even as Nigerians are yet to be told of when President Umaru Yar'Adua will return to the country from a Saudi hospital where he is being treated for pericarditis, the controversy over his capability to continue in office rages just as it is

believed in some quarters that his Doctor did not disclose the President's actual ailment. The President fails or refuses to transmit written declaration as enshrined in the constitution, especially in view of the fact that there must never be a vacuum in the office – nature abhors vacuum; law abhors vacuum; even reason abhors vacuum (Compass, 2009).

Although he was elected under questionable circumstances, many Nigerians, as usual, expected much from the former Katsina State governor. At the time he came, Nigerians were already tired of the immediate past administration and were craving for a change irrespective of the circumstances surrounding his emergence. He came with the message that his government was anchored on the rule of law and many saw it as a welcome development. But as one literally drafted without being psychologically prepared for the task ahead, many knew that a tough job awaited the former lecturer (Lipset, 2010).

NIGERIA IN THE COMITY OF NATIONS

Just like majority of Nigerians, the international community is yet to show confidence in the democratic process. The situation has affected the nation's image in several ways. In the recent glamorous summit of the recent 20 world leading economies known as G-20 summit, Nigeria, the most populous black nation in the world was not invited. Of course, it is inconceivable to imagine that Nigeria qualifies for the meeting as the right of attendance is earned or conferred on beneficiary countries. As if that was not enough, the former President of the United States of America, Barack Obama, had visited two African countries, including Ghana, and Nigeria was not even mentioned in the first official visit by the first black President of 'God's own country.' In the estimation of many, the treatment being meted out to Nigeria by the international community has a lot of negative implication (Uhunmwuangho and Epelle, 2007).

Apart from this, the nation's image abroad as regard the failed attempt by 23-year-old Nigerian terrorist, Abdul Farouk Umar Mutallab who smuggled a packet of explosives on board the Amsterdam-Detroit plane by sewing it into the crotch of his underpants has further relegated the image of Nigeria (Uhunmwuangho and Epelle, 2011). In a nutshell, Nigeria has of recent been blacklisted as one of the terrorist countries against U.S. Political watchers also insist that there is a retrogression rather than progression in the democratic process. Since 1999, every election has been trailed by one controversy or the other. The process is far from being fair and has been characterized by rigging, ballot snatching and stuffing, brigandage and all manner of violence. Many are worried that the system got worse since 1999. Their position was based on the fact that Obasanjo's election in his first tenure was relatively conducted under a free and fair atmosphere

In 2003, many Nigerians perceived the election as a charade as so many aspirants and even voters were disenfranchised. But the situation was compounded during the 2007 general election. The election arguably is the worst in the nation's history of political development. So, in the estimation of many, the nation's democracy is not growing as in other developing countries like Ghana, South Africa its African neighbours. The result of the shortcomings in the electoral process is that successive elections have failed to produce the right candidates that can deliver democracy dividends to the people. One of the proofs of the loopholes in Nigeria's electoral process is the number of elections that have been voided by the petition tribunals and Appeal Courts since democracy was re-introduced. Pundits also insist that in the last 10 years, stagnation in the nation's economy and food prices have gone beyond the reach of the common man, while high prices of cement, building materials

and high rents militate against Nigerians. Today, the people are living in darkness nationwide even after spending so much to ensure adequate power supply. The result is the near comatose condition of the nation's manufacturing industry with its accompanying implication on the labour market. Even almost two decades of democracy, the state of infrastructure is still terrible with no good roads and mode of transport. The nation's educational system is in a state of decay and government hospitals are more or less mere consulting clinics. This is why the past and present Presidents have traveled outside Nigeria for medical treatment. The inherent dysfunction that always seems to be prevalent in the Nigerian political arena has found its most appropriate expression in the present situation. This has generated anxiety and indeed outright confusion over the formal status of the Vice President to a certain extent in the Nigerian media at this time. This indisposition is not a minor hiccup. The President had undisclosed ailments and has been recuperating in a foreign hospital for nearly three months. Like it or not this is the reality that drives Nigeria's national imperative at this time (Uhunmwuango and Epelle, 2007).

Presently, the promise of 6000 megawatts of electricity by the Federal Government is yet to be actualize . As predicted by many observers, the promise has failed, with power generation in the country falling far below that mark. As usual, the government has a plethora of excuses to explain the failure. Key, among these, is the shortage of gas supply for power generation. This is not the first time the government has promised to improve electricity supply and failed to meet the target. Successive Nigerian governments have, over the years, vowed to tackle the problem, with little to show for their promises (Compass,2009). Displayed below is the map of Nigeria.

Figure 2: Political map of Nigeria



Source: Wikipedia caught 20 March 2014.

ANY HOPE FOR A CHANGE

The categorization of Nigeria as a fragile state does not mean anything to Nigerians. All they know is that this country used to be much better than what it is in terms of infrastructure, good governance, security, employment, education, health and social amenities, among others, though the fear of humiliation by the military was feasible. But then, democracy, since 1999, was expected to change things for the better and to improve the lives of Nigerians. So far, the reverse is taking place, and there is no hope that things will improve as the gladiators in their usual quest for power, have turned the political environment into another theatre of ‘absurdities’. Unfortunately, in spite of the overwhelming statistics and feasible features of poverty and other activities enumerated above in this country, government officials continue to defend failure of governance. For instance, the former Nigeria’s co-ordinator of the National Programme on the Eradication of Poverty (NAPEP), Magnus Kpakol, insisted that the present ‘poverty rate in Nigeria may be in the 50 percent range’ (Adesina, 2009), arguing that the UNDP’s rating of 70 percent was wrong. However, the former Governor of Ondo State, Olusegun Mimiko admits that the high poverty rate was real. According to him, “Nigerians are suffering ... we cannot afford to remain in poverty, adding that the problem was the mismanagement of the available mineral and human resources needed for real development. This ‘paradox of plenty’ or the ‘curse of oil’ reflect in the overall national development. While 80 percent of the oil and gas revenues go to the government, only one percent of the population benefit thereof as a result of corruption.

Fundamental to enlarging these choices is building human capabilities – the range of things that people can do or be in life. Failure to meet up with these needs have been responsible for the cycle of crises that have engulfed the Nigerian State. To this end, there is the need for a change of attitude by the government rather than re-branding poverty and failure with corruption and impunity in high places. The vision 2020 expected to be midwived by the seven point agenda would remain a mirage if high level corruption persists in government. Already, the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) has noted that systemic corruption in the political and economic arena was responsible for the stunted growth and development. The continent’s self-monitoring mechanism established by the African Union (AU) stated that this problem “has held back economic growth and development and frustrated incentives to align budgetary allocations with development priorities” (Afro News, 2009). Top government officials agree that corruption has contributed to a large measure of broken promises dashed hopes and shallow dreams that characterizes the polity (Afro News, 2008). Then, where is the hope for a vision 2020 when the wealth from the energy sector could not engender socio-economic development of this country. Importantly, no nation develops with just improved infrastructure but no corresponding development/encouragement of effective decent moral values and practices. In contemporary times, it appears that individualism, egoism, selfishness and overriding exploitative tendencies have taking the place of the much esteemed, cherished, and effective Nigerian values of good neighborliness, communalism, hospitality, respect, decency, responsibility and trust. This paper however, painstakingly appraises several of these issues and concludes that all stakeholders in the federal polity should thread softly, be objective, rational, altruistic and magnanimous in order not to make the existence of true federalism (social, political and economic cohesive existence of the people, peace and tranquility) a fleeting illusion and a mirage.

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