

# Democratic Governance, Sustainable Development and Insecurity in Africa: The Nigerian Experience

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**Abstract:** The paper assesses the responsibilities of the government to its citizens and the state participation in provision of basic or essential amenities for the citizens. It argues that aside from economic challenges, corruption, ignorance, insecurity and illiteracy remain some of the major hindrances to welfarism and consequently democratic governance in Africa in general and Nigeria in particular. The paper therefore, assesses the African Union (AU) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) efforts at ensuring democratic governance in the continent and the sub-region respectively. The paper concludes that the Nigerian state, Economic community of West African states (ECOWAS) and the African Union (AU) need to take important steps in stabilizing the economy of member states such as Nigeria towards promoting democratic governance in the sub-region of West Africa and the African region in general. Findings from the study reveals that despite the lofty objectives of the AU and ECOWAS, they lack the institutional machinery and capacity to fully ensure good governance in member states and that bad governance or corrupt leadership has been the bane of democratic governance in Africa and Nigeria in particular among other various challenges of democratic consolidation. They often focus more attention and energy on issues such as monitoring elections, peace keeping activities and discouraging illegal overthrow of governments, especially through coup d'état than fostering a culture of good governance. It recommends among others that welfarism should be the watchword of governance in Africa and there should be strong commitment by the government to the achievement of MDGs/SDGs. The study employed solely the qualitative method of data analysis. As such, information were drawn from secondary sources of data collection such as text books, journal articles, Newspapers, workshop and conference papers and reports.

**Keywords:** Democracy, Democratic Governance, Sustainable Development, Economic Development, Insecurity.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The welfare of the people is the hallmark of democracy and this is implied in Abraham Lincoln definition of democracy. Government exists to cater for the citizens and that is democratic governance. The main challenge to welfarism in post-colonial Africa was touted to be the economic challenges faced by most if not all the countries in Africa. This necessitated recourse to borrowing from their former overlords, international financial agencies or institutions such as the Bretton Woods institutions (IMF & World Banks). These loans or aids came with conditions or conditionalities

which necessitated the adoption of such economic programmes as the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), austerity measures, deregulation of currencies and other conditionalities from such institutions like the International Monetary Fund (IMF). These programmes or policies became buzzwords and eventually became unpopular with African countries since the mid-1980s. In Nigeria for instance, SAP was introduced in 1986. One of the dictates of SAP is the reduction of welfarism by the state. This general protests from all segments of the nation as the average citizen questions the justification of his continuous obligation to a state which cannot longer play its citizens. Section 14 (2) (b) of the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (CFRN, 1999) provides that the security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose or responsibility of the government.

However, myriad challenges such as corruption, bad governance or leadership, inequality as well as the incessant disturbances, riots, strife, unrests, agitations, insurgencies, terrorism and general insecurity now prevalent in Nigeria can be described as reactions of the average citizens to such perceived injustice in the country. The continued existence of the state is thus threatened by the citizenry. This has in turn forced authoritarian response from the state. Such authoritarian response poses a great challenge and danger to democratic governance and sustainable development in the country touted as the “giant of Africa”. The general consensus is that democratic governance is that democratic governance is the solution to these problems. It therefore becomes imperative that deliberate effort at engaging a discourse on the challenges to democratic governance is tropical at a time like this. Democracy and good governance have been universally accepted as inter twined and interwoven, despite the discordance in the opinion as to the real and actual component views, aspirations and backgrounds of the key players has continued to pose a great challenge. While good governance may not be limited to democratic government, it is however most distinguishing feature. Democracy promotes good governance and good governance consolidates and sustains democracy. It was in the light of the above that the birth of the Nigerian fourth republic in 1999 was greeted with much enthusiasm as it was hoped that good governance which had eluded the Nigerian state for a very long time under the military would become practical reality.

*Conceptual Clarification**Governance*

Bello Imam and Obadan (2004) define governance as the concept which clearly covers all aspects of the complex and myriad relations that exist between a government and a people. Nwabueze (2003) opines that it is a system of values, policies and institutions by which a society manages its economic, social and political affairs through interaction within the state, civil society and private sector. He also described it as comprising the mechanisms and processes for citizens and group to articulate their interest to work together, mediate their differences, exercise their legal rights and obligations with rules, institutions and practices that set limits and provide incentives for individuals, organisations and firms. The World Bank (1998) defines it as the manner in which power is exercised in the management of the country's economic and social resources for development. Good governance is characterised by participation, rule of law, transparency, responsiveness, consensus orientation, equity, effectiveness and efficiency, and accountability (UNDP, 1997, Amundsen, 2010). Kassaheh (2011) quoting Demeke (2000) identified six main indicators of good governance which are (a) the extent to which the state engages in minimizing the incidents, containing the spread and mitigating the impact of civil strife and communal violence and institutes mechanisms for promoting peace, political instability and security, (b) among the preventive measures are equitable access to political power and economic opportunities to all citizens: fair and equitable treatment of all regions and population groups in matter of public concern and the degree of decentralisation of authority and devolution of power in the system (c) establishing and strengthening the legal and institutional foundations of the rule of law and constitutionalism especially to the extent to which the key governance institutions of the judiciary, legislative and executive are functioning effectively and exercise institutional checks and (d) effectiveness, equity and responsiveness of public agencies to the needs of all citizens, especially to the extent to which the public management system is perceived to be effectively accountable and transparent and have integrity (e) popular participation in the political, economic and social processes of the society; this includes freedom of association and expression, existence of conducive and enabling environment for citizen's initiatives and activities and encouragement of the development (f) the availability and free flow of information to permit informed public discussions on national issues and policies.

*Democratic Governance*

The term "Democratic Governance" is a public administration concept derived from two words: "Democracy" and "Governance". The definition of the term remains as elusive as ever but various scholars have, at one time or the other, made gallant efforts at defining the term. For example, Schumpeter (2005) defines democracy as a system in which individuals acquire power to make political decisions based

on a competitive struggle for people's vote. Democracy is viewed by Nzongola-Ntalaja (1997) as a governmental system that involves the widest spectrum of participation mostly through election. Thus, democracy can be described as a form of government in which major decisions of the government are hinged on freely given consent of the majority of citizenry. Democracy as defined by is the government of the people, made by the people and for the people. He also mentioned some characteristics of democracy to include meeting the needs of the people, investing in the citizens through education and health, ensuring economic opportunities for all citizens, respect for the rule of law, open and transparent institution of government, free and fair elections and combating public and private corruption and illicit enrichment by members of government.

*Sustainable Development*

To Rodney (1972), development is encompassed within the idea of the ability of a society to be able to tap its natural resources in order to cater for the material and social well-being of the generality of the people. The United Nations 2005 World Summit Outcome Document sees economic development, social and environmental protection as the "interdependent and mutually reinforcing pillars" of sustainable development. In other words, without developing the economy, ensuring welfare of the people and protecting the environment for the well-being of the people, development can never be sustained. From these assertions, it becomes obvious that good governance is essential for sustainable development. According to UNDP and IMF' in 2000, African states, were among those that signed UN Millennium Declaration. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which the states were expected to achieve by the year 2015 include: (1) eradication of extreme poverty and hunger (2) achievement of universal primary education (3) promotion of gender equality and empowerment (4) reduction of child mortality rate (5) improvement of maternal health (6) combat HIV/AIDs, Malaria and disease (7) ensure environmental sustainability (8) development of global partnership for development (UN, 2008). Since these lofty goals were not able to adequately achieved, the United Nations translated these goals into Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the expected period was expanded to 2030.

The above is to sustain development and it is also a glaring move to make nations to reintroduce welfare.

**II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

A discussion on governance and its indicators will of necessity involve the application of some theories which analyse and explain the issue. The theories to be employed for this discourse are, Theory of Crisis of Government and Systems Theory.

*Theory of Crisis of Government*

Responsibilities of government to citizens include the creation and maintenance of stable and peaceful community, maintaining law and order, protecting property and other

rights of the citizens, promoting economic efficiency and growth, and ensuring social justice and welfarism. Hence this paper adopts as one of its theories the theory of crisis of government. This theory maintains that when government is seen as not being responsible and responsive to the needs of the people, political instability will be the resultant effect (Akinwale and Aderinto, 2011). With copious examples from the Nigerian state, they established a nexus between bad governance and urban violence with manifestations including ethno-religious violence, electoral violence, youth militancy and civil unrest.

The theory also posits that bad leadership and corruption account for the failure of governance, especially in Africa. It also asserts that the absence of an adequate opposing force coupled with apathetic civil society organisations create an environment that makes good governance an impossibility (Kassahum, 2011).

#### *Systems Theory*

Easton (1965) considered the political system existing within an environment of other systems which affect it and are in turn affected by the political system through continuous transactions and exchanges. The political system functions by getting inputs from its environment which evokes responses from it. The outputs of the political system also affect the environment and in turn excite some form of feedback from the environment.

Nigeria, given her location in Africa, operates within an environment of some regional organisations including the African Union (AU) and the Economic Community of West African state (ECOWAS). Going by the above explanations of the system theory, these organizations influence the internal dynamics of politics within Nigeria and are in turn affected by the decisions made by the Nigerian government.

### III. ROLE OF THE AU AND ECOWAS IN THE QUEST FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE IN AFRICA

#### *The African Union (AU)*

The AU conveniently boasts of 54 members with their different backgrounds and aspirations. Among the several objectives of the AU are the promotion of democratic principles and institutions, popular participation and sustainable development at the economic, social and cultural levels as well as the integration of African economies. The AU aims to facilitate conducive environment for the emergence of democracy in Africa and some of the measures taken so far in this regard include (a) AU declaration on the political and socio-economic situation in Africa and the fundamental changes taking place in the World (1990) which underscored Africa's resolve to seize the initiative, to determine its destiny and to address the challenges to peace, democracy and security (b) The 2000 solemn Declaration on the conference on security, stability, development and cooperation which establishes the fundamental principles for the promotion of democracy and good governance in the

continent. (c) The African governance architecture which is a set of legal instruments and institutions with the objective to complement, encourage and coordinate effects by member states towards democracy building and consolidation. (d) The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) of 2001 which have defined new parameters for governance and provided benchmarks for a new governance culture in Africa. (e) The African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG) of 2007 which is aimed at better governance in African continent. It presents what it considers globally acceptable standards of good governance and democracy which includes the observance of rule of law, free and fair elections, and instance on changes in government according to each nation's constitution. The charter is peculiar and mirrors the determination of the AU to entrench democratic governance in Africa as it contains enforcement procedure on member states that fail to comply with general principles set forth in the charter. It also contains provision which allows the AU sanction and to also determine the appropriate measures to be imposed on erring members. It also made cogent provisions at addressing foreseeable impediments to democracy including amendment of the constitution to perpetuate power. (f) the African convention on prevention and combating corruption which addresses corruption both in the public and private sector. It covers virtually every area of corrupt practices such as bribery, diversion of property by public officials, trading in influence, illicit enrichment, money laundering and concealment of property. The convention makes provision for prevention, criminalization, regional cooperation, mutual legal assistance and most importantly, the recovery of assets. Member states are monitored and mandated to submit regular progress report of compliance to the executive council.

The Assembly of Head of States and Government at the thirty-sixth ordinary session noted with concern that despite the drastic structural adjustment and policy reforms carried out by most African states, the poverty level continue to rise and the member countries from the African continent classified on the category of Least Developed Countries (LDCs) has not decreased. They however concluded that development of these states is the responsibility of the governments and peoples. At the thirty-eight ordinary session of the assembly in 2002, the following principles governing democratic elections in Africa were also upheld: (a) Democratic elections are the basis of the authority of any representative government, (b) Regular elections constitute a key element of the democratization process and therefore, are essential ingredients for good governance, the rule of law, the maintenance and promotion of peace, security, stability and development; (c) The holding of democratic elections is an important dimension in conflict prevention, management and resolution. Democratic elections should be conducted (i) freely and fairly, (ii) under democratic constitutions and in compliance with supportive legal instruments, (iii) under a system of powers that ensures in particular, the independence of the judiciary, (iv) at a regular interval, as provided for in



national constitution, and (v) by impartial, all-inclusive competent accountable electoral institutions staffed by well-trained personnel.

#### *The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)*

ECOWAS aims at promoting co-operation and integration in economic, social and cultural activity by integrating the national economies of member states. It also aims at raising the living standard of its peoples, maintain and enhance economic stability, foster relations among member states and contribute to the progress and development of the African continent. Some of the measures taken by ECOWAS in achieving the objectives include (a) The Protocol relating to the Mechanism for Conflict prevention, Management, Resolution, peace keeping and Security in 1999 (b) Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good governance of 2001 (c) ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework (ECPF) of 2008. ECOWAS also provides electoral assistance to member states through capacity building for electoral management bodies, observation and monitoring of elections. It also promotes and consolidates good governance through capacity building for political parties, legislative bodies, the judiciary and the media, as well as human right and anti-corruption institutions.

However, despite the lofty objectives of the AU and ECOWAS, they lack the institutional machinery and capacity to fully ensure good governance in member states. They often focus more attention and energy on monitoring elections, peace keeping activities and discouraging illegal overthrow of governments, especially through coup d'état than at fostering a culture of good governance.

#### IV. CHALLENGES OF BAD GOVERNANCE IN AFRICA: THE NIGERIAN EXPERIENCE

In Nigeria, bad governance has become a culture that is hard to do away with. As Jega (2007) noted, the fourth republic, despite the lessons to be learnt from the failure of the earlier republics, is also characterized by “reckless misrule by elected officials, corrupt practice by public officials, insensitivity and intolerance of opposing views and perspectives”.

Using the indicators of good governance aforementioned, it becomes very obvious that the fourth republic is far from achieving good governance. A day does not go by in Nigeria without groups, usually based along tribal/ ethnic lines, complaining of being politically marginalized. The judiciary is yet to achieve the desired autonomy and the executive and legislature are always engaging in unhealthy power struggles. The citizens have lost faith in governmental institutions and apathy, as against popular participation, has become the order of the day.

At this juncture, the question that needs to be answered is what are the peculiar challenges bedeviling democratic governance in Nigeria? These include:

#### *Leadership*

The bane of Nigeria's instability to ensure good governance is closely tied to the issue of bad leadership. As Adenuga (2012) observed, without good leadership, the human and mineral resources of a society remain mere potentials for development. This is because the leadership of a state gives direction to the citizenry and mineral resources of a society remain mere potentials for development. This is because the leadership of a state gives direction to the citizenry and the leadership determines the quality of the followership. One of the major challenges of the leadership and by extension, democracy is the process of electing political office holders. Elections in this fourth republic have not been free and fair. As Amundsen (2010) noted, the quality of elections has deteriorated over the years to the extent that the elected government is hardly legitimate. Adenuga and Aborisade (2012) averred that the 1999, 2003, 2007 and 2011 general elections were flawed and engineered to favour some candidates. The winner of the 2007 presidential election, late Umaru Yar'Adua even agreed that the election that brought him into office was not perfect (European Union Election Observers Report, 2007).

The implication of the flawed process of choosing leaders in Nigeria is that the elected leaders are more responsive and responsible to their 'political fathers' who rigged them into office than to the electorates. This has made the citizens to lose faith in the leaders as they are not considered to be men of integrity.

Ideally, the essence of leadership should be formulation and implementation of policies to solve societal problems and ensure better welfare for the citizens. This is not the case in the Nigerian state. As Achebe (1983) noted, Nigerian leaders lack the passion, vision and character to deal with myriad of problems facing the country. They often inflict more hardship on the citizenry by reducing the responsibility of government to the citizens while asking to be more dutiful in their obligation to the state. A case in point is the unilateral announcement made by President Goodluck Jonathan in January 2012 deregulating the downstream sector of oil industry, thereby increasing the pump price of petrol and despite public outcry from all quarters that the policy will increase the cost of living, low the standard of living and increase the already high poverty rate, he still went ahead to implement it (The Punch, 2012). As Jega (2007) noted, sheer insensitivity seems to be the main character of Nigerian governments. The reason for this is not farfetched. Dike (2003) aptly described Nigerian leaders as “instrumental leaders” who are only concerned with how to use their offices to achieve private and selfish goals against societal leaders who subordinate private and narrow goals to broader national objectives. This fact is corroborated by Derin (2007) who points out that Nigerian elites see the acquisition of political leadership as means of gaining influence and affluence and are not concerned about the lot of the masses.

### *Corruption*

The black's law dictionary defines corruption as impairment of integrity, virtue or moral principle; especially the impairment of public officer's duties by bribery. The World Bank (1997) sees it as abuse of public power for private gain. Kassahum (2011) describe it to be acts which are perceived to be against public interest or violate certain legal or moral laws and principles.

There are many faces to corruption, most related to issue under discussion is political corruption which comprises of abuse of political power, abuse of public offices and abuse of public resources by elected government officials for personal gain. It involves also the use of power by government officials for illegitimate private gain. From the above, it is safe to infer that corruption is using power or position entrusted on a person whether public or private for selfish or personal gain to achieve a purpose not envisage by such power. Corrupt practices manifest itself in varying forms like bribery, embezzlement, nepotism, fraud, extortion, favouritism, amongst a host of other names (Akinrinmade, et al, 2013).

Corruption has become the rule rather than the exception. Political corruption is not a recent phenomenon. Official misuse of resources for personal enrichment is rife. Most African states run political systems that favour the elite and the wealthy. Economic mismanagement is evident in the plundering of public money and has been referred to as the savage of the century. Corruption is, perhaps, the greatest manifestation of bad governance in Nigeria because it is away from activities that are vital to good governance. Chukwuemeka et al, (2012) established the pervasive nature of corruption in Nigeria through the corruption perception Index of the Transparency International. They stated that in 2009, Nigeria was ranked 134th out of 178 countries surveyed. They also reported that over 500 billion dollars has been stolen from the Nigerian treasury through corruption as at 2009.

Apart from posing serious challenge to development, undermining democracy and good governance and reducing the quality of government services and infrastructure, causing severe hardship and suffering for citizens, inflation and recourse to external borrowing and poverty, other major implications of corruption in Nigeria include the diversion of resources away from the activities that are vital to poverty eradication, economic and sustainable development (Derin, 2007). It is therefore not surprising that Nigeria's poverty level had risen up to 71.5% (The Tribune, 2012). Corruption also incapacitates good governance and hinders development and consolidation of democratic practices as it often leads to erosion of government's legitimacy and democratic destabilization (Abiodun, 2012). Dike (2001) succinctly captures the above when he observes that "corruption diverts scarce resources into private pockets, literally undermines effective governance, endangers democracy and erodes the social and moral fabric of a nation"

### *Lack of Quality Education*

Qualitative education has become too expensive for millions of Nigerians to afford. Akinnaso (2012) noted that educational institutions are supposed to train human resources that would propel national development. He however noted that the education sector in Nigeria is incapable of training the needed manpower for national development and leadership positions. This trend portends great danger, not only to the present but also to the future as democracy cannot be entrenched and sustained without quality education. He attributed the poor state of education in Nigeria to "funding shortages and the negative influence of corruptive and valueless political system". The funding of education in Nigeria is often at a single digit percentile of national and state budgets as against the UNESCO's recommendation of 26%. For many months now, the Academic Staff Union of Universities in Nigeria has been on strike over the issue of inadequate funding of university education.

## V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Provision of welfare is a basic right of the citizens as welfare invariably translates into development as the people are primary and ultimate reason for any proposed development. The disgruntle and demonstration of non-satisfaction with government decision to withdraw welfare have negative effect on development in Africa while whatever little development achieved is dissipated via strikes, corruption, economic mismanagement and unnecessary grandiose show of affluence by African leaders. The people want to identify with leaders who have their interest at heart by caring for their welfare so that Africa's case will not be like that of taking a step forward and three steps backward. While the Nigerian constitution makes provision for the welfare of the people, the actual practice of governance ignores it and what obtains in a crisis of governance made more virulent through other challenges such as bad leadership, corruption, insecurity and weak political institutions. Despite the fact that the constitutive Act of the AU and the Protocol of ECOWAS emphasise the significances and entrenchment of good governance in the region and sub-region, the two organisations have in practice, been better at discouraging the illegal overthrow of government, especially through coup d'etat than at fostering a culture of good governance.

From the foregoing, the paper recommends as follows:

1. Welfarism should be watchword in governance. African nations must cease to pay lip service to welfare issues, and should devote attention to welfarism, not only in terms of policy formulation and implementation but also in terms of financial commitment.
2. The strong commitment should be given to the achievement of MDGs/SDGs. If the goals are achieved, the welfare of citizen will be assured and development will be sustained.

3. The Leadership of African nations should also be re-orientated on the need to see themselves as “servant leaders” and not as rulers. Instead of being instrumental leaders, they should act as societal leaders. To this end, the electoral process should be designed to discourage undesirable elements and people of questionable character from contesting elections.
4. Electioneering campaigns must not be based nor be predicated on the social/financial status or the ethnic affiliations of candidates.
5. Anti-corruption modules should also be incorporated into the curriculum at every level of education so that, from tender age, citizens will be taught about the ills of corruption on the society.
6. The judiciary in African states should also be empowered and strengthened to indeed be “the last defence of the common man”. The judiciary as the custodian of constitutions should always be ready to interpret, defend and uphold the provision of the constitutions, especially with regard to welfarism.
7. The AU and ECOWAS should also establish institutional frameworks to ensure that member states adhere strictly to the guidelines for good governance as enshrined in the constitutive Act of the AU and the Protocol of ECOWAS.

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