

GOOD GOVERNANCE: ANTIDOTE FOR PEACE AND SECURITY IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Nigeria returned to democracy since May, 1999 following long years of authoritarian rule by the military that had been in power for almost thirty years, and while considerable progress has been made in the area of personal freedoms and liberties, flashpoints of ethnic, communal religious and resource conflicts persist across most of the country. This is exacerbated by the seeming failure of government to address key issues affecting economic performances such as poverty alleviation, access to education, employment, resource distribution, infrastructure development and political power contests. This has indeed robbed the country of desired peace and security, which are necessary ingredients for sustainable development. The central argument of the study is to weave a thread linking the Nigerian state's ability to ensure human security and a convivial atmosphere, the focus of which is the protection of the people and response to their needs especially as these concern threats to life and property. This is cast within the context of global peace and security where consideration is not just for protection, but also empowerment of people and societies as a means of engendering development. This paper thus concludes that good governance defined as the manner power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources for an all inclusive development process with a capacity for efficient problem-solving and conflict resolution is a recipe for ensuring societal peace and security.

Key words: *Good governance, democracy, peace, security, sustainable development.*

1. Introduction

Since the Nigerian state returned to democratic governance in 1999 during the era of what Samuel Huntington (1991) called the “third wave of democratization”, the nature of governance in the country has been the subject of intense debate by scholars of all divides. Admittedly, the rising concern about the governance project in Nigeria cannot be explained outside the country’s historical experience, a history that has laid the “solid” foundation for the current wave of ethno-religious and politico-economic crisis in the land. This state of affairs importantly raises some serious concerns about the question of good governance in Nigeria where the politics of deprivation and mismanagement of resources appears to be taking over the principles of accountability, transparency and responsibility. This has thrown up security challenges in the poverty-ridden society. The questions now are: what is the explanation for bad governance in Nigeria? How can these governance deficits be corrected?

An attempt to answer these questions is what this paper has set out to achieve. The thesis of this paper is that good governance is the key instrument that oils a sustained peaceful, secured and over all development of society. In other words, the survival of the society is dependent on how its leadership and people are committed to the ideals of good governance where the atmosphere of peace, equal rights, justice, and rule of law and freedom of choice prevails.

2. Some Conceptual Issues

It is pertinent at this juncture to explore the relevant concepts which underpin this study in what follows below. This is with a view to clearly demonstrating their referents in the study.

2.1 Good Governance

Generally, governance, according to the World Bank Report (1989) is the exercise of political power in the management of a nation’s affairs. This definition thus implies that governance encompasses the state’s institutional and structural arrangements, decision-making processes and implementation capacity, and the relationship between the governing apparatus and the governed- that is the people in terms of their standard of living.

In his analysis, Odock (2006:3-5), sees good governance as “a system of government based on good leadership, respect for the rule of law and due process, the accountability of the political leadership to the electorate as well as transparency in the operations of government.” Transparency, Odock opined that it has to do with the leadership carrying out government business in an open, easy to understand and explicit manner, such that the rules made by government, the policies implemented by the government and the results of government activities are easy to verify by the ordinary citizens. Accountability as a component of good governance refers to the fact that those who occupy positions of leadership in the government must give account or subject themselves to the will and desire of the society and people they lead. Unfortunately, this is lacking in the public domain in Nigeria.

Governance typically emphasizes leadership which suggests the way political leaders meaning the apparatus of the state, use or misuse power, to promote social and economic development or to engage in those agendas that largely undermine the realization of the good things of life for the people. Good governance is in tandem with democratic governance which is largely characterized by high valued principles such as rule of law, accountability, participation, transparency, human and civil rights. These governance qualities have the capacity to provide the development process of a country.

Speaking in Nairobi, Kenya, in August 2006, U.S. Senator Barack Obama pointed out that for all the progress that has been made, the African continent generally has not yet created a government that is transparent and accountable, one that serves its people and is free from corruption which undermines the governance process. Indeed Obama noted that:

Governance in Africa is crisis ridden and it is a crisis that is robbing honest people of the opportunities they fought for. Corruption erodes the state from the inside out, sickening the justice system until there is no justice to be found, poisoning the police forces until their presence becomes a source of insecurity rather than a source of security. In the end, if the people cannot trust their government to do the job for which it exists, to protect them and to promote their common welfare, all else is lost.

Governance or its absence has not been able to provide the people of Nigeria and Africa generally public goods of health care, education, clean water, electric power, physical security, a salutary environment, and decent transport infrastructure.

Onifade (2011) has posed a critical question as to whether it's possible to have good governance without good leadership. Our understanding of reality points to the fact that the former is logically derived from the latter because where there is effective and efficient leadership, there is bound to be good governance. Achebe (1983) had argued convincingly in his seminal book, *'The Trouble with Nigeria'*, that the failure of leadership to rise to its responsibility, to the challenges of personal exemplary life clearly shows why the nation has the problem of true leadership. It is exemplary leadership that can uplift the people, better the lives of the citizenry and see that the people as much as possible enjoy the public resources without ado as is the case in most advanced democracies such as the United States, Canada, Switzerland and some upcoming developing nations such as Singapore, Malaysia, Taiwan and Korea. , theoretical explanations have been advanced by such scholars Migdal (1988), Zartman (1995) about the fact that in the absence of good governance, a nation may experience state collapse or failure. This has been the lot of most African countries including Nigeria where lead governance has held sway. A state ideally is meant to be an organization, composed of several agencies led and coordinated by the state leadership (executive authority) which has capacity and authority to make and implement the finding rules for all the people and applying force if necessary to have its way. Zartman (1995) specifically notes that the status of a state is reviewed as failed or collapsed when it exhibits inability to fulfill the functions of a state such as the sovereign authority, decision-making institution and security guarantor for its population. This can lead to structure, authority (legitimate power), law and political order falling apart.

2.2 *The Concept of Peace*

Another variable that need some explanations is peace. Peace is often seen as the absence of war, and by logical extension, war is the absence of peace. This perspective of peace is faulty because it really does not tell us anything about the meaning of peace. Ibeanu (2005) has however attempted to explain peace in sociological terms as a condition of social harmony in which there are no social antagonisms. In other words, peace is a condition in which there is no social conflict and individuals and groups are able to meet their needs, aspirations and expectations. Peace in this sense can be explained from the perspective of structural functionalism.

Structural functionalism is a tradition of social analysis that sees society as a mosaic of functions and structures that perform them. For example, in order to survive, a society needs to educate its children, produce goods, govern its affairs and provide security for its members. These are functions and they necessitate a number of structures such as schools, industries, parliaments, courts, armed forces, etc to perform their roles. Understandably, when these structures perform their roles or functions properly, there is order in society and in fact, society inherently moves in the direction of order and stability. Consequently, from a structural-functionalist perspective, peace is achieved where existing social structures perform their functions adequately, supported by the requisite culture, norms and values.

In broadening the definition of peace, Galtung (1990) had earlier outlined two dimensions of peace. The first is negative peace, that is the absence of direct violence, war and fear of the individual, nation, region and indeed at the international levels; the second dimension is positive peace that is the absence of unjust structures, unequal relationships, justice and inner peace of the individual. In sum, we can conceive peace to be the absence of fear, conflict, anxiety, exclusion, deprivation or suffering and violence. It is primarily concerned with creating and maintaining a just order in society. Galtung has stated *inter alia* that:

Peace and indeed peace theory is intimately connected not only with conflict theory, but equally with development theory. Therefore a peace research must be one that looks into the conditions past, present and future for the realization of peace which is intricately connected with conflict research and indeed development research (1991:131).

Violent conflicts, whether social, political or environmental have seriously contributed to the crisis situation in terms of loss of human and material capital. Nigeria in the last decade especially has experienced the breach of peace from the six geopolitical zones:

- a. North-Eastern States of Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Taraba and Yobe.
- b. In the North-West States of Kaduna, Katsina, Kano, Kebbi, Sokoto, Jigawa and Zamfara have been hard hit with conflicts.
- c. The North-Central States of Benue, Kogi, Kwara, Nasarawa, Niger and Plateau including the FCT which is not a state however have experienced the breach of peace.
- d. The South-Western States of Lagos, Ekiti, Oyo, Osun, Ondo and Ogun too have at one time or the other during this period witnessed conflicts.
- e. In the South-South States of Akwa-Ibom, Cross River, Edo, Delta, Rivers and Bayelsa, the experience has not been any different.
- f. The South-Eastern States of Anambra, Imo, Ebonyi, and Abia have equally had their own share of violent conflicts.

All these violent conflicts have contributed to the state of underdevelopment in Nigeria. There has been loss of lives, livelihoods, destruction of infrastructure and natural resources, employment opportunities which coincides directly with a weakened social safety net and a decline in the capacity of the state to provide services such as health, education and indeed security for the people. In a sentence, the peace and security and indeed wellbeing of the people of Nigeria has been seriously compromised.

2.3 *Security: Towards an understanding*

The third variable in our discourse is security. Security is viewed as the condition of feeling safe from harm or danger, the defense, protection and preservation of values, and the absence of threats to acquire values (Terriff, 1991). Put simple, security is about survival and the conditions of human existence. We must quickly clear the misconception and myopic ideology of defining or understanding the concept of security to be solely military or conventional matter.

Security is broadly viewed as freedom from danger or threats to an individual or a nation. It is the ability to protect and defect oneself, be it an individual or a nation its cherished values and legitimate interests and the enhancement of wellbeing (Imobighe, 1990; Mijah, 2007). Scholar like McNamara (1968) and Mijah (2007) see Security as tantamount to development. Security is not just about the presence of a military force, although this is encompassed. There can be no development without security. The non-conventional conception of security lays emphasis on human security. It also according to Fayeye (2011) implies the maturation of the structures and processes that can engender and guarantee political space and sufficient conditions for the realization of among other things, personal, group or national aspirations.

Kofi Annan (1998) had earlier emphasized on the human perspective of security when he posited that security means much more than the absence of conflict but also that lasting peace, an inherent ingredient of security will encompass areas such as education, health, democracy, human rights the protection against environmental degradation and the proliferation of deadly weapons. Indeed there can hardly be security amidst starvation, peace building without poverty alleviation and no true freedom built on the foundation of injustice.

The inclusion of the concept of development in the above definitions is particularly important. In point of fact, development essentially focuses on the transformation of the individual with the aim of eliminating poverty, unemployment and inequality. The prevalence of these elements constitutes monumental threats to the security of any nation. It is in this sense that the Kampala Document on Security clearly states that:

The concept of security goes beyond military consideration. It embraces economic, political and social dimensions of individual, family, community, local and national life. The security of a nation must be constructed in terms of the security of the individual citizen to live in peace with access to basic necessities of life while fully participating in the affairs of his/her society in freedom and enjoying all fundamental human rights (1992:9).

Elaborating further, Aligwara (2009) submit that security of the individual citizens is the most important thing. He argued that security is for the citizens and not citizens for security. Thus, for the citizens to live in peace the basic necessities of life such as food, good health, job opportunities, justice, freedom and all other ingredients of life must be provided.

3 The Interface between Good Governance, Peace and Security

Governance and security are separate concepts, yet they have a relationship. To be precise, it is governance that provokes and defines the nature of security. In effect, when there is governance failure the security framework deteriorates as has been the case in Nigeria. To ensure effective security system, there must necessarily be some link between the elements of good governance by the leadership. These elements include rule of law, accountability and transparency in the management of resources, political stability, provision of basic needs and services as well as absence of corruption.

The role of the leadership is particularly important in the governance project. The primacy of leadership in the governance project (Chikendu, 1987) rests on the ability of the leadership to see beyond the perceptual vista of the people, appreciate their needs, and inspire and motivate them to cherish and desire these needs as goals that should be achieved. Indeed, ensuring good governance for achieving peace, security and sustainable development rests with the leadership. This is dependent on the ability and capacity of leadership to allocate scarce resources, determine policy choices and outcomes that affect the direction and nature of development in the society.

It is an incontestable fact that there is a strong correlation between the nature of governance and the state of security in any society. But the case in Nigeria appears to be problematic. From 1999 to date, the country has experienced considerable erosion of domestic security arising from inherent deficit in governance. This is evidenced by the increasing proliferation of private security firms (Mijah, 2006 and 2009) to curb the problem of insecurity in the country. In point of fact, the nature of governance in Nigeria has not instituted sufficient policies and programmes to alter the structures of imbalance and insecurity entrenched by colonialism and prolonged authoritarian military rule (Ibrahim, 2002:197). These structures are exclusionary and ill suited especially in a democratic system of governance.

It has already been argued (Balewa, 1994 and Hembe, 2003) that colonialism imposed on Nigeria a structural imbalance in the configuration of Nigerian federalism. This situation created a feeling of fear of domination and mutual suspicions among the various ethnic nationalities. These factors, that is, the fear of domination and suspicions manifests in the political, economic and social dynamics of the country.

Consequently, the multi-ethnic nature of Nigeria and the failure of the governing apparatus to evolve a true nation and a corresponding national identity (Ibrahim, 2002:179-184), ethnic religious and other primordial elements have assumed points of relevance in Nigeria. Mijah (2009) argued further that the eventual transformation of identities along primordial lines and the entrenchment of negative identity politics have made ethnic and religious identities the basis of inclusion or exclusion in the distribution of resources. Thus, dominant ethnic groups systematically exclude minority ethnic groups from national and even regional or state processes and opportunities for individual and collective development. Thus, as a protection of communal and group resources, ethnic nationalities have defined citizenship along the lines of indignity. This has created the problem of indigenship and settlers. Consequently, indigenes derive more benefits, opportunities and resources than the settlers. In other words, this indigenship/Settlership phenomenon has become the standard for inclusion or exclusion in the distribution of available resources and opportunities (IPCR, 2003; Sanda, 2003; Mustapha, 2004). It must be pointed out clearly that the entrenchment of this negative identity politics in Nigeria is part of the wider causality of insecurity in the country. In point of fact, the structural imbalance in the ethnic, religious and regional composition of Nigeria and the manipulation of such identities logically explains the various ethno-religious and even communal conflicts in the country such as Zangon-Kataf in Kaduna, Ife-Modakeke, Jukun/Tiv, Jos Crisis, Boko Haram insurgency, Kano, Borno, among others.

The crisis of state and economy in Nigeria also reveals the potent threats to security in the country. The inherent economic crisis has had varying impacts on socio-economic and political spheres of Nigeria (Jega, 2003; Mijah, 2006). Essentially, the adverse impact of economic crisis; for instance, the impact of trade liberalization which has led to the closure of several industries in the country as a result of cheaper imports (Abdu, 2003), has led to the increasing privatization of the state and the alienation of the people from it. Understandably, it is this vacuum arising from the roll-back of the state, particularly out of the domain of social provisioning that is increasingly being filled by ethnic militias, religious fanatic (Boko Haram) and disgruntled state elites who feel marginalized or excluded from participating in the public or decision making arena. In fact, neither people nor investments or government can feel secured in such a conjuncture.

The desperation for political power and by extension for unrestrained access to economic resources has also deepened the insecurity situation in the country. The primacy of political power as a springboard to economic resources and higher level of social status has led to the militarization of society in Nigeria. This signifies violence in the struggles of social forces as against peaceful political competition and conduct. Ake has clearly explained the nature of politics that generates conflicts in African societies such as Nigeria thus:

The militarization of society is the outcome of the over valuing of political power in Africa and intense struggle to obtain and keep it. This transformed politics into warfare. In this competition every form of force is mobilized and deployed; the winners have the prospect of near absolute power and the losers not only forgo power but face a real prospect of losing and even life (1989:57-58).

The above merely amplify the character of a post-colonial state such as Nigeria. The premium on power is exceptionally high and the system lacks the institutional arrangement to moderate political competition and to mediate between classes thereby creating a fertile ground for insecurity in society.

The current democratic governance in Nigeria has continued to witness repeated abuses of state power that has manifested in different forms and guises. No doubt, the political elites still see politics or state power as an avenue for primitive accumulation of wealth. This conclusion which has been reached by scholars like Anifowose (1982), Ake (1985), Joseph (1987), Ikpe (2000), etc is still the order of the day today. According to Tell Magazine October 17, 2005, many public office holders in Nigeria especially state governors, ministers (past and present), members of the National Assembly, etc, are stupendously wealthy. These public officers according to the Magazine have huge investments both at home and abroad which cannot be explained. This basically explains why corruption has remained endemic in the country. When public officers who are supposed to be the vanguard in the fight against corruption now elevates the ignoble practice to statecraft, democracy, good governance, peace and security cannot but be at risk. Corruption no doubt undermines and or hampers the governance process and indeed development.

4 How to Evolve Good Governance in Nigeria

From all the foregoing anomalies, it is apparent that there is deficit in the governance process. But this can be corrected through an active and virile civil society. Larry Diamond (1996:5-17) provides us some intellectual insights on the relevance of civil society in the following context:

1. An organized civil society serves as a watch dog to check the excesses of government, to expose and curtail or put a stop to human rights violation, abuse of the rule of law and infringements of constitutional provision.
2. Civil society organization can supplement the role of political parties in stimulating political participation, increasing the political efficiency and skill of democratic citizens, and promoting an appreciation of the obligation as well as the rights of democratic citizenship.
3. Civil society is considered as crucial arena for the development of other democratic attributes such as tolerance, moderation, a willingness to compromise, and respect for opposing viewpoints, which are better experienced in organizational participation in civil society.
4. It serves to enhance the bargaining power of interest groups and provide inclusive mechanisms for them
5. It helps in recruiting and training new political leaders, not only in technical and administrative skills but also in normative standards of public accountability and transparency.

The above intellectual exploits of Larry Diamond provides the civil society a variety of ways to chart the course of good governance for peace, security and sustainable development. It is obvious the governing apparatus in Nigeria lacks the legal and bureaucratic means to check corruption and abuse of power but the civil society with its free, robust and inquisitive institutions has the capacity for pressing for institutional reforms which can fill that gap.

Of course, revamping the economy is a critical factor in the evolution of good governance in Nigeria. A virile economic system will no doubt deal with the problem of poverty. It is impossible to address the problem of insecurity and promote peace and sustainable development with the degree of poverty in the country. Jeffrey Sachs (2007) had argued that poverty leads to desperation among the people and the unhealthy struggle for available resources. This creates a fertile ground for insecurity.

The evolution of good governance also requires proper socialization of the citizenry. Through this process, our children will acquire relevant attitudinal dispositions and behavioural patterns. In point of fact, proper socialization of the children by agents such as the family, school etc. will shape their behaviour and inculcate in them the values of discipline, hard work, and such other values that are promotive of good governance and democracy.

5 Concluding Remarks

We have argued that good governance is a critical element for peace, security, and sustainable development. We have also established that the historical experience of Nigeria has affected the nature of governance that has failed to effectively address the development needs and aspirations of the citizens. This has further created problems of insecurity in the country. Clearly, there is deficit in good governance. And these deficits can be corrected through a virile and active civil society, revamping of the economy and proper socialization in the society.

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