

NIGERIA AND THE CHALLENGES OF GOVERNANCE AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Alozie, Cyprian C.

Department of Political Science
Abia State University, Uturu, Abia State

Abstract

Uptil the 21st century, Nigeria has continued to be faced with myriads of challenges over her governance. This development has negatively affected her bid towards national development. The hope of most Nigerians on the use of state power for a sustained socio-economic transformation in the 21st century has continued to be dashed. This study therefore focuses on the challenges of governance and national development in Nigeria in the 21st century. The methodology is both descriptive and analytical. The study reveals that bad governance in Nigeria has remained a bane on national development. The paper argues that much of government's development initiatives have remained elitist, unfocused and have failed to significantly impact positively on the people who are the main target of development. The paper recommends a fundamental change in the country's governance in order to arrest the bottlenecks that have militated against national development in Nigeria.

Keywords: Governance, National development, Corruption, Unemployment, Poverty.

Introduction

The great hope, enthusiasm and expectations many Nigerians expressed following the restoration of democratic rule in the country in May 1999 was not unconnected with the inert desire for an improved economy which will ultimately bring about national development in Nigeria. The long years of military rule in Nigeria and its attendant economic mismanagement, poverty, and hopelessness inflicted on the people became a source of worry to many Nigerians and hence the clamour for democratic governance. Unfortunately, the hope of the people especially at the grassroots have continued to be dashed over 17 years of unbroken democracy in Nigeria. For instance, the high hopes nurtured by the average Nigerian that per capita income would have increased tremendously; production diversified to non oil sector; poverty reduced to the barest minimum; economic opportunities provided for self development; enabling environment provided as well as environmental sustainability have virtually remained illusive (Oni, 2014).

A UNDP policy paper (1997:2) broadly describes governance as “the exercise of power through a country's economic, social, and political institutions in which the institutions represent the organizational rules and routines, formal laws and informal norms that together shape the incentives of policy makers, overseers, and providers of public services”. Governance in Nigeria can be traced to as far back as

the colonial period. The idea of good governance in Nigeria was enshrined in the 1979 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria where provision was made for the entrenchment of Fundamental objectives and Directive Principles of state policy.

Despite the abundance of human and material deposits in several parts of the country, majority of the people still wallow in abject poverty, which manifests in high levels of unemployment, falling health, educational standards and poor economic financing which have knelt a hard blow on national development. The persistent poverty, unemployment environmental challenges and other forms of social degradation cannot be divorced from poor economic management and a near absence of transparency and accountability in governance in Nigeria.

National development in Nigeria has continued to show abysmal growth despite some strategies already adopted to improve on it. Nigeria went down to an abysmal 157th position out of 177 countries in 2007 and from 148th out of 173 countries in 2003 according to the United Nations Human Development indices (HDI). Similarly, the country's Human Development Index of 0.453 in 2005 was lower than the average index of sub-saharan African which stood at 0.515, leading to the rating of Nigeria as the 13th least viable country of the world (United Nations Development Programmes Policy paper, 1997).

Governance has remained a critical aspect of modern political discourse as it touches on virtually every aspect of national life and efforts aimed at improving the lives of the people. Governance therefore involves an integration of efforts of individuals who have been elected or appointed to carry out the will of the state or realize the objectives for which the modern state has been constituted. Good governance for instance binds the state to the pursuit of those policies and programmes that will impact on the lives of the citizens. The quality of governance in any political system has usually affected the form and content of socio-economic transformation or national development (Nwoye, 2005).

Governance is usually viewed in both broad and narrow perspectives depending on individual scholar's orientation and situation on ground. Generally, governance denotes a multifaceted concept encompassing all aspects of the exercise of authority through formal and informal institutions in the management of both man and man-made resources of the state. Jega (2007) observes that good, responsive, responsible, and accountable governance is required everywhere in order to harness and develop natural resources as well as meet the basic needs of the people. Ake (1995) however notes that the two major issues in governance that have remained a bane on national development in Africa has been lack of accountability and transparency. Governance is usually considered as a more complex and broader concept than democracy. This is derived from the fact that governance encompasses inter related processes, institutions and people in the act of allocating state resources (Nwanegbo 2016).

Governance is aimed at touching people's lives in positive and concrete ways. This often requires the creation of a broad consensus platform that will incorporate and empower the people so as to be co-partners in the process of national development and societal transformation. This is often realized through a strategy of

self reliance which requires that the citizens are the end and not just the means of development (Ake, 2001).

The inability of the Nigerian state to realize her cherished goals and vision has basically been attributed to the nature of governance in the country. In spite of the divergent views of scholars on the concept of development, development is usually used to refer to the transformation of a community into socially, economically, politically, educationally, orderly and materially desirable conditions. The utmost goal of development is the improvement of the quality of life of majority of the people.

A lot of national development strategies have been enunciated by the Nigerian state at one time or the other but these strategies, some of which succeeded in some other countries have failed to work out for Nigeria such as; the Malaysia oil palm experiment and Chile's privatization programme. Scholarly efforts have focused on sundry factors that have affected national development in Nigeria. However, scholars have not given much attention to the issue of governance in Nigeria as a sine-qua-non to national development. This paper is therefore poised to investigate the challenges of governance and national development in Nigeria.

Conceptual Clarification Governance

The concept of governance has continued to attract divergent views among scholars. For Adejumobi (1995) governance refers to the efficient management of state institutions and the steering of society and the state towards the realization of collective goals. The support for governance activities stems from the proposition that accountable and capable state institutions are pre-requisites for economic development. This goes a long way to reducing conflicts especially intra state conflicts which have remained a major feature of the contemporary Nigeria state (Audu, 2016).

The level of transparency and accountability are usually considered to be at the root of governance. In other words, governance is measured with respect to the extent political power has been used to manage a country's social, economic, natural and human resources for the promotion of the greatest good for the greatest number (Audu, 2016). Ogundiya (2010) presents governance as the process of allocating resources through the instrumentalities of the state for the attainment of public good. It involves institutional and structural arrangements; decision making processes; policy formulation and implementation capacity; development of personnel; information flows; the nature and style of leadership within a political system. For Kaufmann (2010) governance could be divided into three broad categories with each containing two components such as:

1. (a) Voice and accountability which includes civil and political liberties and freedom of the press and; (b) Political stability and lack of violence.
2. (a) Government effectiveness which includes the quality of policy making and public service delivery and; (b) The lack of regulatory burden.

3. (a) The rule of law that includes protection of property rights and an independent judiciary, and; (b) Control of corruption.

Two forms of governance have been identified by Audu (2016). These are: good and bad governance. Edigin & Otoghile (2011:23-26) contend that “since governance is carried out in the interest of the generality of the people, then good governance has to do with putting the people’s interest first in governance in line with legal and ethical principles”. Good governance is the ideal form of governance as it is guided by values, conventions, norms and principles in the discharge of government activities. It guarantees good and competent management of a country’s resources. Good governance remains a sine qua non to national development. Good governance ensures participatory democracy, transparency, accountability, effective and equitable distribution of societal or national resources and promotion of the rule of law (Abdellatif, 2003).

Good governance ensures that political, social and economic priorities of a nation are based on broad consensus and that the voices of the poorest and the most vulnerable are heard in decision making over the allocation of developmental resources. According to a United Nations Development Programme Policy Paper (1997:2) “there are a lot of indices for measuring whether a state has good governance or not”. The programme argues that it is not just a matter of singing political jingles or slogans on the air (propaganda) or mobilizing the masses for Kangaroo solidarity visits to those occupying positions of leadership. The United Nations Development Programme acknowledges the following as core indices of good governance: people’s participation; rule of law; transparency; responsiveness; consensus orientation; equity; accountability and strategic vision.

Essentially, good governance deals with how those entrusted with leadership positions make efforts to achieve the goals or the ends of the state which include the maintenance of law and order; the provision of welfare for its citizens and the pursuit of national interest in the global arena. The purpose of establishing a government is to actualize these ends. Good governance usually insist on the process and quality of governance and the role of the civil society and private sector. In the view of Western democracy, good governance entails the existence of democratic institutions and values (Nwanegbo, 2016).

Bad governance is simply the opposite of good governance. That is, “governance that is not responsive, responsible and accountable to the needs and welfare of the people”. (Audu, 2016: 32). It implies a government that is characterized by widespread or institutionalized corruption, abuse of office and failure to deliver the dividends of democracy. Bad governance occurs when the resources of the state are hijacked or manipulated by a few privileged individuals or those at the corridors of power, their sponsors or cronies to the extent that national resources are not evenly distributed. Bad governance has been a major feature of some countries especially those in the Third world to the extent that several years after their attainment of political independence, the people have little or nothing to celebrate or show for it. Bad governance has remained the major drive for mass

poverty, unemployment, youth restiveness and economic paralysis in Nigeria.

Under bad governance, the tenets of liberal democracy hardly apply. For instance, the rule of law; freedom of expression; the press; among others are almost non-existent as critics of an unresponsive government are branded enemies of the state and arrested, tortured (often without trial) and imprisoned. The fight against corruption and abuse of office is usually done on partisan, selfish or ethnic basis. The state institutions that should be non-partisan such as the courts, the police, the army, anti-corruption agencies, Electoral Commission and even the parliament and other similar agencies are usually brought under the executive. Officers that fail to dance to the tune of the powers that be are in most cases meant to suffer in one way or the other. In most cases, those that refuse to adjust to the culture of silence take to violence, militant or terrorist activities so as to vent their anger on a state that they feel has alienated them.

Changes in government through credible elections are usually aimed at ensuring or instituting good governance (Dada, 2011). Generally, governance is used to describe those processes, activities, events and happenings undertaken by those entrusted with state power in order to enhance (or impede) service delivery. It has to do with all the methods utilized by the state to distribute power, manage public resources as well as problems with a view to enhancing the well-being of the people and by extension, national development. A responsible, powerful and overarching state is usually required to effectively distribute power, manage resources, reconcile conflicts and mobilize state instruments for effective service delivery.

Most modern states are pluralist in nature as they are constituted of divergent groups, associations and classes with each seeking to maximize its potentials in influencing or appropriating power in order to actualize its interests. Through the process of governance, the state usually assumes the status of an umpire and an arbiter that set necessary standards and rules of the game so as to ensure or maintain social order. Legitimacy is a major ingredient that enables the state to enjoy the support of the people.

Good governance therefore provides a suitable platform for rapid socio-economic transformation. It encompasses the various processes through which public resources and problems are effectively and efficiently managed and harnessed in response to the critical needs of the different people in society irrespective of class, party, religion and ethnic affiliations. A former Secretary General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, while noting the importance of good governance rightly observed that without good governance; the rule of law; predictable administration; legitimate power; and responsive regulation; no amount of funding, or charity will set any people on the path of prosperity (United Nations development Programme, 1997).

National Development

Development has come to mean different things to different scholars to the extent that it has become difficult to state precisely what development means. Indeed, no nation has actually achieved a complete mastery of all the obstacles on its path to

social bliss and there may never be. Nnoli (1981) argues that development is integrally related to the process of eliminating the obstacles in the way of a people to transform their physical, biological and socio-economic environments for the benefit of all of them. These obstacles which are not common among all societies also vary from time to time. Development involves training in the art of using local resources and creative human energy in problem solving rather than a wholesale imitation of the path to a good life that some societies have achieved. In his further analysis, Nnoli (1981:37) further contends that:

Development refers to man's progressive qualitative and continued self-improvement. Since man extends and reproduces himself socially through labour, he improves himself economically, socially and culturally through the cooperative use of his labour with others in the transformation of his immediate physical and human environment. It is in this way that he is able to tame the wilderness and build very complex structures, organizations and institutions for his own welfare. Therefore, development or man's qualitative self-improvement occurs when his labour conditions improve. Such an improvement varies directly with the elimination of all human and non-human impediments to the creative application of human labour.

Development is usually viewed in two senses, that is, things centred and man centred. As Nnoli (1981: 35) argues, "development is neither catching up with the advanced countries nor the procurement of artifacts". In most cases, the artifacts emanate from the development process and reflect it. However, the artifacts are not development itself and in certain cases may have no relationship whatever with that process. Development can only apply here only when they are the end-product of the population to apply their creative energy to the transformation of the local, physical, biological and socio- cultural environments. This applies in the advanced western and Eastern countries. They cease to mirror development when they are provided by foreigners. In the other case, the local population is merely acquiring the products of other's development, this has for long been the Nigerian experience.

Descriptively, development is a dialectical phenomenon in which the individual and society interact with their physical, biological and inter human environments, transforming them for their own betterment and that of humanity at large and being transformed in the process (Nnoli, 1981). The lessons learned and experiences acquired in this process are passed on to future generations, enabling them to improve their capacities to make further valuable changes in their inter-human relations and their ability to transform nature.

On the other hand, national development is a phenomenon which has to do with considerable planning and tinkering with known variables of change and growth (Olayide, 1981). This is derived from the fact that development means "change" from

one growth pole or point to another. In modern times that are characterized by great expectations, change is not supposed to occur in a *laissez faire* manner. Instead, change must be motivated, promoted, induced and even enforced in order to ensure the attainment of maximum social welfare. For Gboyega (2003) national development involves both a qualitative and quantitative increment in the over all welfare of the citizenry. It is holistic in nature covering the social, political, economic and cultural orientation of the people. National development implies improvement in material well being of all citizens, not the most powerful and rich alone, but everybody in the society. It demands that poverty and inequality of access to the good things of life be removed or drastically reduced. It seeks to improve personal, physical security and livelihood and expansion of life chances.

Development comprises both socio-economic and political issues (Lawal & Oluwatoyin, 2011). Development has to do with the unending improvement in the capacity of the individual and society to control and manipulate the forces of nature as well as themselves and other individuals and societies for their own benefit and that of humanity at large. Put differently, development is a process of actualizing man's inherent capacity to live a better and more rewarding life. It involves increasing skill and capacity to do things, greater freedom, self confidence, creativity, self-discipline, responsibility and material well being (Rodney, 1986).

According to Tolu & Ibe (2011: 387) "development is a complex and multi dimensional concept which has many facets-social, political, economic, and cultural." For Okereke (2003:1):

Development is conceptualized as the qualitative improvement in the living standard of the majority of the people through the provision of economic and social infrastructures like industries, employment, water, electricity, health facilities, good roads, etc. The major concern of many of the Third World countries since independence has been how to improve their societies and guarantee the good life to their people by providing those developmental indicators enumerated above.

Some scholars often times use development synonymous with modernization (Ake, 2001; Unanka, 2000). Rodney (1974:3) defines development "as a widely participatory process of social and material advancement (including greater equality, freedom, and other values) for the majority of the people through gaining greater control of their environment". Similarly, Berger (1976:59) argues that development broadly means "good growth and durable modernization." As he elaborates further:

Development is not what the economic and other experts proclaim it to be, no matter how elegant their language is. Development is not something to be decided by experts, simply because there are no experts on the desirable goals of human life. Development is the

desirable course to be taken by human beings in a particular situation (Berger, 1976: 59).

Moreover, Karadima (1974:82) submits that “development aims at the satisfaction of man’s economic and socio-cultural needs in the most effective and rational way”. Development also denotes advancement, and a change that would yield tremendous improvement in the overall living standard of a greater number of people in the society (Obiajulu & Obi, 2004). As Obiajulu & Obi (2004:165) further avert:

Development is the sustained evaluation of an entire society and social system towards a better human life. It is a comprehensive change or transformation in cultural, educational, economic, social and political fields to enhance the living conditions of the greater majority. It means improving existing ways of doing things to make the processes more efficient and more productive than before, with creating opportunities through people’s abilities and talents. Development becomes meaningful when it serves to increase the access of people to basic necessities of life, allow people to participate in defining their priority needs, proffer solutions to their problems and make tangible investments in their solutions.

Traditionally, development means the capacity of national economy whose initial economic condition has been more or less static for a long time, to generate and sustain an annual increase in its Gross National Product (GNP) at a fairly progressive level (Todaro & Smith, 2003). This understanding however falls short of what development actually means as it does not consider the impact government programmes make on the welfare of the people.

As Seer (1969) argues:

The questions to ask about a country’s development are: what has been happening to unemployment? What has been happening to inequality? What has been happening to poverty? If all these have declined from high levels, then beyond doubt, there has been a period of development for the country concerned. If one or two of these central problems have been getting worse, especially, if all three have, it would be strange to call the result development, even if per capita income doubled.

From Seer’s analysis therefore, development means the welfare, equality and sustainability of the people at large. Thus, the meaning of development is one that makes people the target or end of development. In other words, development is the process by which people create and recreate themselves and their life circumstances

to realize higher levels of civilization in accordance with their own choices and values (Ake, 2001).

Conversely, Rodney (1972) sees development from the point of view of the individual in terms of skill acquisition and development, increased capacity, greater freedom, creativity, self-discipline, responsibility and material well-being. At the societal level, development entails the ability of man to take his destiny in his own hands. Implicitly, development entails an over all social process which is dependent upon the outcome of man's efforts to subdue his physical or natural environment. Development at whatever level of analysis precludes unequal relations and contact between the forces of capital and peripheral nation-states. This is the result of dependency and under development in the Third world countries especially Nigeria. Hence, this is the direct consequences of numerous austerity measures or economic reforms adopted in underdeveloped countries (Offiong, 2003).

As Onwuka (2008:96) submits:

Development as a concept has to do with how man fares in his environment. It encompasses a broad spectrum of indices ranging from the levels of urbanization and industrialization in the society, to the level of ignorance, literacy, poverty, and wealth. Not excluded equally are such considerations as the levels of social security, employment, availability of amenities and social infrastructure, level of feeding and happiness, etc. societies are therefore characterized as developed or underdeveloped depending on how their citizens fare in the universe of these indices.

In development discourse, two related terms are usually brought into focus, that is, economic growth and economic development. Whereas economic growth is concerned about things, economic development is concerned about man; how he fares in his universe of things; the state of provision of essential services; the extent to which basic infrastructures are made available and the level of employment and inflation. In other words, development is concerned with the state of man; that is, how comfortable he is, employed, well fed etc. Okigbo (1987) contends that the difference is simple: economic growth relates mostly to things whereas development relates to man.

As Wignaraja (1976:5) posits:

National development implies the development of every man and woman; of the whole man and woman and not just things, which are merely means. National development is geared to the satisfaction of needs, beginning with the basic needs of the poor who constitute the world's majority. At the same time, development is to ensure the humanization of man by the satisfaction of his needs of expression, creativity, conviviality and for deciding his own destiny.

National development implies a holistic improvement of every segment of society. It represents an ever shifting but always higher level equilibrium between the positive and negative elements within a society and the individual (The Free Encyclopedia <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki>, retrieved 7/6/2013).

Ali (1980) notes that national development is one that is people oriented, that is, it involves the people at all stages of the planning and execution process and is committed to bringing about significant qualitative changes in the lives of all the people. National development also represents a widely participatory process of directed social change in any given society intended to bring about social and material advancement, greater equality, freedom and other valued qualities for the majority of the people through active participation and greater control over their environment in all its ramifications. With respect to the emerging Third World economies such as Nigeria. Olowe (1995) posits that development – centred programmes and policies designed in these economies are aimed at achieving higher incomes and living standard through industrialization and modernization, expansion of social services and cultural activities, full exploitation of human and material resources among others.

As Waldo (1984) argues, national development plans are more or less aimed at achieving qualitative transformation from a particular level of development to a more desirable one. Thus, the transformation should be rooted in such a manner that the expenditure on national resources should be able to improve upon the living standard of the citizenry. As encompassing as it is, national development plan represents a demonstrated commitment of the state's leadership to deploy national resources – human and capital to secure a better living standard of the people.

Ijioma (2002: 145) submits that “national development occurs if over time, a progressively higher percentage of the population shares the fruit of economic growth”. It represents an increase in the share of such sectors as manufacturing, utilities, construction and government administration. National development must involve the improvement of all facets of human endeavour. The politics, economy, culture and social life of the society must improve before we can comfortably talk of national development in a country. National development is generally believed to be multi-faceted and multi-dimensional. The New Economic view of development believes that it has to do with the reduction or elimination of poverty, inequality, and unemployment within the context of a growing economy. In other words, national development must be conceived as a multi-dimensional process involving major changes in social structure, popular attitudes and national institutions as well as the acceleration of economic growth and reduction of inequality and eradication of absolute poverty.

Any definition of national development of any nation especially Nigeria with given impressive figures in terms of material achievements and the relative rise in the Gross National Product would lead one into joining Amucheazi (1980:3) in raising some pertinent facts such as: “how far the lot of the common man has been affected and the main beneficiaries of these products of material development”.

According to Unanka (2001:64) “traditional measurement of national

development focuses on the economic,” especially the growth in economic output or income expressed as size of the gross national product (GNP). Usually, this is computed as the ideal possible amount obtainable when the GNP is shared per citizen of the nation (per capita). In this therefore, national development is a nation’s growth as measured by the size of the GNP at a specific time period. However, the use of growth rate may not always apply in view of the problem of possible data inconsistencies across countries over time.

That man is the ultimate end of development implies that the product of developmental efforts must fulfill the basic needs of man (Mahbub Ul Haq, 1973; Weaver, 1978). Thus, it has been argued that growth in output or income by themselves is not an adequate indicator of development. Hence, after reviewing the different alternative measures presented through a world research project on the issue, Hicks & Streetan (1980:91) concluded thus:

Obviously, the rapid growth of output will still be important to the alleviation of poverty, and GNP per head remains an important figure. What is required (in development measure) are some indicators of the composition and beneficiaries of GNP which would supplement the GNP data, not replace them. The basic needs approach therefore can be the instrument for giving the necessary focus to the work on social indicators.

Uzodinma (2017) identifies three best ways of scientifically measuring national development in Nigeria to include: life expectancy; infant mortality; and the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) or the per capita income. According to Uzodinma (2017:16) “national development in Nigeria for ten years (2008-2017) could not record appreciable increase”. For instance, within the period under review, Nigeria’s GDP remained stagnant as represented in table 1.

Table 1: Nigeria’s GDP between 2008 and 2017 (quoted in us dollars)

Year	Annual GDP Growth	Purchasing Power Parity (PPP)	Percentage Growth Per year
2008	2,234.4	4,403.0	4.3%
2009	1,958.6	4,678.4	5.5%
2010	2,365.0	5,342.7	8.3%
2011	2,582.6	5,542.4	2.1%
2012	2,797.9	5,521.8	1.5%
2013	3,042.0	5,755.4	2.6%
2014	3,268.4	6,061.4	3.5%
2015	2,763.1	6,120.8	0.1%
2016	2,260.3	5,929.9	4.4%
2017 (As at May, 2017)	2,192.5	5,933.3	2.0%

Source: International Monetary Fund Report, 2008-2017; Authors compilation

As shown in table 1, Nigeria recorded its highest growth in GDP in 2010 (8.3%) and 2009 (5.5%) respectively. The later years shows that nothing significant has happened in terms of growth in the GDP. For instance, since 2015, the GDP has been recording a steady decline in percentage as follows; 2015 -0.1%; 2016 – 4.4%; and 2017 – 2.0%. The resultant effect of this development has been the economic recession the country has been passing through.

With respect to life expectancy in Nigeria, the picture has not also been brighter. In 2015 for instance, Nigeria ranked the 171st nation in the world (World Health Organization, data 2015). The implication is that Nigeria's life expectancy is one of the lowest in the world. WHO records that life expectancy for a male in Nigeria is 53.4 years, while that of the female is 56.6 years. Average life expectancy for both male and female therefore stands at 54.4 years (Uzodinma, 2017).

Similarly, Nigeria is not also shining in terms of infant mortality rates. Nigeria ranks the 10th highest in infant mortality rate in the world (World Health Organization Report, 2015). The report showed that out of every 1000 live births, 71.20 deaths are recorded in Nigeria. Some of the Less Developed Countries (LDCs) such as: Sierra Leone, Congo Republic and Mozambique even rank better than Nigeria. For instance, according to the 2015 WHO report, Sierra Leone recorded 70.0 deaths per 1000 live births, Democratic Republic of Congo recorded 69.80 per 1000 live births, while Mozambique recorded 67.90 respectively (Uzodinma, 2017).

The concept of human development recognizes that the process of widening people's choice and the level of well-being they achieve are at the core of the notion of human development (United Nations Development Programme, 1997). The three essential choices of people being: (i) to live a long and healthy life; (2) to acquire knowledge, and; (3) to have access to the resources needed for decent standard of living. Others include: political, economic, social freedom and the opportunities for being creative and enjoying self-respect and guaranteed human rights.

Moreover, several alternative and inter-related operational measurement of human development still apply in development studies. These models of measurement of development indices include; the physical quality of life index; the human development; the human freedom index, the human poverty index, the gender – related development index and the gender empowerment measurement index. In each of these measures, national development as human development is a nation's score on an index of basic human needs.

Challenges of Good Governance and National Development in Nigeria

Over the years, the nature of governance in Nigeria has continued to leave the people with sad memories. Generation after generation, the Nigerian electorate has hardly got what they bargained for as short changing of the masses and alienation of the people from the scheme of things have remained the order of the day. During political campaigns, over bloated promises that are hardly fulfilled are made to the people by politicians. Unfortunately, the Nigerian electorate has continued to be weakened in pressing for their rights and demanding for accountability from their representatives.

In his study of Nigeria's problem of development, Bedford (n.d) identified three main explanations for Nigeria's lack of development, namely:

- (i) The colonial legacy explanation
- (ii) The corrupt leadership hypothesis; and;
- (iii) The authoritarian regime argument; a fourth explanation which is the prevalent value system in Nigeria which glorifies and endorses corrupt and illegal means of wealth acquisition, which majority of Nigerians consider necessary, normal and sufficient means to an end.

(i) **Corruption**

The age long value system in Nigeria that condones public acceptance of corruption as a way of life has compounded the problem of combating the menace. Over the years, each of the Nigerian government, both civilian and military have been associated with various acts of corrupt practices. Unfortunately, even though the state has also set up anti-corruption agencies, the activities of these agencies has often lived much to be desired as the fight against corruption by the various regimes has been fought with some elements of bias, class and partisan spirit. Ukachukwu (2015: 20) captures the many faces of corruption in Nigeria when he argued thus:

In the public sector, tales of corruption came from the legislature; the executive; and the judiciary in various guises. A common one was the abuse or misuse of money for constituency projects. Money for this is diverted to personal pockets, legislators at other times rely on the oversight function assigned to them to coerce the executive to allocate large sums of money to them on this basis; otherwise, the executive may not get their support in passing bills or approving appointments submitted to the legislature. In the Executive Arm of Government, often including the top most person(s), there are reports of the following faces or forms of corruption; embezzlement of money direct from the government treasury and tales of high level bribery involving all levels of courts and judicial officers.

Institutionalized corruption in Nigeria has remained a major cankerworm that upto the 21st century, it has undermined Nigeria's quest for national development as funds earmarked for developmental projects often end up in private pockets. Nigeria has to an extent lost the confidence and trust of some of her local and foreign development partners as a result. In 2001, the Transparency International based in Germany listed Nigeria as one of the incurably corrupt countries in all indices of measurement and evaluation.

In view of the looting of the state treasury by some former Nigerian leaders and the negative impact created by this development, the administration of President Buhari has since its inception been fighting an anti-corruption war through which

millions of naira have been recovered as stolen funds from some former public officers. However, criticisms have continued to trail over President Buhari's anti-corruption crusade as there have been allegations that the fight is mainly targeted at the opposition whereas some members of the ruling party whose corruption cases have been mentioned are treated with kid-glove.

(ii) **Youth Unemployment:** The non utilization of the potentials of most of the Nigerian youth has denied the youth the opportunity of making their contributions to national development. As veritable tools for the development of any nation, the youth in Nigeria constitutes about 70 per cent of Nigeria's population, a number that places them in a vital position to influence things to a certain level in the country (Anthony, 2013; <http://nigeriaobservernews.com/features/htm>, retrieved 5/9/2016). The migration of some Nigerian youths to other parts of the globe to contribute to their development and the suffering of those at home has continued to go unnoticed by the political class. In addition, certain age requirements expected of the youth as a pre-requisite for contesting in elections; securing employment (even after National Youth Service corps); admission into higher institutions of learning among others have continued to alienate the Nigerian youth from national affairs in the country. As a result of this, most Nigerian youths have been left frustrated. Whereas a good number have lost faith in the country, others have either taken to various forms of violent crimes, militancy and anti-social behaviour. Table 2 shows the level of unemployment rate by the states in Nigerian between 2007 and 2011.

Table 2: Unemployment Rates by States, 2007-2011

State	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Abia	25.1	11.9	14.5	22.8	11.2
Adamawa	21.5	13.5	29.4	24.6	33.8
Akwa-Ibom	18.0	11.1	34.1	27.7	18.4
Anambra	14.9	7.3	16.8	10.8	12.2
Bauchi	20.5	6.9	37.2	27	41.4
Bayelsa	21.9	67.4	41.5	27.4	23.9
Benue	7.9	7.8	8.5	6	14.2
Borno	12.5	11.8	27.7	26.7	29.1
Cross River	32.8	18.9	14.3	27.9	18.2
Delta	22.9	11.5	18.4	27,9	27.2
Ebonyi	7.9	5.1	12	25.1	23.1
Edo	14.8	15.6	12.2	27.9	35.2
Ekiti	11.4	11.5	20.6	28	12.1
Enugu	14.1	10.5	14.9	28	25.2
Gombe	16.9	7.6	32.1	27.2	38,7
Imo	28.3	17.4	20.8	28.1	26.1
Jigawa	27.0	5.9	26.5	14.3	35.9

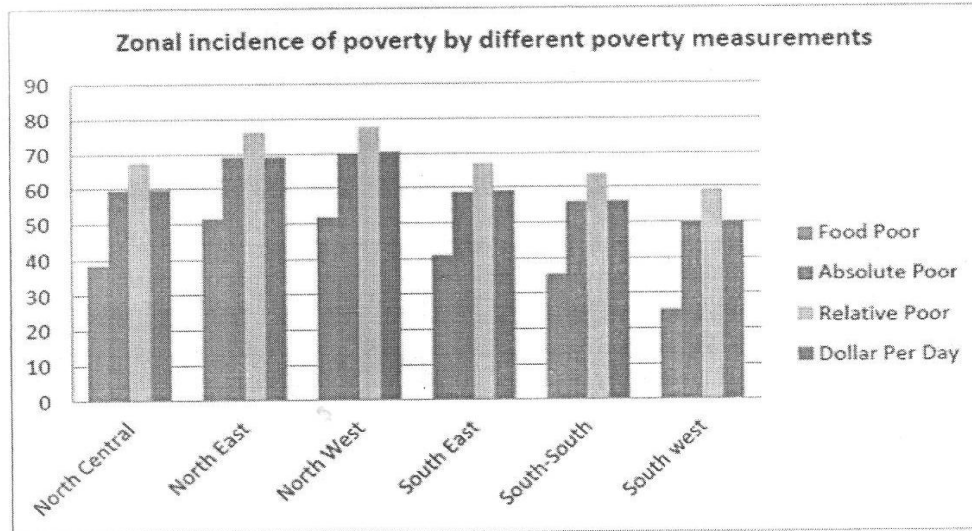
Kaduna	8.7	12.7	11.6	12.4	30.3
Kano	10.1	5.8	27.6	14.7	21.3
Katsina	10.9	11.8	37.3	11	28.1
Kebbi	1.3	16.5	12	10.7	25.3
Kogi	14.6	16.4	19	9.5	14.4
Kwara	17.7	10.2	11	2.7	7.1
Lagos	13.7	7.6	19.5	27.6	8.3
Nasarawa	11.8	17	10.1	3.4	36.5
Niger	4.2	3.9	28	11.7	39.4
Ogun	3.6	5.8	8.5	27.5	22.9
Ondo	6.7	6.3	14.9	28	12.5
Osun	7.2	6.5	12.6	27.6	3
Oyo	8.1	8.7	14.9	27.7	8.9
Plateau	6.8	4.7	7.1	10.4	25.3
Rivers	4.2	3.9	28	11.7	39.4
Sokoto	12.3	5.9	22.4	15.9	17.9
Taraba	15.2	19.9	26.8	24.7	12.7
Yobe	24.4	12.8	27.3	26.2	35.6
Zamfara	19.1	16.4	13.3	14.5	42.6
FCT	47.8	8.7	21.5	11.8	21.1
Nigeria	12.7	14.9	19.7	21.4	23.9

Source: Nigeria, National Bureau of Statistics Report, 2012.

The record on table 2 shows that Yobe State, the earlier headquarters of Boko Haram insurgents on the average had the highest percentage of unemployed people in the country at 33.3 percent. Hence, the lack of basic amenities and necessities for survival has created a growing army of frustrated, disenchanted and despondent youths who vent their anger on the state and resort to violence at the slightest opportunity as a way of actualizing their vested interest or goal.

(iii) **High Incidence of Poverty:** National development can be measured according to the extent to which the level of the socio-economic and living standard of the people has been affected positively by government. In Nigeria however, despite her huge human and mineral resources, poverty is still widespread among some Nigerians to the extent that the country is ranked as one of the 20 poorest countries in the world. Over 70 per cent of the Nigerian population is classified as poor with about 35 per cent living in absolute poverty. Figure 2 clearly illustrates this.

Figure 2: Different poverty measurements for the geo-political zones of Nigeria.



Source: Nigeria, National Bureau of statistics report, 2010.

The zonal incidence of poverty by different poverty measurements as shown in figure 2 has remained a major constraint to national development in Nigeria. According to Adesoji (2010:95) “socio-economic marginalization prevalent in Nigeria and imbalance in the distribution or implementation of national resources has led some radical scholars to fault the government and Nigeria’s democratic setting which contributed immensely to Boko Haram insurgency in North East, Nigeria. Persistent dearth of infrastructure has also made about 90 per cent of the Nigerian population to be under poverty line (Salisu, et al 2015). Comparatively, Northern Nigeria has the highest figure of relative poverty vis-à-vis the South West and South East zones that have relative poverty of 67.0 per cent and 59.7 per cent respectively. The North East and North West zones have the highest figures of 76.3 percent and 77.7 per cent relative poverty (NBS, 2012).

(iv) **Politics of God Fatherism and the Money Bags:** Politics of god fatherism and the money bags became more pronounced in Nigerian politics since after the restoration of democratic rule in May, 1999. This was evident in some of the states in the Federation. For instance in Anambra State in 2003, the disagreement between the then Governor Chinweoke Mbadinuju and his erstwhile political god father, Chief Emeka Offor paralysed state activities for a long time and almost dragged state functions to a stand still. Conflict of interest among the political god-fathers and their “godsons” continued during the tenure of Governor Chris Ngige who resisted the political might of the “political big-wigs” of the state popularly known as Abuja based politicians. Politics of god-fatherism has all the ingredients of deceit, murder,

betrayal, and violence of no known pedigree as observed in the Mafioso-like style they adopted in going about their demands (Nnatuanya, 2006). Politics of god-fatherism led to the development of strongmen who dictate, sponsor, hijack or manipulate the internal democracy of their parties. Most times, the sponsored elected candidate owes allegiance only to his political god father and not to the electorate. The consequence has been the putting of round pegs on square holes and much of the funds meant for development are channeled into settling the god-fathers.

(v) Ethnicity and Parochial Orientation: Nnoli (2008: 5) defines ethnicity “as a social phenomenon associated with the identity of members of the largest possible competing communal groups (ethnic groups) seeking to protect and advance their interest in a political system”. For most parts of Nigeria’s political experience, Nigerian voters have been known to give more support and votes to candidates from their own areas whether such candidates would deliver or not. This problem has been exacerbated by the issue of weak political culture in the country where an average Nigerian electorate is influenced more by parochial sentiments which beclouds his sense of sound political decision. For instance, it was widely believed that the annulment of the June 12, 1993, presidential election when late Chief M.K.O Abiola (a Yoruba) was leading in the released results by General Ibrahim Babangida (a Northerner) was on grounds of ethnicity.

The emergence of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo (a Yoruba) as Nigeria’s president in May 1999 was also greeted by the reinforcement of the Sharia legal system in 12 states in Northern Nigeria to frustrate his administration. Former President Goodluck Jonathan also had to be confronted with a lot of opposition throughout his administration following the open threat of some high level political figures of the North that they would make the country ungovernable for him.

(vi) Long Years of Military Rule: Good governance in Nigeria was for long marred by incessant military intervention in politics. Being amateurs in the art of governance, military regimes hardly promote good governance. They often make more grievous mistakes than the politicians they toppled. It is a widely held view that the worst civilian regime is better than the best military regime. Military regimes are usually not accountable and are unresponsive to the welfare of the people. In Nigeria and in some other African countries, looting of public treasury, poor management of the economy, ill-conceived economic revamp programmes have crippled the quest for national development.

(vii) Electoral Malpractice and Politics of Violence: Nigeria’s faulty political foundation laid at political independence in 1960 has continued to hunt the nation’s quest for good governance and national development. Anti-democratic vices such as political intolerance and various forms of electoral malpractices have continued to mar Nigeria’s enthronement of good governance. Among others, these vices have led to the emergence of unpopular candidates and low political participation. The consequence has been the emergence of leaders without a clear vision of what they

can do to address the myriad of socio-economic, ethno-religious and security challenges confronting the country.

(viii) Youth Militancy and Insurgency: The twin problems of youth militancy and insurgency especially in the Niger Delta area of Nigeria and Boko Haram insurgency in North East, Nigeria has gone a long way to derailing national development in Nigeria. The Niger Delta militants who could not embrace the federal government's Amnesty programme had persisted in their violent attacks and kidnapping of oil company workers (including expatriates) as well as blowing up of petroleum pipelines leading to huge loss of national revenue. Just recently (2015) a new dreaded group known as Niger Delta Avengers emerged in the area and has been busy launching renewed attacks against Nigeria Security Forces drafted to the area as well as destruction of oil pipelines and other economic investments in several parts of the Niger Delta region. Boko Haram insurgency in North East, Nigeria and its environs since 2009 has also led to colossal loss of lives, property, and other valued resources and rising cases of Internally Displaced Persons. Billions of naira that should have been used in the provision of critical infrastructure for national development have continued to be used in financing the insurgency war, rehabilitation of damaged facilities and taking care of the Internally Displaced Persons.

(ix) Non Diversification of the Nigerian Economy: The monocultural nature of the Nigerian economy and over reliance on the downstream oil sector has remained a major constraint on Nigeria's path towards economic and national development. In this era of global economic recession, fall in the price of Nigeria's crude oil, coupled with the fallen value of the naira vis-à-vis major world currencies like the United States dollar, the economy has been hard hit and only a multifaceted, well conceived, people driven and properly articulated strategies can salvage it.

Conclusion

This paper has examined the challenges governance and national development, with a major focus on Nigeria. It can rightly be argued that over fifty six years after Nigeria's political independence, the nation is still grappling with the challenges of good governance. The right pathway to national development has remained a major challenge of the leadership. The people have been unable to actually get what they have been bargaining for from the leadership. The so called democracy dividends have continued to be hijacked by the few privileged members of the elite class and those at the corridors of power.

Good governance is meant to effectively mobilize Nigerians and harness the vast human and material resources that abound in the country in order to lift the people from their age long position of misery to that of prosperity. Over the years, efforts have been made to entrench good governance in Nigeria and ensure accountability which are necessary ingredients for national development. Unfortunately, most of the agencies created to ensure good governance and

accountability such as the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) and even the judiciary have in most cases failed to discharge their functions in an unbiased and non-partisan manner.

National programmes and strategies aimed at national development in Nigeria have hardly made the expected impact by significantly addressing the persistent and precarious socio-economic and security challenges that have for years been steering majority of the people on their faces. There has been poor articulation and implementation of development programmes as the entire arrangement has remained elitist and unfocused. Besides, partisan, ethnic and class interest have often marred the implementation of Nigeria's development initiatives. To lift Nigeria out of the present economic misery and recession therefore, the leadership must chart a new course at all levels of governance in the country. Concerted efforts must be made to effectively address Nigeria's obstacles to national development on the part of both the leadership and the led.

Recommendations

Nigeria, the generally acclaimed "giant of Africa" has come a long way after over fifty six years of nationhood. In order to improve the nation's governance for national development, the following recommendations are proffered:

- i. The Nigerian elites of various classes, professions and party affiliations being the key holders to societal progress must eschew ethnic, partisan, religious and class bigotry and dispose themselves to a positive spirit in order to realize the vision of the Nigeria of our dream.
- ii. The launching of the national Agenda on national rebirth (**change begins with me**) by the Buhari administration is a welcome development. It should be noted however, that similar programmes have been launched in the past by previous administrations without achieving the intended targets. For the initiative to succeed, therefore, the welfare of the people must be given a priority attention.
- iii. To strengthen the nation's electoral system, concerted efforts need to be made urgently for electoral and political party reforms in order to address issues relating to accountability, legitimacy, immunity clauses and good governance. In addition, in view of the pivotal role of the judiciary in democratic consolidation, urgent efforts should be made to refocus or reform the judiciary in order for it to effectively contain the 21st century challenges. Its independence in judicial pronouncements or electoral adjudication should not be compromised. Delivering of contradictory judgments on similar electoral cases and every form of double standard should not be allowed to continue in the judicial arm of government.

Finally, as the youths are the bedrock and the foundation upon which every nation in the quest for development and improved standard of living of her citizenry builds upon, every necessary avenue should be created to encourage the Nigeria youth to play their role in national development. If the society must be free from

crimes, insecurity and other anti-social vices, then, the youth must be productively engaged. There is therefore a dire need for the government to provide an enabling environment for the survival of the youth. Efforts must be made to provide the youth with gainful employment; entrepreneurial skills; eradicate poverty through the improvement of the standard of living; give priority and access to education (both conventional and technical); fight and eradicate corruption in a non partisan and unbiased manner, and give the youth opportunities for leadership positions in the country. It has been argued that the limited opportunities and lack of enabling environment for the survival of the Nigerian youth has remained a major drive for some of them that travel out to places such as Europe where they engage in prostitution, human trafficking and drug peddling. It became another national embarrassment in November 2016 when a Nigerian youth, Chijioke Stephen Obioha was hanged in Singapore over drug related offences (AIT News, 18/11/2016, 8.00pm).

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