Path To Good Governance In Nigeria: Challenges And Prospects

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Abstract: Governance among other things, involves making and implementing crucial decisions that could affect lives of individuals in a variety of ways. It has several interrelated dimensions such as economic governance, administrative governance, political governance, national governance, and systematic governance. In this review paper, emphasis is laid on national governance. Eight characteristics of good governance were examined which should be applicable to both advanced nations of the world and their developing counterparts. The specific features and contributory factors for bad governance which is the bane of underdevelopment and poverty in Nigeria were highlighted. Finally ways of ensuring good governance in Nigeria were discussed which will promote formidable national security and stable socio-political system for the nation.

Keywords: Corruption, Democracy, Good Governance, Ethnicity, Rule of Law.

Introduction
The issue of how a particular country, city or agency is governed or should be governed, and the relationship between the state and civil society, or how to establish an ideal balance between them in order to achieve a stable political system has been of immense concern to scholars (see Azeez 2009: 213). Arisi and Ukadike (2011: 413) expressed optimism that human beings are born into the world with an opportunity make them live better in their various communities. Such anticipated better condition of living for citizens has been largely achieved in developed nations such as Britain, United States of America, Germany, Japan, and China through the mechanism of good governance. These countries have in place, well-run educational system, and good organization of industrial sectors, affordable shelter for citizens, sound national security and political stability. They also experience favourable interdependence between growth, poverty reduction and sustainable development; as well as respect for the rule of law, human rights, peace and security among others. In essence, good governance has remained a crucial element of the socio-political system of developed countries of world. However, on the contrary, a major challenge to quest for Nigeria’s greatness is good governance. Nigeria’s search for the most cultivated and best informed minds, and men and women and women of wisdom who will take the nation to the peak level of good governance has remained elusive. Plato, the great Greek philosopher, had argued in his time that as a just and healthy person is governed by knowledge and reason, a society must be under the control of society’s most cultivated and best informed minds in order to achieve remarkable social, political and economic development. The fact that Nigeria remains a laggard in social, economic and political developments despite all social and economic policies implemented by successive administrations suggests that such administrations had not optimally delivered the dividends of good governance. Nigerians are worried as to why their leaders seem to find it difficult to address perennial governance problems despite abundant human and material resources. Many viewpoints have been formulated to explain governance challenge of the country. These include the emergence of colonial misadventure in Nigeria; corruption and lack of vision among past and present leaders of Nigeria. All of these have hampered any meaningful effort in the quest for good governance in the country with systemic challenges and decays. There were also institutional problems rooted on the type of governance Nigeria has had since independence. Nonetheless, Nwagboso and Duke (2012: 234) contended that Ghana and South Africa were colonized like Nigeria but they seem to fare better in development than Nigeria. Currently Nigeria is faced with myriad of problems prominent among which are poverty, corruption, insecurity, unemployment, infrastructural decay, kidnapping, ethnico-religious crises and many more. These problems could be attributed to bad governance. Nigerian governance challenge has been a threat and clog in her wheel of progress towards achievement of economic growth and stable polity. Against the above background, this paper examined the problems and prospects of good governance in Nigeria.

The Concept of Governance
The concept of governance is not new. It is as old human civilization. According to the World Bank Institute (2003), governance is the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country’s economic and social resources for development. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2007) see governance as the exercise of power through a country’s economic, social, and political institutions in which institutions represent the organizational rules and routines, formal laws, and informal norms that together shape the incentives of public policy-makers, overseers, and providers of public services. The United Nation Human Development Report (2004) further pointed out that governance has two faces: first, the leadership which has responsibilities derived from the principles of effective governmental organizations. Second, the governed, that is
the citizens, who are responsible for making relevant inputs to the socio-economic and political affairs of their society. In other words, governance is a relationship between rulers and the ruled, the state and society, the governors, and the governed. It is important that the two principal actors be as close as possible to ensure the legitimacy, accountability, credibility and responsiveness of the rulers and the effective participation, and responsiveness of the ruled is achieved. All these elements or attributes are the instruments of effective governance in the sense that they provide the necessary anchor and legal/moral justifications to the government. Hence, governance has social, economic, administrative and political dimensions (World Bank Institute, 2003). Economic governance includes processes of decision-making that directly or indirectly affect a country’s economic activities or its relationships with other economies. It has a major influence on societal issues, such as equity, poverty and quality of life. Political governance refers to decision making and policy implementation of a legitimate and authoritative state. The state should consist of separate legislative, executive and judicial branches, represent the interests of a pluralist polity, and allow citizens to freely elect their representatives. Administrative governance is a system of policy implementation carried out through an efficient, independent, accountable and open public sector.

Systemic governance encompasses the processes and structures of society that guide political and socioeconomic relationships to protect cultural and religious beliefs and values, create and maintain an environment of health, freedom, security and with the opportunity to exercise personal capabilities that lead to a better life for all people (World Bank Institute, 2003). Therefore, simply put, Coleman (1965), governance means the process of decision making and the process by which decisions are implemented (or not implemented). It is the manner in which power is exercised by governments in the management and distribution of a country’s social and economic resources. The nature and manner of this distribution makes governance a bad or a good one (Arisi & Ukadike, 2011: 413).

Concept of Bad Governance
According to the World Bank (1992), bad governance has many features, among which are failure to make a clear separation between what is public and what is private, hence a tendency to divert public resources for private gain; failure to establish a predictable framework for law and government behavior in a manner that is conducive to development, or arbitrariness in the application of rules and laws; excessive rules, regulations, licensing requirements, etc., which impede the functioning of markets and encourage rent-seeking; priorities that are inconsistent with development, thus, resulting in a misallocation of resources and excessively narrow base for, or non-transparencies, decision-making. Obadan (1998) opined that when these features occur together, they create an environment that is hostile to development. In such circumstances, he further argued that the authority of governments over their peoples tend to be progressively eroded. This reduces compliance with decisions and regulations. Governments then tend to respond through populist measures or, as in some authoritarian regimes, resort to coercion. Either way, the economic cost tends to be high, including a diversion of resources to internal security and escalating corruption.

Concept of Good Governance
Good governance has been described by Arisi & Ukadike (2011: 413) as an approach or perspective that focuses on state, societal institutions and the relationship between them, as well as on how rules are made in a society which are accepted as legitimate to enhance values that are sought by individuals and groups within the society. Oburota (2003) argues that politically, people may disagree about the best means of achieving good governance, but they quite agreed that good governance is absolutely imperative for social and economic progress. According to Madhav (2007) good governance has much to do with the ethical grounding of governance and must be evaluated with reference to specific laid down norms and objectives. It looks at the functioning of the given segment of the society from the point of view of its acknowledged stakeholders, beneficiaries and customers. It must have firm anchorages to certain moral values and principles. Good governance according to Downer (2000) is the process whereby public institutions conduct public affairs, manage public resources and guarantee the realization of human rights. Good governance accomplishes its goals in a manner essentially free of abuse and corruption, and with due regard for the rule of law. The true test of good governance according to Conable (1997) is the degree to which it delivers on the promise of human rights; civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights. In tracing its origin and necessity. Nnoli (2011: 2) argued that good governance is a product of the sweat, toil, creativity, blood and sacrifice of millions of people across space and time in the human struggles for a better a life.

Characteristics of Good Governance
The World Bank Report (1989) identified the following as the features of good governance for sustainable human development:

i. An efficient public service
ii. An independent judicial system and legal framework to enforce contract
iii. The accountable administration of public funds
iv. An independent public auditor, responsible to a representative legislature
v. Respect for the law and human rights at all levels of government
vi. A pluralistic institutional structure and
vii. A free press

In the same vein, UNDP Policy Paper (1997:2) acknowledges the following as core characteristics of good governance: Participation, Rule of Law, Transparency, Responsiveness, Consensus orientation, Equity, Effectiveness and efficiency, Accountability, Strategic Vision. Adeosun (2012:6) explained the above words that constituted UNDP characteristics of good governance as follows:

(a) Participation involves the participation of all and sundry in decision making either directly or through their elected representatives. Such broad participation
is built on freedom of association and speech as well as capacities to participate constructively.

(b) Accountability requires not only government institutions but also both private sector and civil society organizations to be accountable to the public. Accountability is guaranteed by the process by which public decision-making processes and the results they produce are held up to public scrutiny and feedback.

(c) Effectiveness and efficiency: Effectiveness concerns the ability of public bureaucracies to skillfully and efficiently transform public resources into services and infrastructure that correspond to public determined priorities. The concept of efficiency covers the sustainable use of natural resources and the protection of environment.

(d) Equity and inclusiveness requires all groups particularly the less privileged ones to have opportunities to improve or maintain their well-being. All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.

(e) Transparency must be built on the free flow of information. Processes, institutions and information should be directly accessible to those concerned with them and enough information is provided to understand and monitor them.

(f) Consensus orientation requires mediation of different interests in society to reach a broad consensus on what is in the best interest of the country and the way this can be achieved.

(g) Responsiveness requires that institutions and processes serve all stakeholders within a reasonable time frame.

**Challenges to Good Governance in Nigeria**

Haven examined the attributes of good governance above, it is important to identify the challenges to good governance in Nigeria over the years. The 1999 Nigerian constitution provides the yardstick for measuring good governance. Section 14(1) stated that Federal Republic of Nigeria shall be a state based on the principles of democracy and social justice. This is further strengthened in Section 16 (1 and 2) of the 1999 Nigerian Constitution. Section 16 (1) a, b, c and d, provided that the state shall, within the context of the ideals and objectives for which provisions are made in the constitution harness the resources of the nation and promote national prosperity and an efficient, dynamic and self-reliant economy. It further states that the state shall control the national economy in such manner as to secure the maximum welfare, freedom and happiness of every citizen on the basis of social justice and equality of status and opportunity; that the state without prejudice to the right of any person to participate in areas of the economy within the major sector of the economy, shall protect the right of every citizen to engage in any economic activities outside the major sectors of the economy. Section 16(2) states that, the state shall direct its policy towards the promotion of a planned and balanced economic development; that the material resources of the nation are harnessed and distributed as best as possible to serve the common good; that the economic system is not operated in such a manner as to permit the concentration of wealth or the means of production and exchange in the hands of few individuals or of a group; and that suitable and adequate shelter, suitable and adequate food, reasonable national minimum living wage, old age care and pensions, and unemployment, sick benefits and welfare of the disabled are provided for all citizens. However this has remained a mirage as a result of many factors among which are:

(a) **Bad Governance and Politics of God Fatherism**

Nwoye (2005) argues that the quality of governance in any political system affects the form and content of democratic transformation. He opined that the essence of governance is fundamentally about touching peoples’ lives in positive ways. To do this requires creating a broad consensus platform that will incorporate and empower the people so as to be effective partners in the process of social transformation. One way of achieving this is through democratization because it makes room for effective, transparent and all inclusive governance that will endure and prosper. This explains why every society now strives to attain democratization rather than stick to other less fancied political options (Owolabi, 2001). According to Oluwolere (2003), democracy adequately understood, is a theory that sets some basic principles according to which good government must be run. Such principles include those of justice, equity, freedom, liberty, accountability, openness and transparency in government. Indeed, effective democratic forms of governance rely on public participation, accountability and transparency. In most countries today, these principles are used as criteria for distinguishing between good and bad governance. However, it is worrisome that after woeful failure of military regimes that were in power for several years in Nigeria, the return to democracy since 1999 has not produced expected results. Rather than engender power levels of development and good governance, democratization in Nigeria seems to be synonymous with political assassinations, ethno-religious conflicts, increasing levels of abject poverty, acute youth unemployment and general economic and political decay (see Ogundiya 2010). Indeed, not much has positively changed after the prolonged years of military dictatorship. Commenting on the situation, Nwigwe (2003) contends that what Nigeria is practicing is not democracy rather, Nigeria’s type of government could qualify as a government infested with power drunken, self seeking, ideology-barron, orientation less operatives; usually selected by their kind and of course scarcely ever elected by the people. He referred to such government as ‘mafia government’. For Ogundiya and Baba (2005), Nigeria’s democracy has been violent ridden, characterized with wanton destruction of lives and properties. More importantly, the peoples’ vote seems not to count in determining who governs as elections are rigged or its outcome determined before the poll by some political elites otherwise known as the ‘god fathers’. An elected or appointed public officer no longer owns responsibility to the people but to the political god father. Much of the national and state funds are used in settling them to the detriment of the masses. The resultant effect has remained abysmal performance of these officers (Alozie in Onuoha and Ezeribe, 2012).

a. Corruption

Corruption has broadly been defined as a perversion or a change from good to bad. Specifically, corruption or
corrupt behavior involves the violation of established rules for personal gain and profit (Sen 1999:275). Lipset and Lenz, (2000:112-114) described corruption as efforts to secure wealth or power through illegal means for private gain at public expense; or a misuse of public power for private benefit. Corruption has been the focus of considerable attention and lamentation in and outside Nigeria. Unfortunately, after years of independence, endemic corruption has become a bane in the socio-political life of Nigerians. In his widely acclaimed book, 'The Trouble with Nigeria', Professor Chinua Achebe boldly proclaimed his frank and honest opinion that anybody who can say that corruption in Nigeria has not become alarming is either a fool, a crook or else does not live in the country. Corruption in Nigeria according Ikejian – Clark (2001:122), takes the form of kickbacks, payoffs, bribery among others. Indeed, Waziri (2010) observes that past surveys of homes, offices, corporate organizations, ministries, institutions, organizations, leadership positions, including commercial and banking sectors (as revealed by the stock market crash and the ongoing bank investigations) show that corruption has become a cancerous social ill which has unfortunately come to be justified by the average Nigerian as ‘the need to survive’. At the corridors of power, corruption manifests in the form of over-inflated contracts with selfish motives and countless times execution and re-execution of same contracts. Others are diversion of monies given to public officers for their respective populace, organizations and sectors to personal accounts and most times, laundered to foreign accounts (Waziri, 2010). Corruption permeates every sector of the Nigerian society from millions of scam e-mails messages sent each year by people claiming to be Nigerian officials seeking help with transferring large sums of money out of the country, to the police officers who routinely set up roadblocks, to extract bribes of 20 naira from drivers (Polgreen, 2005). However, the most disturbing and damaging form of corruption is made manifest in the succession of kleptocratic governments, which has produced extremely wealthy generals and political leaders. Similarly, electoral corruption is prevalent. This is a situation that includes the purchase of votes with money, promises of office or special favors, coercion, intimidation, and interference with freedom of election, sale of votes, killing and maiming of people in the name of election, and a situation where losers end up as the winners (Adedaymi, 2012) Sadly, Nigeria ranked 130th position out of the 180 countries surveyed by Transparency International (2009). The effects of corruption in Nigeria have not been insignificant. From multi-internal effects such as under-development, lack of basic infrastructure like good road networks, misuse of natural resources, inadequate power and water supply, mediocrity in professional and leadership positions, defective leadership outputs, fuel scarcity in an oil producing nation, falling standards of education and work output, high unemployment rates, the ever-widening gap between the rich and poor to mention just a few. There are also international effects such as the tarnished image of Nigeria in international circles and the caution exercised by foreign nationals in entering business transactions with Nigerians thereby weakening the economic sector. The multiplier effect has been the mass spread of poverty and

our unenviable position in the list of poor and under-developed countries amidst rich natural resources.

b. Ethnicity
According to Osaghae (1992), ethnicity refers to a social formation resting upon culturally specific practices and a unique set of symbols and cosmology. Ethnicity denotes a group of individuals who consider themselves, or are considered by others, to share common characteristics which differentiate them from other collectivities within a society. Distinct cultural behaviors are developed, and ethnic groups can be identifiable in terms of religion, politics, occupation, or language. Nnoli (1980) posits that ethnicity has had a more devastating effect on Nigeria politics than religion. Some of the ethnic conflicts witnessed in Nigeria over the years include the Maitatsine sectarian crisis in 1981, the Kaduna and Bulunkutu (Maiduguri) in 1982, Kano civil disturbance of December 1991 and Jos crisis of April 1994 amid several others (see Adesoji 2010; Yusuf Bagaji, 2012). But the most worrisome account so far is the incessant bomb attacks by the Boko Haram Islamic Sect which is escalating every day. Despite the bill passed on anti-terrorism by the Nigerian National Assembly on February 17th, 2011 and the effort of President Goodluck Jonathan to negotiate with the Islamic sect, the anticipated seize fire has remained elusive. Consequently, not only is the prospects of good governance undermined and worsened by the Boko Haram insurgency, the problem constitutes a major threat to national unity and Nigeria’s status of a nation state. In the words of Onimisi (2012),

...this country exists only in name and as a geographical expression. The quest for relevance by many ethnic groups has given rise to mutual distrust and disharmony….Nigeria is a nation only to foreigners or while one is abroad; but inside the country, everyone knows to which ethnic nationality he belongs…When you hear people fighting for the North or the South, it is a push of their ethnic agenda and an evidence of ethno-centrism and a vote of no hope in Nigerian ‘nationhood’…Because no one owns Nigeria, no one is loyal to her. Everyone looks for what he/she can take out of her, take it to his/her family and ethnic nation for enjoyment. In such political clime, patriotism is meaningful only when it leads to your stomach –which is that each person is patriotic to his/her interest only, not to an entity called Nigeria… No one is obliged to maintain or secure public infrastructure, for they belong to no one in particular. No one keeps faith with another, except when they are of the same ethnic nationality. This is why public officials breach public trust and official oath at will… A nationless state lacks the patriotism to sustain common values, create and maintain commonwealth and so, adopts ad hoc method or solution to lingering problems. In a nation less country, citizenship is meaningless, for you don’t even know the nation ‘Nigeria’, not to talk of being one of her citizens…
It is, therefore, pertinent to note that ethnicity poses a serious challenge for good governance in contemporary Nigerian society.

Prospects of Good Governance in Nigeria

The negative factors affecting Nigeria’s potential for good governance have been x-rayed and discussed as above. However, there are immense prospects for the nation to witness good governance, security and stability. The following points are to be noted and worked for.

a. There is urgent need for Nigerians irrespective of status, to reflect on the visions, values and aspirations of founding fathers of their nation, particularly in the areas of good governance, formulation and implementation of people-oriented policies and programmes through good leadership.

b. The determination of governments and other stakeholders to partner in rapid development of the country must be complemented by effectiveness, accountability and transparency at all levels. There is urgent need to rebuild largely eroded faith in the integrity, intents and capability of governments among the populace and global community.

c. The need for a well mobilized and enlightened citizenry capable of rising against miseule by the powers that be.

d. Multi-sectoral action is urgently required to alleviate widespread poverty, achieve sustainable Development Goals (MDGs), and fulfill her goal of becoming Africa’s strongest economy.

e. Constitutional provision as it affects the immunity clause should be revisited. There should be no sacred cows in government. Nigerian voters should vote only people who have sparkling record of integrity, good principle and proven character.

f. Nigerian judiciary can still be the last hope of Nigeria by discharging justice in a free and fair manner, and by awarding punishment when due. Hence, the national Judicial Council should as a matter of urgency investigate and discipline all members of the bench that allegedly compromised in the discharge of their duties.

Conclusion

This paper examined the concept of good governance as a critical factor for sustainable development of nation states. The work also traced bad governance as a bane of underdevelopment and poverty in Nigeria. We argued that non adherence to core democratic values; corruption and ethnicity constitute operational bottlenecks to good governance in Nigeria. These factors also threaten the unity and corporate existence of Nigeria as a sovereign state. Nonetheless, prospects of entrenching adherence to good governance in public and private life in Nigeria are high. This paper called on Nigerians to rise up against ugly behaviours and corrupt practices of their leaders which jeopardize developmental efforts. They should speak out and stand firm to ask non performing leaders to resign their appointments. Strengthening of civil society groups, labour, the bar and agencies of political education and socialization was also canvassed.

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Author Profile

Nwankwo, Ignatius Uche (PhD) received the Bachelor of Science (B.Sc) degree in Sociology and Anthropology from University of Nigeria, Nsukka in 1992. He later obtained M.Sc. and PhD degrees, majoring in Medical Sociology from Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Nigeria. He is currently an Associate Professor of Medical Sociology in the Department of Sociology/Anthropology, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Nigeria. His research interest cut across various subjects in the area of Health and Environmental Sociology, especially socio-cultural determinants of access to healthcare among social groups.