

The Recession Blues and Matters Arising: The Imperative of Repositioning Governance in Nigeria

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Abstract: *There are several incidents that can be used to validate any claim about the existence of governance deficit in Nigeria. Aside the glaring signs of leadership failure, one can equally see that the generality of citizens lack the capacity to engender and sustain a culture of accountability. In spite of the fact that the government had at different periods issued rhetorical promissory notes toward redirecting the trajectory of governance in the right direction, things appear to remain unchanged and even tend to assume a worsening dimension with the passage of time. Challenged by the recent recession in the country, this study reviewed the pattern of governance in Nigeria, identified the existing governance deficits, and concludes that the major contributory factor leading to the recession is poor governance. Being a qualitative research, this paper relies heavily on documentary evidence and observation instruments for data generation and these were analysed by adopting content analysis and interpretative skills. The basic recommendation is that there is every need for both the leaders and the followers in Nigeria to take up their roles in governance responsibly and inject a high sense of accountability into the system in order to promote responsive governance and better management of available resources.*

Keywords: Recession, governance, accountability, corruption, mismanagement.

1. INTRODUCTION

Nigeria has gone through different kinds of socio-political and economic problems all through the stages of her political history. Colonial rule was characterized by suppression, intimidation, and complete emasculation of the indigenous people in the process of governance. As captured by Ki-Zerbo (2000, p. 3, 4), ‘colonization is analyzed as a break in governing, in the endogenous development, as a political hold up, if not a “de-responsibilisation” and this is true in view of the fact that it introduced the modernized form of governance that replaced the ‘African patrimony of governance’. The trajectory of colonial governance was guided from outside and was not meant to favor the indigenous people and the local environment. Tandon (2000, p. 3) agrees to this by positing that ‘colonial governance was for the benefit of the rulers, not for the benefit of the ruled’. As such, one can submit that the people never had a good taste of ‘governing’ under colonialism. Having been suppressed, overpowered and rendered weak by the invading colonialists, the peasants who dominated the early struggles had no other choice than to live with what they could not change. It was at this point that ‘the petty bourgeois assumed dominance and leadership of the struggle’ and unfortunately, ‘changed the goal of the struggle’ from ‘the elimination of the colonial order’ to ‘the takeover and control of the undemocratic colonial state’ (Nnoli, 2011, p. 92).

Hopes for the emergence of a better and people-oriented form of governance were dashed after independence had been granted. The ruling class that took over the mantle of leadership from the colonialists soon proved that they were not different from the colonial masters in terms of governance style. The welfare of the masses and issues relating to national development continued to be relegated

to the background. Internal wrangling that took the form of ethno-religious and political crises as well as economic and political problems continued to multiply as the country advanced in age.

It is a fact that the Nigerian masses have been yearning unsuccessfully for good governance at every stage of the country’s political development. Each change of government ushered in moments of hope, which soon gave way to moments of despondency. This cycle of hopes and despondency has dogged every regime and it appears that what the people keep experiencing under each new government is an old wine repackaged in a new wineskin. Apart from the faces of those occupying leadership positions at different periods or the nature of clothes they wear (whether military uniform or civilian attire), the style of governance has never witnessed any dramatic change in the positive direction. Things rather tend to get worse as the country advanced in age. Corruption, wastages, mismanagement, and plundering have appeared in different shades and intensity under every regime. From every indication, the only operational aspect of governance to which the Nigerian masses have so far been exposed is what Ezekwesili (2011) refers to as the supply-side of governance. The situation is worsened by the fact that the masses appear incapable of interrogating the type of governance in place, with a view to demanding for something more favourable.

The recent recession being experienced in the country, which has direct linkage to poor governance, has once again generated another round of wailings and lamentations from the people. On a closer analysis, it appears that the masses are yet to understand the dynamics of the challenges facing the country and are still looking at it from the perspective of ethnicity or the political party in power. Challenged by the echoes of the recession, therefore,

this study is set to review the prevailing style of governance, highlight its connection to the numerous challenges facing the country, and propose the necessity for repositioning governance.

2. CONCEPTUAL ISSUES

Governance: Some definitions capture governance from the general perspective while some others capture it from a narrower point of view. In a very simplistic sense, one can see governance as the things being done by those that govern, that is, those actions undertaken by the people that govern in the discharge of their duties. It can be explained to mean the manner in which officials of organized institutions exercise authority in the process of managing resources and individuals within the institution. Bevir (2013) sees it as all of the processes of governing, whether undertaken by a government, market or network, whether over a family, tribe, formal or informal organization or territory and whether through the laws, norms, power or language of an organized society. According to UNESCO (2017), it refers to structures and processes that are designed to ensure accountability, transparency, responsiveness, rule of law, stability, equity and inclusiveness, empowerment, and broad-based participation. It can be seen as the way rules, norms and actions are structured, sustained, regulated, and held accountable (<https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/governance>). Adopting a working definition, the Institute On Governance (2017) resolves to see the term as one that reflects the idea of who has power, who makes decisions, how other players make their voice heard and how account is rendered.

Some other definitions appear quite restrictive, as they tend to create the impression that governance is something that takes place only at the public realms. For instance, the definition that was developed as an outcome of a World Bank study (cited in Ezekwesili, 2011, p. 171), posits that ‘governance is the manner in which public officials and public institutions acquire and exercise the authority to provide public goods and services, including the delivery of basic services, infrastructure, and a sound investment climate’. Nnoli (2003) sees it as the manner in which a government carries out its functions. For Haslam, Schafer, and Beaudet (2009), governance is a term that denotes a particular set of interactions between civil society and governments.

From the above, one can see that the meaning of the term goes beyond the activities undertaken by those that govern. Governance is a relational concept, which presupposes that there are two sets of people – those that govern and those being governed. The latter must be in place in order to justify the existence of the former. As a matter of fact, the concept evokes the idea of people-centeredness. Since government exists because of the people, they remain an indispensable component of governance. Ki-Zerbo (2000, p. 6) aligns with this viewpoint by asserting that ‘it is in the name of the people and to the advantage of the people that

governments pretend to govern’. This idea is equally evident in Nnoli’s (2003, p. 199) opinion, as he states that governance is ‘determined by the relationship between the rulers and the ruled’. The questions he raised, which are associated with this relationship, further confirm this line of thought and they, inter alia, include: Who are the rulers? How much power do they have at their disposal and how willing are they to use this power for or against the people? Do they trust the people? How do the people perceive their rulers: good, credible or bankrupt? Do they trust the leaders such that they are willing to work with them? What mechanism do the rulers have for relating with the people, and vice-versa, and how much of it is persuasion and how much of it is confrontation?

At this juncture, it is quite decipherable that the issue of interaction, accountability, and participation in decision making are among the key elements that define governance. As such, governance can take different shades or forms depending on the extent to which these elements feature in the process. It is in this sense that the concept is attached with such qualifier as ‘good’, hence, good governance. If governance can take a good turn, it means that it can equally take a bad turn. According to Tandon (2000, p. 2), the concept of good governance became prominent ‘when donors decided that it was not enough to institute economic reforms in Africa, but that it was necessary, in addition, to reform the manner in which African governments were carrying out the business of governance’. The implication of this statement is that the African leaders in question were taking the wrong approach to governance. In a way, one can say that good governance is the type that conforms to the ideals of governance whereas bad governance is the type that deviates from it.

Haslam, Schafer, and Beaudet (2009, p. 228) portray the concept of good governance as an array of practices that maximize the common/public good and, in more specific terms, ‘a relation between social organizations and government that conforms to the following “democratic” principles: transparency, effectiveness, openness, responsiveness and accountability; the rule of law, acceptance of diversity and pluralism, and social inclusiveness’. Ezekwesili (2011, p. 175) believes that development is at the centre of the concept and its basic goal, as according to her, ‘it is imperative to understand good governance not only as a means to enhance existing approaches to development and poverty reduction...but also as a vision of development itself’.

In view of the fact that there are those who share the opinion that governance takes place in both public and private institutions, it is worth specifying that this study is concerned with the governance that takes place within the public sphere. That is, the type relating to state power or making of binding laws and delivery of public services in Nigeria. Governance takes place in so far as government exists, although, it can take the direction of being either good or bad. This study is looking at good governance – the type

that promotes accountability, responsiveness, rule of law, inclusive participation, as well as other principles that empower the people to determine the direction of government. Above all, the focus is on the type of governance that can engender development. When we talk of repositioning governance, therefore, it means taking steps to correct the existing governance deficits and enthrone better style of governance.

Recession: From a lay man's point of view, recession can be seen as one of those economic conditions which indicate that the economy is going through difficult moments and which usually cause increased sufferings for the masses. The definition offered by Wikipedia (2014) captures recession as a business cycle contraction which results in a general slowdown in economic activity. Same source equally indicated that, in the United Kingdom, it is defined as a negative economic growth for two consecutive quarters. However, the statement from the Public Information Office of the National Bureau of Economic Research, Inc (NBER, n.d.) states that NBER does not define a recession in terms of two consecutive quarters of decline but rather sees it as a significant decline in economic activity spread across the economy, lasting more than a few months, normally visible in real GDP, real income, employment, industrial production, and wholesale-retail sales.

3. THE RECESSION IN NIGERIA:

Recession has not always been part of Nigeria's economic lexicon. There are other economic concepts that had been pushed to the consciousness of the Nigerian masses due to the hardship they were believed to have created. These include Austerity Measures introduced by the government in the eighties and the Structural Adjustment Programmes introduced in the nineties. The term, recession, came into the national limelight some months after the country went through an election that saw the ousting of an incumbent President (Jonathan) and the emergence of the presidential candidate of the then major opposition party (Buhari) as the new President. From the account given by Olawoyin and Agency Report (2017), the Nigerian Bureau of Statistics (NBS) officially declared the economic recession after negative growth in the first two quarters of 2016. While the economists and the government are explaining the recession in terms of GDP and associated technical terms, the masses believe that its visible aspects include, inter alia, increasing cost of foodstuffs and other commodities, reduction in the circulation of money within the economy, depreciation of naira and high exchange rates, harsh business environment for industries, increase in unemployment, and general economic hardship across the country.

It was the belief of some people that the country was already in serious economic trouble and that the recession came as a mere coincidence under Buhari's incumbency. The government of the day was in the lead of those who believe that the country was bound to witness

serious economic downturn owing to the activities of the government under the incumbency of the immediate past president. Explanations of shortage of funds occasioned by the drop in crude oil price were equally tendered as being part of the reason behind the problem.

To some others, however, the recession was triggered off by certain actions and inactions of the new President and, as such, should be blamed squarely for it. The argument raised by those in this group include that the former President Obasanjo assumed power at a period the price of oil was comparatively lower and equally witnessed shortage of funds, yet, the country did not sink into recession. Considering equally that the country had witnessed, and somehow managed to sail through periods of oil glut and global economic meltdown without necessarily going through recession, the claims about paucity of funds occasioned by drop in oil price were waved off and the recession blamed on poor governance.

It is on record that President Buhari, upon assumption of office, made certain rhetorical statements and exhibited body languages symptomatic of a ruler with poor governance skills. One of the statements made by the president, which created ethnic tension, was that he would not treat those constituencies that gave him few votes as fairly as those that gave him huge votes. He sounded wounded and appeared as if he was on a mission of vengeance against those that did not vote for him; against those belonging to the former ruling party that had denied him the opportunity of winning the election during his previous attempts; and against those outside his ethnic region. This posture made people stand on their guard.

The President had ruled the country before as a military Head of State and in view of the fact that he had been in the presidential race on four different occasions (2003, 2007, 2011, and 2015), many people believed that he was coming with a wealth of experience and would take instant positive groundbreaking actions as soon as he took over power. Unfortunately, this didn't happen. For nearly six months, the President was unable to form a Cabinet and an economic team to steer the affairs of the country, which he had already identified as being in economic crisis. Within the period, it was impossible to predict the economic direction of the new government. This created the impression that he was not fully prepared to face the task of governance and generated the fear of unknown within the economy.

The scary business environment orchestrated by the uncertainty hanging in the air forced foreign businessmen into liquidating their investments and converting their money into dollars. In fact, all those that had the opportunity converted their money into the dollar denomination so as to avoid the impending devaluation. In the process, billions of dollars were taken out of the economy within a very brief period. Added to these, the government banned the depositing of foreign currency into domiciliary account. All these led to a high exchange rate of dollar. And to make matters worse, the new government decided to ration dollars

in a manner that gave preference to certain sectors while blocking others. In the exchange policy, people embarking on religious pilgrimage were given one of the fairest deals as against businesses. Indeed, the (in)actions of the government made way for the private sector to lose confidence in the economy.

While big businesses and industries that were import/export related were hit instantly by the dollar squeeze and high exchange rate, small businesses that operate within the domestic arena were equally affected adversely by the unexpected astronomical increase in the pump price of petroleum products initiated by the new government. In the typical Nigerian manner, the price of transportation and food items were hiked following this adjustment in the pump price of fuel. Given the numerous high-sounding campaign promises made by the APC led government and the tall expectations nursed by the masses, the economic hardship that attended the recession appeared like a bolt from the blue and generated high level of frustration among many people.

This study discusses recession in terms of the economic downturn that enveloped the country following the emergence of President Buhari as the President of the country and as declared by the National Bureau of Statistics. Corollary, recession blues are the outward manifestations of the inner feelings of the people or their general state of sadness and lamentations over the recession and economic problems they believe it caused.

4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The group theory is deeply rooted on the idea of pluralism. The driving force of the group theorists was their attempt to establish the group as the focal point in political analysis rather than the individual or the society as a whole. Early pluralists that provided the foundational arguments and viewpoints upon which the theory rests include F.W. Maitland, John Figgis, G.D.H. Cole, and Arthur Bentley, while others like Daniel Truman, Robert Dahl, Grant McConnel, Theodore J. Lewi, etc recreated and gave it prominence in the fifties and sixties (Varma, 2004). From the group theoretic point of view, the society is seen as comprising of dynamic processes, or actions, rather than specific institutions, or structures. Ogundiwin (2015) cites Olaniyi as reflecting the work of Truman to explain a group as a collection of individuals with shared attitudes and interests on the basis of which certain claims and demands are made upon government and other groups in the society for the establishment, maintenance or enhancement of preferred values. On the other hand, Bentley (cited in Varma, 2004) defined group as a certain portion of the men of a society, taken, however, not as a physical mass cut off from other masses of men, but as a mass (of) activity, which does not preclude the men who participate in it from participating likewise in many other group activities. As such, individuals can belong to as many groups as they desire based on the various interests they share and the availability of groups that represent each interest.

The salient issues about the theory that are of specific interest in our study include that: group emerges when the interactions among the individual members are sufficiently patterned to produce directional activity; same individual can belong to various groups at the same time; interest, which is explained by Bentley as a shared attitude concerning a claim or claims to be made by one group upon certain other groups in a social system, is what leads to the organisation of groups; interests remain unrepresented until they find expression in any group; there is a difference between a genuine group and co-incidental group. Thus, the social system is seen as an arena for interaction of groups. According to Truman (1964), the essence of government is to establish and maintain a measure of order in the relationships among these groups.

This theoretical perspective is indeed relevant to this study based on the fact that it can help in making a detailed analysis about the issues raised. It is believed that governance has not been beneficial to the Nigerian masses right from the days of colonialism. The petty bourgeoisie (ruling class) that took over the reigns of governance from the colonialists has continued to reproduce the same anti-people style of governance exhibited by the colonial masters, which they were meant to correct. One can argue along the line that governance in Nigeria has benefitted only the ruling class to the detriment of the masses. Taken in this light, it can be agreed that the ruling class (petty bourgeoisie) and the masses share different (or even opposing) interests when it comes to governance. While the former seems to be interested in maintaining the status quo so as to continue benefitting inordinately from the system, the latter appear to be interested in seeing the style of governance reorganised and refocused in order to serve their preferred values. But the question remains whether they (masses) have sufficiently patterned their interests and interactions in such a manner as to produce directional activity represented in a group.

On a close analysis, it can be seen that some of the gimmicks adopted by the petty bourgeoisie (ruling class) in acquiring or retaining power include harping on the strings of ethnicity, religion, party affiliation, or any other grouping that the masses can freely belong. For instance, the members of the petty bourgeoisie (ruling class) from a particular ethnic group can draw the masses from same area into that group by creating the impression that both of them (petty bourgeoisie and masses) share same (ethnic) interest. When it appears that religion can serve the purpose, they (petty bourgeoisie) coat their selfish political interest with the icing of religious interest and draw support with it. Same goes with situations when projecting party affiliation appears impressive in winning support.

As highlighted earlier, this theoretical perspective recognises that interest is what leads to the organisation of groups and that interests remain unrepresented until they find expression in a group. That is to say, it is possible for individuals to share certain interest, which would remain unrepresented because they could not form a group. In order

to form a group, the interactions among the individual members must be sufficiently patterned to produce directional activity. And this cannot happen when they allow themselves to be distracted. Against this backdrop, we can say that by playing on the sentiments of the masses based on issues relating to ethnicity, religion, or party affiliation, the ruling class will keep them disorganised and prevent their interactions from being sufficiently patterned to produce directional activity. As such, they cannot form a group. Hence, their interest will remain unrepresented. That is to say, they will be incapable of questioning the status quo and mounting pressure for the enthronement of a favourable pattern of governance.

With this analytical tool, we can survey the Nigeria's political terrain to see whether there is a genuine group seeking to reposition governance in the country or whether what has been in existence are co-incidental groups that appear like flash-affair. It is quite agreeable that a group (ruling class) benefitting from the status quo cannot be the driving force for initiating change. Any change in the style of governance must come from a group (the masses) that feel the need for a change and for this to happen, individuals within this group must ensure that their interactions are sufficiently patterned to produce directional activity that would culminate in the formation of a group with the basic interest of advancing change in the pattern of governance.

5. THE NATURE OF GOVERNANCE IN NIGERIA

Colonial Era: Colonialism, as we know, took off after the invading imperialists conquered the local inhabitants and established direct control and domination over them. Chinweizu (1978) gave lucid accounts of how the Europeans set out to seize the mineral and agricultural resources as well as African labour in order to advance their (European) interests. Citing the example of Nigeria, Nwankwo (1998) specifically points at political domination and exploitation of the country as the primary objectives of colonialism. This is in alignment with Rodney's (1972, p. 162) position, as he asserts that 'colonialism was not merely a system of exploitation, but one whose essential purpose was to repatriate the profits to the so-called "mother country"'. In the words of Nnoli (2011, p. 30), colonialism 'brought domination, oppression, exploitation, injustice and illegitimacy to a head and at the same time in the country'. According to him, the colonial state was coercive, authoritarian, domineering and characterized by reckless abuse and projection of state power. It was bereft of non-coercive elements such as morality, norms, values, customs and traditions, contractual obligations and other historical checks-and-balances that diluted power. In the light of all these, one cannot be in doubt that the main objective of colonialism was not to serve the interest of the local people.

Apparently, the colonial system served foreign needs rather than the interests of the local population and going by the terms employed above in characterizing the colonial administration, it stands to reason that the people

who ought to be at the centre of governance were completely sidetracked in the entire process. This, perhaps, is the basis upon which Rodney (1972, p. 287) asserted that 'the only positive development in colonialism was when it ended'. The pattern of relations between the British colonialists and the indigenous people vis-a-vis the style of governance generally must have been the reason the colonial administration 'gradually generated a critical mass of desperate enemies' (Nnoli, 2011, p. 31).

Obviously, the indigenous people felt the pang of colonialism. Going by the system of production and economic practice that prevailed in the pre-colonial era, which the colonialists dislocated, the first set of people that were visibly hit and agitated by the intrusion of the colonialists were the peasant. Rodney (1972, p. 288) captured this when he asserted that the 'African cash-crop farmers had profound grievances against the colonialists'. They were those displaced in the production process. Since the people never accepted colonial rule, the imperialists relied on force in order to maintain control over them. Hence, colonial governance took special interest in maintenance of law and order whereupon security agents of the state saw subjugation and intimidation of the people as their primary assignment. In sum, the pattern of governance during the colonial period was skewed against the masses.

Independence Era: Signs that the colonial pattern of governance might outlive the colonial period began to manifest prior to independence. It has been noted already that the colonial rule generated a critical mass of desperate enemies. However, it appears that the petty bourgeois class was not among this "critical mass" that decided to draw a line of enmity against the colonial masters. In fact, while accusing them of being collaborators with colonialism and partakers of British economic, social and political notions, Nnoli (2011, p. 86) captured them in the following words:

Economically, they wanted cash crops cultivated in exchange for European manufactured goods. They desired motorable roads to integrate Nigeria into the world economy. Unlike the masses who were ashamed of Britain being in this country, they looked upon themselves, socially, as being close to, if not the equals of, the British... Increasingly, the distinction was no longer between Nigerians and the British but between the petty bourgeois and the masses.

It became clear that whereas the masses were opposed to colonial rule on the grounds of its oppressive and anti-people tendencies, the petty bourgeois mounted their own attack against the colonialists on the grounds that they were being excluded from enjoying the benefits of the oppressive government. Thus, while the masses were interested in, and hoping for, the enthronement of responsive and responsible governance, the petty bourgeois appeared to be primarily interested in being accommodated as major

partners in whatever governance style that was going on, and ultimately, as the inheritors of the reigns of power whenever the colonialists departed. Guided by this thinking process, they assumed a behavioural order that aligned with the anti-people colonial standards. As observed by Okoye (1979), they took to the commercialisation of politics and embraced tribalism, parochialism, corruption, arrogance, authoritarianism, and developed the sense of intolerance against dissent, which denied them the capacity to offer people-oriented governance.

Indeed, the ruling class that took over the reigns of governance upon the departure of the colonialists continued to exhibit those tendencies, which the masses experienced and despised under the colonial period. Ki-Zerbo (2000) captured the frustration that struck the African peasants when the pattern of governance failed to change even after independence had been won, which forced them to start asking: “When is the end of this independence going to come?” The Nigerian masses equally found themselves in the same situation, as there was no structural and qualitative change in the pattern of governance. Events that took place made it appear as if the gaining of independence was simply a change that translated into the indigenisation of colonial pattern of governance. Governance did not change in favour of the masses. Among others, they continued to suffer abuse in the hands of security agents that refused to change its perception of being mere tools for suppression and intimidation of the defenceless citizens.

The ruling class, at independence, demonstrated that they were primarily interested in controlling state power for parochial reasons rather than on nationalistic grounds. They failed to undertake actions and policies that would bind the different peoples within the country and create a common desire among them to live together peacefully as Nigerians. In their quest for power, they continued to build the Nigerian structure upon the divisive foundation laid by the colonial masters (Nnoli, 2008); prevailed against the development of the spirit of nationalism; instigated ethnic-based politics; and promoted mutual suspicion, hatred, destructive competition, and violence within the polity.

When the military intervened in politics, they hinged their reason on the grounds of saving the country from the hands of the “irresponsible” civilians. With time, however, it became apparent that the country was going through a circle of bad governance in the hands of both the “civilian dictators” and “politicised junta”. While the military continued to demonstrate their penchant for distorting the democratic process and capturing power through coup d’état, their civilian counterparts continued to demonstrate their penchant for organising elections that appear more like selections whereupon the final results usually deviate from the actual decision of the electorate. In all situations, the masses were always denied the opportunity of demanding the accountability of their rulers or determining the nature and direction of governance.

Right from the onset, Nigeria has been operating with Constitutions (and Military Decrees) handed down from “above”. Although the opening passage of the Nigerian Constitution began with the clause: ‘We the people of the Federal Republic of Nigeria’ (FRN, 1999, p. 1), the fact remains that the 1999 constitution, and indeed all others that existed before it, did not originate from the people. The different constitutions that had been guiding the country were either handed down by the colonial masters or the military government without the people making any meaningful input into it. The Independence Constitution was drafted under the tutelage of the colonialists. Though drafted within the independence era and under a civilian government, the 1963 constitution appeared simply as a domestication of the Independence constitution in order to suit the country’s republican status. The 1979 and 1999 Constitutions were delivered by the respective military regimes that handed over power to the succeeding civilian administrations. The several constitutional or political reform conferences were guided and regulated by the government in terms of what to discuss and things to avoid being discussed. Just as the British colonialists created the country unilaterally, the Nigerian government, at various times, had decreed the unity and structure of the country as being sacrosanct and non-negotiable.

The pattern of governance in Nigeria has failed to address the developmental challenges facing the country. Economic mismanagement, profligacy, and ineptitude have continued to be associated with the Nigerian brand. Despite the immense resources at the disposal of the government and the amount of money that had passed through the public coffers, social infrastructure still remains in a pitiable state and has maintained a continuing trend of deterioration. Unemployment, poverty, life expectancy, and other indices for measuring development have remained at an abysmal level and kept assuming a worsening dimension with the passage of time.

Successive Nigerian leaders have continued to demonstrate signs of poor governance through their inability to direct the country’s national energy towards the productive arena. It was this aspect of failure that launched the Nigerian state into assuming a distributive character. Rather than think of how to encourage or increase the productive capacity of the federation, the constituent units and respective individuals got more interested in sharing the national cake, promoting indolence in the process.

There is no better way of assessing the direction of governance than establishing its beneficiaries. In Nigeria, the ruling class remains the primary beneficiary of governance while the masses remain completely sidetracked. The British imperialists were the primary beneficiaries of colonial governance. At independence, the local elite/ruling class became the most visible beneficiaries of governance and equally accommodated the interests of the former colonialists through the neo-colonial structure of the state. It is only the lifestyle of the ruling class that reflects the

country's wealth. There is no relationship whatsoever between the living standards of the masses and the available resources in the country.

From every indication, the sole reason majority of the politicians in the country seek a place in governance is to service their selfish interests. This is in the light of the fact that they see the acquisition of state power as the most lucrative business. This thinking has equally permeated the minds of many a great number of Nigerian masses and it is based on this that those who win elections or offered political appointments are celebrated, conferred with chieftaincy titles and given "meritorious" awards even when they have not shown any sign of good leadership. Apart from the ill-gotten wealth people make from public offices, official salaries/allowances and perks of office attached to political positions within the country appear more attractive than what is obtainable in some of the developed countries. In sum, the pattern of governance in Nigeria is such that benefits the ruling class to the detriment of the masses.

6. DEMAND-SIDE OF GOVERNANCE IN NIGERIA

As already noted, governance has two sides: the supply side and the demand side. It is the demand side that gives the "suppliers" (leaders) the direction to the people's choices and preferences. It is equally the demand-side that puts those that govern in check by insisting on accountability. Given an environment of governance that favours the ruling class to the detriment of the masses, it behoves the latter to demand for a favourable. This is because good governance may never be voluntarily and freely offered by those that govern under the circumstance. How has the demand side of governance fared in Nigeria?

There are accounts of struggles aimed at incorporating the demand-side of governance into Nigeria's political process. Nnoli (2011) categorised the struggles that took place during the colonial era into two periods – 1900-1940 and 1941-1960. The first set of struggles mounted against the oppressive colonial rule lasted from 1900-1940 and this struggle was dominated by the peasants. However, the patches of struggles were mostly uncoordinated and came like flash affairs, which led to their defeat. They resigned themselves to their defeat and this adversely affected the demand-side of governance both in terms of intensity and the chances of establishing a culture of accountability.

The second set of the struggles that took place under the colonial period lasted from 1941 – 1960 and it was the petty bourgeois that assumed dominance and leadership of the struggle. As it appeared, the agenda of their struggle was quite different from the agenda that guided the earlier struggles championed by the peasants. The demand they were making did not border on changing the pattern of governance but on expanding the space to accommodate them in the existing arrangement, with a view to inheriting the structure upon the departure of the colonial masters.

Hence, that governance style continued even after they had taken over the reigns of power.

Following the defeat suffered by the peasants in the early struggles, as well as the petty bourgeois' subsequent distortion of the main object of the anti-colonial struggle, one can rightly say that the masses stepped into the era of independence as a weakened lot. The ruling class that took over power at independence launched further assault that sapped any remaining energy needed to sustain the demand-side of governance. Aside the intimidation and high level of intolerance against dissent, the politicisation of ethnicity served as a distraction and prevented the masses across the country from forming a united and formidable force to demand for good governance. Veiled with ethnic sentiments, the masses began to judge issues relating to governance and accountability from sectional perspective. In the circumstance, it became impressive for one to support a politician from his/her side without minding whether or not such a person possesses good leadership qualities. In the process, ills such as corruption, embezzlement, mismanagement of public funds, and other negative acts became tolerable depending on which section of the country the perpetrator comes from.

Looking at the country's political history, there seems to be paucity of struggles targeted at enthroning good governance. The struggles that have taken place appear to be those aimed at requesting for a change in baton from colonial rule to home-rule (during the independence era) or from military regime to a civilian regime (during the independence era). The struggles were usually relaxed after the change in government had occurred. This is notwithstanding the fact that home-rule/civilian rule had failed to show a remarkable change in terms of governance style. As such, groups that played serious role in fighting for the return to democratic (civilian) rule usually go under once the military had handed over power. The forms of struggle that usually occur under civilian rule include the sporadic protests mounted against hike in fuel price and related uncoordinated protests that last for brief moments.

Perhaps, one of the greatest protests that took place under democratic rule was the 2012 oil-subsidy protest tagged Occupy-Nigeria. But as it appeared, it was a campaign mounted against the government by the main opposition political party. Otherwise, the conditions that generated the protest have persisted and even worsened under a different administration without a similar protest being organised. The implication of this is that the protest was aimed specifically at changing the party in power and not to change the 'undesirable' conditions and the pattern of governance.

Indeed, the demand-side of governance is very weak and this explains why the supply-side appears unchecked and unguided, resulting in the high level of irresponsiveness on the part of those that govern. The country is confronted with a situation where the masses seem to have generally accepted poor leadership and bad

governance as a norm. It has become the norm for individuals known to have been living from hand to mouth and with no identifiable means of livelihood to suddenly become wealthy and begin to acquire flashy cars and huge mansions within just few months of getting into political positions. Despite knowing that such wealth has no justifiable source and must have been acquired through the looting of public treasury, the relatives, friends, and well wishers of such individuals still find the heart to rejoice and celebrate with them during Thanksgiving, House-warming, Child-naming, or birthday ceremonies characterized by ostentatious display of wealth. The society appears to even show serious loathing for those that fail to loot public funds or convert public offices for personal gains. There is no culture of sustained opposition and criticism or demand for accountability on the part of the masses. When the corrupt politicians defect from one party to the other, they still find large numbers of the masses defecting along with them. The general catchword in the country has been: If you cannot beat them, you join them. With this defeatist orientation, people try to justify why they would rather be part of the process of bad governance than demand for good governance. The current trend is such that the masses appear satisfied with whatever crumbs that fall off the table of corrupt politicians and are lethargic towards demanding for accountability.

7. CONCLUDING REMARKS: ARGUMENT FOR REPOSITIONING GOVERNANCE

Nigeria is blessed with enormous resources and has experienced periods of economic boom but has been battling with challenges of poverty, illiteracy, low life expectancy, poor state of physical infrastructure, as well as general problem of development. When one places Nigeria side by side Dubai, Singapore, and similar countries that have attained high economic exploits, it becomes striking that the former had actually generated and spent enough money that ought to have pushed her up the developmental ladder. Judging from the abysmal level of development in Nigeria vis-a-vis the stupendous wealth that had passed through her coffers, one cannot help but conclude that the country must have been going through crisis of governance.

The country's scorecard remains pathetic when assessed on the basis of certain indicators of good governance such as accountability, inclusive participation, transparency, economic performance, responsiveness, freedom, and development. Right from the colonial era to the present moment, the people have not featured significantly within the country's equation of governance. The governance being witnessed has never been driven by, or in the direction of the people. There is no other way of demonstrating poor governance than the fact that the issues that had agitated the minds of the people within the colonial were never addressed while colonialism lasted and succeeded in finding their way into the era of independence. The same issues that caused problems during the early days

of independence are still causing problems and even assuming a more dangerous dimension almost sixty years after the country gained her independence. Nigeria went through a civil war to remain as one country. Fifty years down the line, echoes of discontentment and demands for the breakup of the country are still resonating from all sides.

Nigerian state assumed a distributive character based on her political economy and fiscal federalism. The system encourages consumption and discourages the spirit of enterprise. The federating units and political elite are more interested in sharing and consuming the national cake that has already been baked without planning for how to bake another subsequently. The country has witnessed days of economic buoyancy as reflected in certain terms that had formed part of her dominant national lexicon at one point or the other, which include oil boom, Gulf oil windfall, Excess Crude Account, etc. Yet, the country cannot boast of any meaningful and sustainable projects delivered under those periods of buoyancy. Neither could she point at the account where the monies are still being lodged preparatory to the ripe moment it would be spent. What keeps appearing in the news include issues like how the state governors, under the aegis of the Nigerian Governors Forum (NGF), were at loggerheads with the federal government concerning the sharing of Excess Crude Account or the Ecological Funds; how they challenged the establishment of Sovereign Wealth Fund at the Court; how they received huge sums in form of bail-out-funds or through the Paris-London club refunds to states; and how public funds were mismanaged and squandered by the different levels of government. In all these, the country usually leaves no economic space for manoeuvring through economically challenging moments. Perhaps, the most impressive fall-back plan of an average Nigerian leader in the event of an economic downturn and shortage of fund is to take (foreign) loan – without having a clear picture of how it would be repaid. There is a seeming inability, on the part of Nigerian leaders, to work out productive plans on how to generate funds internally through the available resources. For instance, the country has remained on its mono-cultural status for many years despite repeated warnings that crude oil may likely lose its relevance in the nearest future. Promises by successive governments to diversify the economy have always ended as political statements. In a nutshell, governance in Nigeria has always been in favour of the ruling class and to the detriment of the masses. Past regimes have failed to plan and save for the rainy day; failed to utilize the abundant resources in the country to engender sustainable development. The present one is yet to demonstrate that the trajectory of governance has been redirected to its right course. The country may continue in the cycle of doom if her leadership remains unchecked.

Given the prevalent style of governance in Nigeria, there is every need for the masses to wake up from their slumber and challenge the conspiracy of the political elite against the rest of the citizens. The lessons or suffering,

which they feel was occasioned by the recession, should serve as a lesson. More importantly, there is the need for the masses to understand that, inasmuch as the Buhari-led government took certain wrong steps, the recession came equally as a culmination of series of events that predated the current administration. While belonging to different religions, ethnic groups, or political parties, they should understand that poverty or economic hardship induced by poor governance does not know ethnic, religious, or party boundaries but affects all. It may prove difficult for governance to respond to the need of the masses in an environment where the demand-side is weak and for this, the masses across the ethnic, religious, or political divide should focus on electing credible individuals into power and more importantly, hold the elected individuals accountable to their actions.

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