

Nigeria and the Question of Good Governance, Corruption and Failed State

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Abstract

Governance is a recurring word in the discussion of public policy because it describes the relationship between governors and governed, an inevitable feature of every political system. The quality of governance varies greatly between political systems, but the attention given to good and bad governance is unbalanced. The paper explores the experience of ordinary Nigerians with governance when they come into contact with officials delivering public policies in their society and also focuses on the bad and problematic manifestations of leadership and governance in the performance of our leaders and the consequences of corruption. The paper also examines how the Nigerian state fails because it is convulsed by internal violence and can no longer deliver positive political goods to its inhabitants. The services delivered include both the 'good' goods of public policy such as security, education and health care. The impact of corruption on Nigeria is bad because a significant amount of money that should be spent on national development is diverted into the pockets of politicians and public employees delivering services. Mal-governance is responsible for the scale of corruption in Nigeria. The paper concludes that the issue of corruption, leadership and bad governance are obstacles to the national growth and development of the Nigerian economy

Keywords: Nigeria, Governance, Corruption, Public Policy, National Development, Failed State.

Introduction

'Bad leadership', as prominently suggested by Barbara Kellerman, relates to 'ineffective leadership' on the one hand and 'unethical leadership' on the other (2004, pp. 32–7). Kellerman has, moreover, argued in favor of considering effectiveness and ethics as key criteria for good leadership that may be violated in different ways and to differing degrees. She distinguished between seven different forms of bad leadership, the first three of which Centre on in-effectiveness: the lightest and arguably most common form of ineffectiveness, according to Kellerman, is

incompetence, a lack of will or skill (or both) to sustain effective action. Rigidity marks a second form or source of ineffectiveness. Leaders in this category tend to be 'stiff and unyielding. Although they may be competent, they are unable or unwilling to adapt to new ideas, new information, or changing times' (2004, pp. 40- 41). Finally, there are intemperate leaders. A leader of this kind according to Kellerman typically 'lacks self-control and is aided and abetted by followers who are unwilling or unable effectively to intervene' (2004, pp40- 42). The majority of Kellerman's seven types of bad leadership are bad in terms of unethical leadership, though leaders may be callous, uncaring, unkind and corrupt (the leader 'lies, cheats or steals' and 'puts self-interest ahead of the public interest') as well as insular (meaning that he or she 'minimizes or disregards the health and welfare of others).

On leadership crises in Nigeria, Akharine (2007, p.10) posited that weak institutions, pervasive corruption, ethnic and regional base loyalty and interest, and a general amoral public sphere have all colluded to prevent efficient governance and by extension rapid development upon which defined Nigerian political state as a bizarre. Kescelma (1996, p.616) described the state as an unfinished project characterized by instability and uncertainties. Similarly, Ameh used metaphor to describe the Nigerian state as a diabetic patient whose excess sugar in its bloodstream serves no purpose (2007, p.10).

The issue of corruption and bad governance is also examined and the effects of corruption and leadership on governance and how Nigeria has failed as a result of poor governance, convulsed by internal violence and can no longer deliver positive political goods to Nigerians.

Corruption and Bad Governance in Nigeria

The United Nations Convention Against Corruption casts a wide net in describing 'the scourge of corruption'. It includes not only the payment of bribes, the most common form of corruption, but also the tolerance of organized crime, dealing in drugs, looting government treasury, money laundering, and handling stolen assets (Rose and Peiffer, 2019, p.vi). It is not easy to define corruption easily. Basically, if a person uses his/her public office to make private gains, it would be considered an act of corruption. The widely accepted definition of corruption was given by UNDP. To UNDP, Corruption refers to "the misuse of public power, office or authority for private benefit through bribery, extortion, influence

peddling, nepotism, fraud, speed money or embezzlement". By definition, then, one cannot be corrupt if he/she did not have the authority to make private gains. Therefore, very poor people who hold no public office of any influence cannot be corrupt (1999, p.iii). Corruption has a distinct moral and qualitative connotation. No matter what, corruption is immoral and therefore it has to be routed out. The position of Achebe on good governance was mentioned in an article by Dhikru and Adeoye that:

Leadership is, no doubt, a key factor in the whole gamut of public administration and the management of societal affairs. In light of this, Nigeria's lack of capacity in terms of the attainment of effective governance that addresses the issues of corruption, human rights, and mobilization of human and material resources for sustainable development is generally traced to leadership failure. (1988)

Arguing in line with the above position, Roy and Prasad argue that:

Corruption hurts growth, impairs capital accumulation, reduces the effectiveness of development aid and increases income inequality and poverty. There is an inverse relationship between good governance and corruption, an inverse relationship between corruption and development outcomes and a positive relationship between good governance and development outcomes; i.e., the higher the quality of governance, the lower the level of corruption and the higher the level of development outcomes. (2007, p.3)

Nigeria is infected with misgovernance, and corruption largely hinders or damages the process of sustainable development. Economists have endeavored to determine the causes and consequences of corruption. Corruption is an important issue for Nigeria since it is widely spread throughout the country and can lead to many unwanted consequences. The consequence of corruption is detrimental to Nigeria's growth. Corruption is by no means confined to public officials. Individuals in private companies may also take bribes to provide goods and services if these are in short supply. Scarcity leads to rationing and rationing encourages corruption. If all services and goods were available in plenty, there would be less room for both taking and giving bribes.

In Nigeria, corruption exists at all levels of government, the Executive,

Legislature and the Judiciary, and it is sometimes very difficult to get a job done. However, Ghosh and Siddique (2015, p.11) argue the other way around that most developed countries seem to experience much lower levels of corruption in both government and non-government agencies than in comparable agencies in developing countries. If this is so we could argue that corruption is a by-product of poverty and underdevelopment, and that development itself provides an automatic mechanism to reduce or eliminate corruption. It is certainly arguable that when the general population in a country becomes more and more affluent with economic growth and development, they are less tempted towards 'petty' levels of corruption. To Hossain and Marinowa (2003, pp.90-94), low-paid workers also have a greater incentive to accept bribes in order to survive. Thus, according to Akintunde:

Nigeria has lost its pride of place in the African continent to corruption, wasteful and mismanagement of resources and patient-client politics. Other challenges of the Nigerian state that impedes good government are under developmentalism expressed in terms of infrastructural decadence, poverty, inequality, violence, declining life expectancy, unemployment, insecurity of lives/properties and high debt profile (2017, p.528).

The rampant corruption in Nigeria includes bribery, stealing funds from the government, exploiting employees by private sector employers, and exploiting and cheating consumers by the sellers of essential commodities. It is clear that Nigeria is in a vicious cycle in which corruption begets corruption and creates a society where one is either a giver or a taker of a bribe. Very few Nigerians can claim to be outside this noxious embrace. On the other hand, according to Hassan, "corruption has become all-pervasive, extending from petty corruption to project corruption e.g., taking large commissions for securing large public sector contracts and program corruption food scandals"(2007, p.49).

In support of the above, Roy and Prasad aver that:

Governance is exerted through the traditions and institutions by which the authority in a country is exercised for the common good. While institutions are more representative of the current mechanism and instruments needed to allocate resources, coordinate or control social and economic activities within a

society. (2007, p.3)

They also emphasize that a good governance system should focus on the following: transparency to the public; simplicity of procedures of all economic, political and social matters with minimum people; responsibility and accountability; and fight against corruption. What are the consequences of corruption in Nigeria? Existing literature has explored the empirical relationship between corruption and economic growth as well as other factors existing within a country. Husted (1999, p.39) found that the level of a country's corruption is correlated to the levels of economic development; high uncertainty avoidance; high masculinity and; high power distance. Thus, Lawal and Tobi opine that:

The socio-economic and political development of a country depends on its ability to entrench and sustain good governance which is expressed in a committed, patriotic and disciplined leadership with a vision to advance in the quest for national development. Sadly, Nigeria has existed for over fifty years with little or no record of such socio-economic and political development. (2016, p.4)

This ugly trend is connected with the pervasive corruption noted in the country. Ghosh and Siddique, were primarily interested in exploring the various quantitative measures of corruption, the conclusion emerging from their paper pointed towards the long-term evil effects of corruption. Abu Siddique argued that:

Corruption could lead to misallocation of resources, or be harmful to innovation, thereby inhibiting long-term growth. Corruption would of course adversely affect the poorer sections of a community who would be asked to pay a bribe to get essential services like water, electricity, and health and educational services. In other words, the economic burden of corruption is disproportionately high on economically disadvantaged people. (2015, p.6)

Forms of Corruption

According to Taylor (2010) as quoted by Ikechukwu, Uka and Kanu (2020, pp. 15-26) include:

Political corruption: It occurs when politicians and public decision-

makers, who are entitled to formulating, establishing, and implementing laws on behalf of the people, are corrupt. It also takes place when policy formulation and legislation are tailored to benefit politicians and legislators.

Electoral corruption: This category of corruption includes the rigging of elections and other frauds in the electoral process. It includes the promise of an office, special favors, coercion, intimidation, and interference with the freedom of election, buying of votes, disenfranchisement, snatching of ballot boxes, victimizing and maiming, mutilation of election results in favour of losers and votes turn up in areas where votes were not cast.

Bureaucratic corruption: This occurs in public administration in the course of public policy implementation. The citizens encounter this kind of corruption daily in service delivery points such as hospitals, schools, local licensing offices, police stations, the various government ministries etc. Bureaucratic corruption occurs when public sector procedures become illegal/ inappropriate

Bribery: This includes kickbacks, rubbing of palms, and payoffs.

Fraud: This could be reflected as trickery, swindling and deceit, counterfeiting, racketing, smuggling and forgery.

Embezzlement: This is seen as the theft of public resources by public officials. It is when an official of the state steals from the public institution, where he is gainfully employed. Perhaps, like any other developing country in Africa, the embezzlement of public funds is one of the most common ways of wealth accumulation, and this may be due to a lack of strict regulatory systems.

Extortion: This is reflected in the use of coercion, violence, or threats to acquire resources.

Favoritism: This is a mechanism of power abuse implying a highly biased distribution of state resources based on connection,

Nepotism: This is a special kind of favoritism, in which a public office holder prefers his/her kinfolk and family members.

Governance and the Culture of Accountability

Accountability as an abstract noun refers to both the capacity of, and the obligation of, someone to produce an account. Yet, it was not in political or

legal discussions that accountability first developed as a term of art, or as a fully developed and self-standing concept. In politics and administration, responsibility was the technical term that was preferred to indicate the duty that persons in public authority had to “respond” in their conduct and actions as public officials. In law, liability was and is preferred to indicate that by doing a certain action or entering into a certain contract, a person has put himself or herself under an obligation and is therefore answerable for the consequences following that action or from entering into that contract.

Thus, for a considerable time, accountability was part of a family of words in English that covered several interrelated meanings that had to do with issues of political representation, executive and administrative responsibility, and, more loosely, legal liability. The issue of corporate accountability is revealing what has been called the iconic status of the idea of accountability, which is often used in the generic rhetorical sense of “good and responsible” governance. This takes us back to the beginning of the recent history of the term accountability and how it has increasingly tended to assume some of the meanings more readily associated with responsibility. Indeed, some authors refer to external and internal accountability to distinguish respectively between those instances when there is a specific power of external control over a principal over the person who provides the account, and those instances when there is not such an external power, and accountability relies entirely on some kind of internalization of rules of conduct, or the identification of objective standards of good governance.

One of the ways in which we can ensure that people in authority are accountable is also, and crucially, that they are, and feel, responsible, in the sense of treating the power they have over their fellow citizens or other human beings in general with the utmost seriousness. It would be wrong to think that accountability is a matter of institutions and mechanisms of control, whereas responsibility in this subjective and moral sense is only a virtue or disposition. In democratic societies, they can be thought of as interlocking practices and institutions. Good governance is a prerequisite for sustainability and environmentally friendly development and bad governance is embedded in the historical experience of failure to achieve economic growth in Nigeria. The World Bank Report on governance and development as reiterated by Ghosh and Soddique, explored the meaning of governance and why it is critical to long-term sustainable development,

for Ghosh and Siddique:

The Bank defined governance to mean how power was exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources for development. The World Bank report in 1992 concluded that if sustainable development was to take place, a transparent and predictable framework of rules and institutions for the conduct of public and private business must exist(2015, p.4).

In a subsequent report entitled *Governance: The World Bank's Experience* (1994), it was stated that “Good Governance is epitomized by predictable, open, and enlightened policymaking, that is, transparent processes; a bureaucracy involved with a professional ethos; an executive arm of government accountable for its actions; and a strong civil society participating in public affairs; and all behaving under the rule of law”. Indeed, it is possible to argue that good governance would need the three arms of government, viz. the executive, the legislature and the judiciary to have separation of powers.

These three arms should work independently of one another, and work transparently. Following the lead of the World Bank, a consensus has now emerged that good governance is an important element in a complex process of economic change. Savings and investments, and population control measures cannot sustain development without efficient management of resources through good governance. To achieve a long-term process of development it is necessary to have an open, transparent and accountable administration that is free from corruption. In other words, good governance is the key to sustainable development.

A negative impact of corruption is that it is inevitably linked with crime and eventually with the corruption of the judiciary. Corruption has spread widely in Nigeria. The problem is that the sentences passed by the judges in corruption cases in Nigeria are generally lenient towards defendants with particular occupations but harsher toward others. Let me mention a few cases out of many where justice is selective or cosmetic. In July 2022, former Accountant-General of the Federation, Ahmed Idris compromised the Treasury Single Account (TSA), Government Integrated Financial Management Information System (GIFMIS), Integrated Payroll and Personnel information system (IPPIS), and carted away billions of naira (109 billion) belonging to the government and within two weeks of

investigation, the Federal High Court in Abuja granted bail to the suspended Accountant General of the Federation, Ahmed Idris and his co-defendants because of his person and the trial Judge claimed that he gave the ruling on grounds that the allegations against the defendants are yet to be proven (*Guardian News*, 28th July 2022). Former Registrar of the Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB), Professor Adedibu Ojerinde was tried on 18 counts marked: FHC/ABJ/CR/97/2021, by the Independent Corrupt Practices & Other Related Offenses Commission (ICPC), in which he was accused among others, of diverting public funds estimated at over N5.2 billion (*Sahara Reporter*, April 5th, 2022) selective justice on the part of the judiciary in carrying out their responsibilities and the anti-corruption agencies carrying out selective justice should be improved upon. Recently, the National Council of State granted state pardons to former Governors Joshua Dariye and Jolly Nyame of Plateau and Taraba States respectively, who were serving terms in jail for corruption. According to a presidential source, the two former governors were pardoned on health and age grounds. Mr Nyame, 66, governor of Taraba State from 1999 to 2007, was serving a 12-year jail term at the Kuje prison for misappropriation of funds while he was in office. The Supreme Court upheld his conviction in February 2020. Mr. Dariye, 64, who governed Plateau between 1999 and 2007, was jailed for stealing 2 billion naira of public funds during his time as Plateau State governor between 1999 and 2007.

In the words of Khair, it is observed that:

Efforts of the government to weed out corruption have been half-hearted. In particular, the integrity of the legal system is constantly compromised when law-enforcing agencies, including the police, misuse their power or are irresponsible and inefficient in carrying out their duties. (2005, p.4)

Therefore, the need for improvement in anti-corruption cannot be overemphasized because we need a lot of improvement in the fight against corruption because the agencies that are charged with such responsibilities are not carrying out their jobs as expected. One's political party or location should not be considered because nobody is above the law and everybody is equal before the law that is the only way we can win the war against corruption if there is a perception that the fight is selective, then we are not going to win the war. Corruption should be fought holistically. Okonjo Iweala battling to reform one of the world's most corrupt nations, where

corruption is widespread noted that:

A common approach to tackling corruption in developing countries has been for officials to target high-profile cases, publishing the arrest of offenders often as a deterrent to others. Such stories tend to generate big headlines. Yet after a few weeks, interest fades and corruption may continue unabated. To change this circle requires that such high-profile approaches be firmly coupled with relentless action to put in place rules and processes that cushion transparency and limit discretion and subjectivity. (2013).

She further writes that reform will be given a boost when smart tools are brought in.

Governance in Nigeria and the Question of a Failed State

There is no agreed definition of failure but the following is typical: a failed state is characterized by the collapse of the central government to impose order, resulting in loss of physical control of territory, or the monopoly over the legitimate use of force. Crucially, it can no longer reproduce the conditions for its existence (GSDRC 2012). Thus, Andrew Taylor is of the view that: "Failed states were seen as the product of a volatile combination of underdevelopment, embedded ethnic conflicts and disputed sovereignty that could act as a haven for diverse security threats, such as narco-barons, terrorists, pandemic disease and environmental crisis" (2013, p.225). State failure is a crisis of security, a crisis so devastating that non-state security solutions may be preferable to anarchy, where security, no matter how brutal, is more acceptable than its absence. If security and the means of providing it is the fundamental political resource, competition for its control is likely to be vicious and lead to the withdrawal figuratively and actually of marginalized groups into their own spaces, generating new layers of political authority to establish security. Following several investigations, Hill made it clear that:

Nigeria is a failed state now beyond doubt present tense not future. It is a failed state for two main reasons. First, the writ of its government does not run the length and breadth of its territory. There are places in the Niger Delta and in and around the northeastern city of Maiduguri that lie beyond the direct and continuous control of the federal, state and local governments. These areas are controlled instead by a range of insurgent groups

such as the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), the Niger Delta Vigilante Force (NDVF), and the Niger Delta Peoples Volunteer Force (NDPVF) in the Niger Delta, and Boko Haram in the north-east. Nigeria is also a failed state because its government does not promote the flourishing of all its citizens. It does not provide all Nigerians with the public goods or social services they have a reasonable right to expect to receive including law and order, basic health care, primary education and impartial justice. (2012, pp. 2)

Rotberg brought to bear that State failure is largely man-made, not accidental. Institutional fragilities and structural flaws contribute to failure, but those deficiencies usually hark back to the decisions or actions of men, rarely women. So it is that leadership errors across history have destroyed states for personal gain; in the contemporary era, leadership mistakes continue to erode fragile politics in Africa, Asia, and Oceania that already operate on the cusp of failure.

Ameh (2007) used metaphor to describe the Nigerian state as a diabetic patient whose excess sugar in its bloodstream serves no purpose. Nation-states exist to provide a decentralized method of delivering political (public) goods to persons living within. Nigeria as a state has failed because citizens are consumed by internal violence and cease delivering positive political goods to their inhabitants. The government has lost credibility, and the nation-state itself becomes questionable and illegitimate in the hearts and minds of its citizens. States succeed or fail according to their performances at the levels of their effective delivery of the most crucial political goods. Strong states may be distinguished from weak ones, and weak states from failed or collapsed ones. The delivery of a range of other desirable political goods becomes possible when a reasonable measure of security has been sustained.

Following Ameh's position above, Morton argues that:

Governance refers to the strategies and tools by which a society is governed. A society does not necessarily need a 'state' or even 'government', but there is always 'governance' that can rest on fear and violence, using appropriate technologies and vast quantities of cheap, powerful small arms. This governance fills the vacuum caused by the retreat or rejection of the state and shifts our focus away from failure as 'pathologies of deviancy,

aberration and breakdown' to the 'centrality of strategies of primitive accumulation, redistribution and political legitimacy that unfold in the uneven and combined conditions of development that shape postcolonial state sovereignty. (Morton, 2005, pp.376).

The core functions of the state to Hesselbein (2006, pp.40) vary but the provision of security is fundamental. From a human security perspective, however, there is no reason why security should be provided by the state, particularly when the state or its agents are perceived as the source of violence and deeply mistrusted.

Another key political good that enables citizens to participate freely, openly, and fully in politics and the political process encompasses the essential freedoms: the right to participate in politics and compete for office; respect and support for national and regional political institutions, such as legislatures and courts; tolerance of dissent and difference; and fundamental civil and human rights. Other political goods typically supplied by states and expected by their citizenries include medical and health care at varying levels and costs; schools and educational instruction (of various kinds and levels); roads, railways, harbors, and other physical infrastructures the arteries of commerce; communications networks; a beneficent fiscal and institutional context within which citizens can pursue personal entrepreneurial goals, and potentially prosper; space for the flowering of civil society; and methods of regulating the sharing of the environmental commons. Together, this bundle of political goods, roughly rank ordered, establishes a set of criteria according to which modern nation-states may be judged strong, weak, or failed.

Strong states perform well across these categories and concerning each, separately. Weak states show a mixed profile, fulfilling expectations in some areas and performing poorly in others. The more poorly weak states perform, criterion by criterion, the weaker they become and the more that weakness tends to edge toward failure, hence the sub-category of weakness that is termed "failing." Many failed states flunk each of the tests outlined earlier. But they need not flunk all of them to fail overall, particularly since satisfying the security good weighs very heavily, and high levels of internal violence are associated directly with failure and the propensity to fail.

Dhikru and Adeoye (2019) aver that "the Nigerian state has failed in three major areas: security of lives and properties, promotion of the rule of law,

and provision of visionary leadership” (p.7). Thus, Obo, Coker and Omenka corroborated that:

Failure in governance has resulted in the increasingly deplorable state of internal security as evidenced by insurgency, banditry and rising activities of non-state actors; bastardization of the rule of law; growing external debts; extrajudicial killings; depreciating economy; very hostile business environment; the rising cost of living; poor infrastructure; underfunding of the educational sector; people's distrust of government officials; dysfunctional electoral system; systemic corruption; and many other preponderant factors of a failing/failed state. (2014, pp.68-70)

Conclusion

In Nigeria today, innocent and unarmed protesters are arrested, tortured, and brutally murdered, terrorists and bandits are forgiven and even rewarded. The nature and characters of the political leadership explain the Nigerian state's incapacity for effective governance. The magnitude of corruption in Nigeria caused by mal-governance has given room to public officials to take advantage of too much power and a lack of regulation. Corruption retard growth, it is suggested that the government needs to reflect on the impact that corruption is having on its country. Again, the Nigerian government has also failed to guarantee the security of its citizens and banditry, kidnapping and attacks by unknown gunmen have militated against effective governance. Once the full extent is known it may push our leaders to pay more attention to its current bureaucracy and judiciary thereby increasing the refurbishing of governance with competent, honest, responsible and patriotic politicians, civil servants, activists, and other actors is of utter necessity for reversing the current trends in Nigeria.

Recommendation

Paolo Mauro, as quoted by Ghosh and Siddique concluded that corruption defeats economic growth in the long run. The countries which are perceived to be highly corrupt had poor economic growth (2015, p.139). We must intensify the drive against corruption by taking timely action against corrupt public servants, both by way of Court Proceedings or Departmental Actions. EFCC and ICPC should be on their toes. For Nigeria to function properly, trustworthy leaders who have robust education and have risen above corruption and selfishness are needed to

achieve good governance in Nigeria. Delay and lack of transparency in Government Departments need to be eliminated by taking necessary Administrative Reforms. Court trials need to be expedited so that important evidence are not lost due to the long passage of time. We once again reiterate that Certainty of punishment is more important than Severity of punishment. Lastly, there should be proper enactment to tackle corrupt politicians. The introduction of the LokPal system to enquire into charges of corruption against Ministers and other senior politicians, both at the national and state levels would perhaps bring in the required changes. Civil society must also rise and protest against corruption at all levels of public life. Social acceptance of corruption is also eating into the moral fabric of society. Civil Society Groups should spread awareness amongst the citizens regarding their rights and responsibilities.

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