

Governance and Enthronement of Poverty in Nigeria

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Abstract

At the primary stage of human development, man struggled against his fellow man in his quest to achieve the essential needs of food, clothing and shelter. But the gradual and steady progress toward communal living was attended by the syndrome of collectivism. From this stage man evolved to nation-state status with the emergence of modern governmental system as one of its towering features. Henceforth, the socio-economic and political fortunes of nation-states have come to bear a direct relationship to the integrity of their governance systems. This paper takes a hard look at public governance in Nigeria. Relying on historical and contemporary data, we found that the enthronement of instrumentalist Nigerian state principally accounts for not only the quantum but also the structure of poverty in Nigeria. Again we observed that the conversion of Nigeria's abundant human and material resources into prosperity for the great majority of her citizens depends crucially on fixing the governance question.

Keywords: Governance; Political economy; Poverty; Instrumentalist state

Introduction

In contemporary sense, governance means coordination and control of human, material, and non-material resources aimed at achieving some purposes. In its generic sense, it includes the administration of big corporate organizations which are profit-oriented, although its original import conjures up a sense of political control over people and their environment. These powers of controlling and coordinating entail critical institutional processes such as making rules, laws, regulations and implementing same in relation to the society concerned. Hence, someone who governs a country is one who rules it by making and amending laws relating to its society, economy and management of public services.

Karl Marx (1818-1883) categorized human history not only according to the evolving pattern of modes of production, distribution and exchange of material resources but, even more importantly, according to the evolving patterns of control of the people in a society which had been underscored by the historically varied modes of production. To this extent, one of the most important inventions of mankind has remained the institution of governance. Modern social life makes no sense in the absence of governance. Therefore, even in the pre-colonial era, African social formations were associated with one form of governance or the other. In this connection, it was fallacious for colonial political anthropologists to claim that some African societies were "stateless" in the sense of not having any identifiable form of governance, simply because they did not bear features of centralized kingdoms. This was the case with many Igbo, Middle Belt, Ibibio and Anang social formations which were designated stateless by European political anthropologists.

The emergence of colonial governance on the Nigerian scene marked the advent of modern state and with it modern governance

system in this part of Africa. Thenceforth, the socio-economic and political fortunes of emergent 'Nigeria' became ipso facto tied to the character of administration foisted by the colonial state. After independence and 50 years down the line, the character of the post-colonial state became a dominant determining factor in assessing the socio-economic and political fortunes of the post-colonial Nigerian society [1]. Two these will guide the analytical direction of this paper:

(a) There is a positive relationship between the character of governance in post-colonial Nigerian state and the degree of poverty and sundry deprivation suffered by her citizens, and

(b) The political economy of the Nigerian state shapes the structure of poverty in the country.

To achieve efficiency in undertaking the intellectual tasks set, the paper has been partitioned as follows:

(a) Characterize the post-colonial state-of which governance is a salient feature and put in bold relief the implication which its very nature bears for the governance process;

(b) Subsequently discuss critically the theoretical undertone of Governance, particularly in the pertinent context of the "social contract" theory;

(c) Relate the character of the Nigerian State and the governance thereof to the regimes' development programmes and/or poverty intervention measures, empirically demonstrating the positive correlation between governance and poverty in the country; and

(d) Show how the integrity of politics and governmental power has preconditioned individuals' and groups' socio-economic welfare or deprivation.

The Character of the Post-Colonial State in Nigeria

In this crucial section we strive to demonstrate how the nature of the Nigerian State which inevitably emerged upon the country's

attainment of independence impacts directly on the integrity of governance. Radical political economists are wont to set almost incontrovertible parameters on the basis of which they are able to segment states as orthodox state, socialist states and post-colonial states—Nigeria belongs to the last category. What therefore, in this perspective, constitutes a post-colonial state? An essential feature of the post-colonial state is the fact that it is peripheral. Peripheral in relation to the dominant state system within which its creators were raised. It is a product of imperialist powers, and except there was conjectural break from the apron strings of the departing metropolitan state, can hardly share in the centrist status. This logic therefore yields a dual notion of the state: The orthodox and post-colonial peripheral state systems. With reference to the orthodox state system (exemplified by Western European and North American states), there are two contradictory perspectives—the Liberal and the Marxist. The Liberal view maintains that “the state is a neutral umpire in national affairs; so that struggles among contending social groups are disinterestedly mediated by its agents” [2]. The Marxists, on the other hand, see the state in its generic sense, as maintaining an order in which the interests of the dominant (ruling) class supervene ultimately. According to them, “the state ensures this through the manipulation of institutional conditions which are obviously more favourable to the dominant (ruling) class” [3]. Claude Ake noted in this connection that:

The state is a specific modality of class domination, one in which class domination is mediated by commodity exchange so that the system of institutional mechanisms of domination is differentiated and dissociated from the ruling class and even the society and appears as an objective force standing alongside society [4].

This makes the class situation of the ruling elite to appear to be independent of the social classes which are engaged in day-to-day struggle for political, social and economic leverage.

Meanwhile, with this apparent aloofness, the state in orthodox system has been able to play this role efficiently by simply organizing the condition under which the bourgeoisie maintains its dominance but avoiding appearing as the direct handmaiden of this class. Onyishi observes that the orthodox state’s relative autonomy allows it ostensibly, to cater for the general interests of society without impairing its central role of surreptitiously ensuring the maintenance of the bourgeoisie’s hegemony [5].

To this extent, the Marxists argue it does not matter the social class background from which the officials of the orthodox state are recruited, the important thing is that they will remain loyal to the class interests of the capitalist ruling class. Thus, the state domination remains class domination but its relative autonomy obscures its class bias to the ordinary mind.

Having examined the features of the state in western capitalist societies, what is the nature of the state in post-colonial, peripheral states particularly in sub-Saharan Africa? Eme Ekekwe notes in this regard:

Whereas the state in the capitalist societies function to maintain the economic and social relations under which bourgeois accumulation takes place, in the post-colonial states, factors which have to do with the level of development of productive forces make the states direct instrument of capital accumulation for the dominant class or its elements.

Thus, while we can talk of autonomization in the case of the advanced capitalist states, the status of the post-colonial African states is non-autonomization since the state is scarcely aloof from the socially and economically engaged forces. A brief historical overview of the non-autonomization of the post-colonial state is therefore illuminating at this point.

Because of the rudimentary development of capitalist forces in pre-colonial societies, “the colonial predators played leading roles in catalyzing the capitalist penetration into these societies, in addition to promoting the exploitation of the economic resources in the colonies” [3]. As Ake argues:

The state... was a crude tool of colonial capital. It was used to coerce Africans into commodity relations to change their pattern of production to prevent the emergence of competitive African bourgeoisie [4].

To this extent the colonial state was instrumental in synchronizing the colonial economy with that of the metropolitan state. The pervasive role of the colonial state in the economy, which was primarily meant to serve metropolitan capitalism (since it ensured through its policies that western merchants and industrialists held sway), foreclosed the development of a capitalist culture similar to the one obtained in western societies. The colonial state became willy-nilly the alternative instrument of capital building for the ruling class, including of course the governing component.

In Nigeria, after the attainment of flag independence, ubiquitous state involvement in the emergent national economy took on even greater dimension. The incipient oil-economy provided further impetus as the resources available to the public multiplied almost geometrically. State power and positions were now increasingly seen as the most viable and rapid avenues for acquisition of private capitals. Thus, state positions offered greater attraction to Nigerians, as experience had shown that they became the surest means to riches, affluence and prestige in the Nigerian society. To this extent, state power became wealth and wealth an efficacious pathway to power. The nature of the bureaucratic-political class bears testimony to this unity—the class could not exist comfortably outside control, or access to state positions. This is because “the state provides it with the instrument to protect, aggrandize and reproduce itself” [3]. In this context one can capture the instrumentalist role of the post-colonial state in Nigeria.

The Social Contract, the Common Good and Governance in Nigeria

In any polity, be it developed, developing or under-developed, the idea of governance conjures a theoretical undertone of the social contract and the common good. Because these notions are interwoven with the central issue of mobilizing, husbanding and distributing national wealth, they deserve operationalization at some length, so as to put the poverty question in proper theoretical perspective.

The Social Contract and the Common Good

The social contract theory seeks to explain the emergence of the state system, be it ancient or modern. It was prominently advanced by some European medieval political philosophers, namely Thomas Hobbes, John Locke and Jean Jacques Rousseau. In his book, *The Leviathan*, Hobbes argued that men are naturally self-interested yet rational. He furthered that men will choose to submit to the authority of a sovereign, that is, ultimate political authority in a social formation

like a country in order to be able to live in a civil society which is conducive to their interest. He expressed strong reservation about the possibility of this interest if men were to remain in a state of nature in which life would have been very nasty and brutish. He preferred the creation of a Leviathan—a political society which entails:

Men agreeing to establish a society by collectively and reciprocally renouncing the right they had against one another in the state of nature; and

They must confer on one person or assembly of persons with the authority and power to enforce the social contract and the laws that gave life to it [6].

John Locke wrote two Treatises on Government. He also argued in the line of Hobbes, that the state was completely brutal and hence intolerable; men therefore created a civil society and government through their voluntary consent so as to gain three things: laws, judges to adjudicate laws and the executive powers to implement these laws. Unlike Hobbes and Locke, Rousseau argued that the state of nature was sanguine:

The state of nature was a peaceful and quixotic time. People lived solitary, uncomplicated lives. Their few needs were easily satisfied by nature. Because of the abundance of nature and the small size of population, competition was non-existent, and persons rarely even saw one another much less had reason for conflict or fear. Moreover, these simple, morally pure persons were naturally endowed with the capacity for pity, and therefore were not inclined to bring harm to one another (*The Social Contract, 1762*).

Elaborating, Rousseau maintained that the civil society which emerged as a result of the exit from this simple and pure state of nature portended greed, competition, vanity, inequality and vice. He, therefore, recommended a social contract which would entail collective renunciation of the individual rights and freedom and the transfer of these to the collective body. This new body is to be called the Sovereign Audits Mandate. It is to advance and guarantee the Common Good. What is Common Good?

The Common Good

The common good refers to all the tangible and non-tangible values (resources) under the custody of the Sovereign (or governmental authority) of the civil society. In Nigeria, this governmental authority is encountered at local, state and federal levels of governance. In contemporary political parlance, the common good is an aggregated abstract noun which connotes the state of belonging to the public realm and husbanded by the government of the day. By way of illustration, all the physical and non-physical resources belonging to the Federal Republic of Nigeria at local, state and federal levels and over which levels of public authority exercise control are qualified for this designation. Thus, the solid and liquid mineral deposits in the Nigerian territory (offshore as well as onshore) are part of Nigeria's common good. The Nigerian government is therefore expected to exercise extractive, distributive and regulatory powers over these and other elements of the common good.

One of the sacred injunctions of the social contract theory is that the common good should be administered to advance the welfare of the citizens of the country. To this extent, citizens acting severally and collectively reserve the right to monitor and seek explanation of how the custodians of the common good manage it. Those who carry on governance have to come to terms with this irreducible fact.

What is Governance?

Governance, according to BBC English Dictionary, is simply the art of making rules, revising them, enforcing them, managing the economy and controlling public services. But governance goes beyond this to include regulating the behaviour of people living within and at times outside the territorial boundary of a country or part thereof. A governing body is therefore a committee that is responsible for making and enforcing the rules which control a public organisation and/or persons and groups within a country or state. However, Governance can be used in several contexts such as corporate governance, institutional governance and local governance. But the one we have in mind in this paper is governance within the nation state system.

The extent to which the governing body deploys public resources (common good) to address the varied needs of groups within a polity will determine its goodness or badness. So to achieve good governance, which includes poverty alleviation, the governance process must subscribe to certain sacred conditions. Onyishi has outlined some of them as follows:

1. Participation: Participation by both men and women is central to governance.

2. Respect for the Rule of Law: Good governance requires fair legal frameworks which regulates individual, groups and corporate organisation in their conduct in relation to the state and to one another.

3. Transparency: This means openness; decisions and actions of government agencies and public officials should not only be within rules and regulations but must be seen clearly to be so. It also requires that information about day-to-day governance affairs has to be made available to the civil society.

4. Responsiveness: This requires that institutions and processes try to serve all stakeholders within the required time-frame.

5. Consensus-Oriented: The heterogeneous character of the society has to be acknowledged. This requires that the government mediates efficiently these forces so that popular positions may be hammered out in taking important public decisions. This requires that those on the government should understand the divergent historical, cultural and social contexts of contending groups in the policy.

6. Equity and Inclusiveness: One sterling hallmark of good governance is equity and inclusiveness. We are going to demonstrate in subsequent sections of this paper that the absence of these elements lies at the root of governance deficit in the crucial area of poverty alleviation.

7. Effectiveness and Efficiency: Effectiveness in governance means ability to produce anticipated result which efficiency means rational utilization of strategic resources to produce effectiveness. For us to talk of good governance institutions and the governance process must produce results that meet the development needs of the citizens. If poverty is prevalent in any society, it means that institutions and processes of governance are neither efficient nor effective.

8. Accountability: This is the hallmark of good governance. Since in letters and spirit of the social contract, the governed reserve the right to know how the custodians of the common good govern them. It follows that a non-accountable government is a bad one. It is insensitive to its terms of reference and to this extent irresponsible. Good governance therefore requires that laws be deliberately made which will grant citizens the right to challenge political and

administrative actions directly or through the law courts, ombudsman or administrative tribunals. According to him accountability takes place at different levels of public conduct—organisational, local, state or national [7].

Having specified the nature of the social contract, common good and governance, we shall subsequently take a critical look at how they have interacted within Nigeria's economic management system to connect to crucial issues of development and poverty. But before this crucial analysis, let us examine the poverty scene in Nigeria.

Poverty in Nigeria: Qualitative and Quantitative Evidence

In this section of the paper we shall try to respond to the interrogation: What are the level and pattern of poverty in Nigeria? To say that Nigeria is poor is to speak trite [8]. But from the point of view of methodological ritual it would be unconventional to delve into analysis of the nexus between governance and poverty without, as it were, displaying the portrait of the latter. This is what this section intends to do.

Poverty is "a way of life characterized by how calorie intake, inaccessibility to adequate health facilities, low quality of education, low life expectancy, high infant mortality, low income, unemployment and underemployment and inaccessibility to various housing and social facilities" [9]. From this definition one can immediately conclude that the poor are people who lack the capacity for self-sustenance, to say nothing about influence in both their environment and the process of governance in their society. There is an avalanche of literature on the nature and causes of poverty in development and administration literature. A few of them includes in the literature [10-12]. In fact, the list is almost inexhaustible. Our immediate concern relates to its nature in Nigeria. Reports of investigation into the behaviour of the Nigerian economy abound in the published findings of international development/donor agencies like the World Bank, United National Development Programme (UNDP), United States Agency for International Development (USAID), The British Department for International Development (DFID), UNESCO, Nigerian Federal Office of Statistics, National Population Commission (NPC) and host of other commissioned and independent research projects by agencies, academic institutions and scholars. For instance, the World Bank Report indicates that Nigeria was one of the sub-Saharan African countries which are still classified as the world's poorest region [13]. According to the UNDP Report of 2001, Nigeria is one of the poorest countries in the world as indicators showed that she was worse that year than the 1980s. The World Bank Report already alluded also revealed that greater percentages of Nigerians are living below the universal poverty line of US\$1 per day. This picture combined to worsen as shown by the fact that while in 1998 out of a projected population of 120 million, 55 million were classified as very poor (using UN's poverty indices). In the year 2000 about 70 million people were so classified. And another study by on an added that the figure of 80 million was posted in 2003 and "this represents substantial increase by 10 million" [9].

In 1997, Echebiri carried out a study on the structure of rural income inequality and poverty in South Eastern Nigeria. Household data were collected from sixteen villages in Abia, Anambra, Enugu and Imo States [14]. A total of one hundred and fifty five (155) households were surveyed. Household were categorized into bottom, medium and top income groups to show the household income differential.

According to Echebiri, "analyses showed that household's income is best estimated using monthly expenditure and repeated cost route visit techniques". According to the analysis carried out, income was generally low in study area and the distribution was not skewed or lopsided. The researcher adopted four poverty line criteria to estimate the level of incidence of poverty: minimum calorie requirement, food share of total expenditure, N395.41 per capita per month at 1995 price level (World Bank 1995), and N1500 per capita per annum at 1996/97 prices. One significant lesson from the analysis done is the striking locational variations among bottom, medium and top income groups. Regarding the geographically related pattern of poverty in Nigeria, the World Bank, carried out a study in 1996. The World Bank found out that poverty was more pronounced in rural than urban areas, (2) the South had less poverty than either the central or northern part of the country; (3) generally, the incidence, depth and severity of poverty had been increasing over the years. The World Bank study also indicated the rising incidence of urban poverty. For detailed studies on the incidence, depth and severity of poverty in Nigeria, it may be insightful to look closely at the works of [14-17].

At the end of 2006, Human Rights Watch, Abuja came up with the following evaluation of the Nigerian economy and the public sector in general; with regard to the health sector if noted. Nigeria has some of the worst socio-economic indicators in the world and the overall picture has not improved since the end of military rule. Government's failure to address the urgent health-related needs of its population over the years has had particularly devastating consequences. Many African countries have made important progress in cutting their client mortality rates in recent years but Nigeria is not among them. Nigeria has more than 255,000 new born deaths each year as against 1.16 million for the entire continent of Africa. Donor agencies noted that one in five Nigerian children dies before the age of five, a statistic that translates into more than one million child deaths per year. Many of those children die from diseases that are either preventive or treated at low cost. Maternal mortality is estimated at 7 per 1,000 births, and it is believed that Nigeria has the world's second highest number of maternal deaths each year after India.

Corruption is widely cited as a major impediment to government's efforts to improve the situation. One 2003 World Bank assessment noted that:

The long decades of military rule weakened, politicized and encouraged rent-seeking in government bureaucracy, and the health system was no exception. The culture and incentives became such that their own economic interest is the most priority for many public employees. (HRW, P1)

Despite oil export earnings of about \$300 billion since the mid-90s, per capita income in 2000 was 20% lower than in 1975 [18]. To simplify, we can segment the aggregate poverty situation into sectoral categories:

Hunger and Food Crises

Records in the Federal Office of Statistics indicate that about 65% of Nigeria's populations are faced with severe food insecurity and hunger. Even before the current world food crises, Nigeria had come under serious threat of food insecurity. United Nations Reports (1999) insist that even the food majority of Nigerians consumed came dismally below the required international diet standard. The pitiable way children and the youth struggle violently for food at public celebrations bear eloquent testimony to the validity of this UN claim.

Lack of Access to Safe Water

Nigerians are presently suffering from lack of safe drinking and cooking water. Both the rural and urban towns witness acute shortage of potable water. The public water supply system has completely collapsed and succeeding alternative which is water supply to taps in private residential areas is hardly functional. The situation that has ensued is pitiable as shylock water vendors have further pauperized the populace with exorbitant water charges.

Poor Health Condition

The high rate of infant mortality and under 5 mortality rate (U5MR) are associated with high rate of infant mortality disease, namely malaria, diarrhea, acute respiratory infections (AR), measles, polio, malnutrition, etc. The high rate of these diseases and their destructive effects on majority of Nigeria is aptly indicative of abject poverty.

In 2006, a public health worker in Etche local government of Rivers State told HRW that not even one health centre had been renovated or repaired in recent years. In some centers their only supplies of medicines expired as "far back as 2000". The result was that people ceased to come to the Health centre. In few instances, one could see some drugs but only the ones donated by foreign donors and United Nations agencies. For instance, HRW visited three primary health centers in Etche Local Government Area; "in some of these, the floor was literally covered with garbage and other filth; staff said that the building flooded with each rain, and the floor was later caked with mud and strewn with water logged boxes of ruined polio vaccines. It had no mattresses, toilet facilities or other basic amenities, rusty bed frames, no water supply, no electricity or toilet facilities. A nurse on duty told HRW that one mattress had been donated by the Etche Diaspora in the United States but had yet to arrive and that the staff had negotiated an agreement with a neighboring household to allow them and their patients to use that family's house. The health centre had water pump, but this had been broken for more than two years and never repaired.

These Stark instances are simply microcosmic of the prevalent situation across the Nigerian state and local governments. Primary school education and primary health care are the two most basic human social needs after food and shelter. This condition of extreme deprivation does arise from lack of sufficient public resources but more importantly due to crass neglect by public authorities-a quintessential indicator of governance deficit.

Educational Services

Children of Nigerians who are below the middle and upper class level receive either half-baked or no formal education at all. This is because apart from the apparent lack of educational facilities in primary and secondary schools, the teachers are so dismally demotivated that they hardly stay in school to impart any meaningful knowledge. Indeed, a very common sight as one drives through some states in this country, is school children learning under trees and roofless classroom blocks. People subjected to this condition-not less than 60% of Nigeria-are really poor. Primary education in Nigeria has also experienced a steady decline over the course of the past few decades. One assessment written in 2000 spelled out the extent of the problem of the education system as a whole.

The public perception is that the quality of education offered is low and the standards have dropped. These perceptions are based on lack of adherence to acceptable educational practice. Teacher qualifications are low. The learning environment does not provide effective learning. Basic facilities, teaching and learning resources are generally not available. Teacher-pupil ratios are high. General performance in examinations is poor and the graduates have low level of competence in the work environment.

These problems have remained intractable despite well-publicized government's efforts to tackle their DFID's country Assessment in the 1980s. Nigeria had one of the best education systems in Africa, with near-full enrolment in some parts of the country but the education system has declined considerably since then and many emerging from primary school are not functionally literate. The chilling findings by the Human Right Watch in Rivers State indicate the deplorable if not despondent state of primary education and health sentences in most parts of Nigeria:

And according to the findings on primary Education by Human Rights Watch in August 2006, most of the Niger Delta primary schools were in extreme state for instance, of destitution and decay. In Rivers state it reported that local government neglect fueled by corruption, has had a devastating impact on primary schools throughout the state. This is perhaps most obviously reflected in the schools grounding physical infrastructure.

Human Right Watch visited eleven primary schools in the state and noted that they had either collapsed or in the verge of doing so. According to the Human Right Report, most others schools are nothing more than the empty shells of houses with nothing being done to maintain or equip them (HRW field investigation).UNDP (2005) also observed that facilities in almost all the schools in the Delta region were in a state of extreme despair requiring major rehabilitation. HRW reported further that most primary schools, especially in rural areas are simply structures. Many blocks of classrooms have partitions between the classes leaving teachers to shout above each other as their classes, sit packed alongside each other in one large room. Most schools did not have black boards, with teachers writing their lessons on writing surfaces that are painted on the walls.

HRW reported that most of the schools it visited were under staffed and some were in shortage of books and other teaching materials. In fact, only one of the schools had books that were irrelevant for the children.

Unemployment and Underemployment

Despite wild claims by governments, less than 15% of qualified youths are employed either by the government or corporate organisations. Ayodele captures the employment condition thus, the band of jobless graduates and psychologically assaulted undergraduates, and the rising bellows of under-paid workers who have been forced to hawk their body for a living are clear indices of poverty.

The Nation newspaper, quoted in Ayodele noted:

The country's social indicators had slipped to well below the average for developing countries, half the population lives in absolute poverty, life expectancy was only 52 years and the infant mortality rate was as high as 84 per 1,000 live births [19].

To cap up the characterization of poverty in Nigeria, Jega A presented the matter in a picturesque form:

... 70% of Nigerians are said to be living in poverty that is earning an income of less than the equivalent of One US dollar a day. As if that is not enough, the evidence daily walks, and sleeps on our streets, manifested as an army of destitute, jobless and aimless beggars, mad persons and street urchins [20].

With the evidence adduced above, we are no more in doubt, if one of the defining characteristics of the Nigerian society is poverty. Our next task is to explain it.

The State, Governance and Poverty in Nigeria

One irreducible fact which is not in search of consensus is that Nigeria has enormous economic potential and resources—a vibrant private sector, dynamic entrepreneurs, vast and fertile agricultural land and a large domestic market. To cap it all, the oil and gas sector has added an enormous dimension thereby hiking the prospect of a buoyant economy and a prosperous citizenry. Why then is the above gory picture of poverty descriptive of the Nigerian scene?

The answer to this question is in the character of Nigeria's post-colonial state which encapsulates a governance system that paralyses rather than grows the population. An incontrovertible evidence of the fact that governance lies at the root of poverty in Nigeria can be gleaned from the following national speech made by ex-President Olusegun Obasanjo [21].

The consequences of past economic mismanagement are glaring. For instance, the poverty gap in the nation has widened during the years of misrule and millions of people are ravaged by hunger, poverty loom larger than life...The grim condition of many citizens was worsened by the deterioration of public services, whereby access to pipe-borne water and affordable health care became a pipe dream and supply of electricity became epileptic and irregular. Communication networks are out modeled, expensive, and unreliable in an era in which globalization has made such services ubiquitous and cheap. Agricultural production is a far cry from its actual potential; while capacity utilization in industry hovers around 30 percent which is a waste of installed assets. Investment is not much more than the level for the replacement of depreciated parts, which amounts to de-industrialization. All these ills have impacted negatively on employment opportunities for our youth [19,22].

The above disgusting picture was painted by a President who had just taken over the reins of leadership at national and international level. It means that the political class was ab initio conscious of the state of decay and poverty in Nigeria [22]. So, the President pledged that governance under his watch would focus on a number of political and economic measures to revamp the Nigerian society. A few of these deserve restatement here:

- (i) Re-invigorate the productive sectors of the economy, especially food production—agriculture and manufacturing.
- (ii) Strengthen the education sector.
- (iii) Revamp social and economic infrastructure, such as power, energy, oil sector, water supply, roads.
- (iv) Revamp the health system and provide affordable medical services.
- (v) Alleviate poverty and provide jobs for the people, in order to reduce the army of unemployed youths.
- (vi) Supply dignifying and affordable housing for the citizen.

After groping in the dark for whole 4-year term in office, the Obasanjo regime realized that any government on a reform mission must first of all articulate a Development Blueprint, particularly since this had become a fad among most post-colonial state governing classes. So, between 2003 (after being sworn in for a second tenure of 4 years) and 2004, the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy was launched. Here are its overall direction and goals:

- (i) Increasing the quality of public service delivery
- (ii) Efficient resource utilization
- (iii) Wealth creation
- (iv) Employment creation
- (v) Poverty alleviation
- (vi) Food on every table
- (vii) Provision of rural infrastructure including potable water, electricity, basic education, roads, telecommunication and housing
- (viii) Achieving a diversified economy and value orientation [19].

To achieve the above objectives, NEEDS targeted the following specific goals:

- (i) Empowering people
- (ii) Improving the health, education and environment sectors
- (iii) Providing housing for majority of Nigerians
- (iv) Providing employment for majority of the youth
- (v) Undertaking pensions reforms
- (vi) Achieving geo-political balance in the distribution of public values
- (vii) Changing the way government did work
- (viii) Reforming the public sector
- (ix) Privatizing public enterprises to make them more efficient
- (x) Institutionalizing transparency, and anti-corruption in governance
- (xi) Reforming the budgetary and expenditure system
- (xii) Making service delivery to the citizens more efficient and effective

Before Obasanjo handed over to Umaru Musa Yar'Adua on 29th May, 2007, The Nation newspaper—a cerebral national daily—carried out a far reaching assessment of the regime. Its thorough going reports were published in 8 separate editorials between May 9 and May 18, 2007. Overall, The Nation came out with scintillating and damning findings on the performance of the regime on almost all the above counts which the regime had claimed in the NEEDS document to pursue. The conclusion of The Nation was that apart from the liberalization of the GSM and Banking Sectors, Obasanjo's regime failed woefully to address the burning issues of macroeconomic development much less address honestly the festering canker warm called poverty in Nigeria.

The Nation in conclusion noted, because of the centrality of energy and power, Obasanjo regime's greatest shortcoming was its inability to fix the crisis of electricity, notwithstanding the stupendous amount

invested to revamp NEPA. The Aviation, Niger Delta, transportation and education sectors have rather deteriorated. Details of The Nation's assessment of Obasanjo's 8-year rule over Nigeria are contained in its Editorials, May 9-18, 2007.

Can an instrumentalist post-colonial state achieve development goals targeted at poverty?

To reduce poverty successive Nigerian governments since the 1970s have enunciated a number of poverty alleviation/reduction programmes: National Accelerated Food Programme in 1972, Operation Feed the Nation in 1976, National Directorate of Employment in 1986, National Poverty Eradication Programme in 2000 [9]. But Ezeibe criticized the poverty programmes of Nigerian Governments. He identified the following problems:

1. Policy inconsistency and poor governance.
2. Ineffective targeting of the poor (leading to leakage of benefits to unintended beneficiaries).
3. Unwieldy scope of the programmes resulting in resources being thinly spread among projects.
4. Overlapping of functions which ultimately led to institutional rivals and conflicts.
5. Lack of mechanisms in various programmes and projects to ensure sustainability.
6. Lack of complementarities from beneficiaries.
7. Uncoordinated sectoral policy initiatives.
8. Lack of involvement of social partners and other stakeholders in planning, implementation and evaluation.
9. Poor human capital development and inadequate funding [23].

The National Poverty Alleviation Programme was broken into four main planks: Youths Empowerment Scheme (YES); Rural Infrastructure Development Scheme (RIDS); Social Welfare Service Scheme (SWSS); and National Resources Development and Conservation Scheme (NRDCS). Yet in spite of the huge human and material resources so far invested to pursue NAPEP goals, the poverty reduction impact it has so far created remains insignificant. Jega A noted in this regard:

A series of presidential and inter-ministerial committees reviewed and attempted to harmonize poverty alleviation policies, as well as functions and responsibilities of a number of poverty alleviation institutions and agencies, prior to the setting up of NAPEP. Indeed, in particular the conceptualizers and formulators of NAPEP are said to have drawn useful lessons from its immediate predecessors, PAP, in which N10 million was set aside to create 2,000,000 jobs in 2000 but which succeeded only in creating more benefits to unintended beneficiaries than those worthy and deserving [20].

Regarding earlier poverty alleviation programmes, the UNDP report had noted that: "those who captured the benefits of the various poverty reduction strategies were not the Nigerian poor, rather the Nigerian rich and powerful" (emphasis mine).

Those observations from within and outside Nigeria plus our own daily experience suffice to maintain that, neither knowledge nor technical know-how was at the root of the deteriorating economic condition of Nigeria but the integrity of the governance system. I had

noted in a study carried out between 1991-1993 that the instrumentalist character of the Nigerian that is responsible for the glaring absence of democratic content in the development programmes and processes of successive Nigerian regimes. I demonstrated with copious empirical data that because the state is a resource in itself, the exclusivist proclivity of state officials is antithetical to popular participation, transparency and accountability [3]. There is at present an avalanche of literature which have established the nexus between the worsening state of poverty in Nigeria and the political economy of governance in the country. The universal term employed in characterizing this phenomenon is CORRUPTION [5-7,12,13,19,20]. For instance, a very recent publication on the front page of the SunNewspaper reads: WASTSED: Probe confirms \$13.5 billion as amount squandered on power by Obasanjo Regime, "I awarded N350 billion Naira contracts... (on road construction)-Anenih tells Senate", "Obaseki, Kupolokun (all former NNPC Group Managing Directors) and others summoned over oil probe". Another commentary by one of The Sun's ace columnists, Eric Osagie goes like this:

In over seven years of our democracy, Nigerians know how much we have made from do not oil nor how the funds are disbursed. Only one man controlled the oil purse. Now, we know courtesy of Transparency International, that that is not right. It is heresy to operate that way. Yet that is how we have been doing oil business. We also now know that oil money had been deployed to service personal interests by government officials, courtesy of the split between the two big men [24].

With reference to other sectors of the economy, Osagie also noted: "The current probe of the power sector gives an inkling of what to expect in the oil sector: billions of dollars have dramatically disappeared, while Nigerians wallow in darkness. Businesses suffer. Lives are lost in the operation theatres because of power failure, mother and child dispatched to the other beyond because a few greedy thieves conspiring with the powers that be have decided to help themselves to the collective till. Regarding the personalization of Nigeria's oil proceeds, Osagie noted of ex-president Obasanjo.

He saw our oil as extension of the chickens in his Ota farm. He allegedly allocated oil blocs to cronies and withdrew same from his critics and perceived foes. When his former Defense Minister, Gen. T.Y. Danjuma, began to align with his opponents to thwart his third term ambition, he simply withdrew OPL 246 to friendly daughters-in-law like Moji. He dashed NNPC contracts. Gbenga could only whine in pain; Nigerians will never truly know how much oil money was squandered during Baba's administration.

The cerebral columnist concluded this segment of this commentary by remarking that "When the NNPC probe comes fully on course, Nigerians will get heart broken, yet Nigerians deserve to know the character of the man who pledged to rid the land of corruption and yet plunged us deeper into the class of the world's most corrupt countries'.

This chilling account of the corrupt proclivity of Nigeria's immediate past president is not only microcosmic but fully representative of what happened at state and local government levels. Even if time and space permit it does not produce any intellectual excitement to begin a rehash of the detailed accounts of graft and kleptomania that have become the bane of governance in Nigeria over the past three decades or so.

Concluding Remarks

Governance is at the root of our collective woes as a people, not necessarily because the knowledge necessary for undertaking development reforms is lacking nor because resources, actual and potential, are by any means limited. Indeed Nigeria boasts of the best crop of intellectuals and technologists in Sub-Saharan Africa. Governance reforms are taking place in the so called Asian Tigers who were almost at par with Nigeria in economic rating at the beginning of the 1960s. They have already begun to savor the economic benefits of their clear headed, focused and patriotic governance reforms. Back home in Sub-Saharan Africa, South Africa, Botswana, Ghana, Cameroon, even the Republic of Benin are household examples of where governance reforms have made huge returns in form of economic growth and poverty reduction.

On the contrary, the Nigerian governance process has remained bugged down in prebendal culture, with dire consequences for the welfare of the people. Returns on oil exports have more than quadrupled over the past few years but our economic and social travails have only increased in the same proportion. In the apt conceptualization of this paradox Ibeanu explained how affluence has created affliction for Nigerians [25]. Yet there is no alternative, apart from further governance reforms, particularly in the areas of democratic institutions and the constitution.

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