

THE NIGERIAN STATE AND GOVERNANCE CRISIS THEORY

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Abstract

This paper attempted a critical review of the governance crisis theory in Nigeria. It discusses issues confronting Nigerian political governance as an offshoot of the Colonial Administration. The objectives of this paper are to examine the factors responsible for governance crisis in Nigeria, factors that predetermine the character of the Nigerian State and the effects of governance crisis on economic development and social values in Nigeria. The paper elaborates through a historical method of analysis, numerous incidences of governance crises, their sources and effects. The observation is that governance crisis is an institutional problem that would require structural and re-orientational approaches. Basically, enabling laws to be operational and faceless, not to identify with sacred cows. There is the need to address good governance that would position fundamental governance and create an enabling environment for self-participation, collective services, a driving force and responsiveness to public demands.

Key words: Nigerian State, Governance Crisis, Security, Good Governance.

Introduction

Since the development of the dominion era and the dawn of the post-colonial state, the Nigerian state has been marked with uncertainties. In spite of the huge resources the country has devoted to institutional governance and security, the post conflict Nigeria has faced increasing incidence of internal governance and security challenges. There is unprecedented rise in political violence, inter communal crisis, religious cleavages and economic maladies. The situation in the country is complicated by perceived ethnocentrism, indices of marginalization of the minority groups, religious bigotry and sectarianism. The agitations over marginalization incidences, ethnic killings, and armed conflict has created unnecessary inter- communal tension and governance crisis.

This situation is worrisome and often traced to the multi-ethnic societies in Nigeria with populations that are sharply divided along racial, cultural, linguistic, religious and ethnic cleavages (Jackson and Rosberg 1998:36). The racial afflicted societies in Nigeria are composed of traditional societies often characterized with disaggregative norms, customs and social reactivity. Each with distinct political institutions contrary to perceived arbitrary structure and perception of European colonial political powers. Though because of the nature of colonial powers structure that was composed from the outside, it is rather debatable by African scholars that colonial political power was arbitrary, and every other governance crisis could be an offspring of colonialism. According to those fundamentalists, “it was imposed from the outside and worked in accordance with alien and unfamiliar rules and regulation in disregard, often in ignorance of indigenous institutions (Jackson & Rosberg, 1998:36).”

The deliberated structure of balkanization instructed by the colonial power is a principal suspect to this configuration of plural society formation in Nigeria. And this template brought in impediment to the realization of modern, rational-legal institutions of good governance (Jackson & Rosberg, 1998:36). Therefore, from the enumerated incidence of Nigeria’s state structure, it is obvious that Nigerian state which supposed to be a public force with a common national cohesion has been privatized and particularistic, that is, it has been appropriated to the services of private interest by the dominant indigenous compradors under the shade or covert of ethnicity or religion. So, its formal or rational legal structure is deliberately ill managed to conceal the patrimonial, particularistic, ethnic and religious covert nature of power in Nigeria.

This notion is often reiterated and cited by scholars such as Uzodike & Malangwa 2012:96. Leopold Sedar Senghor, a former Senegalese leader also recited this conscientious attitude of governance. According to him “politics is no longer a question of the art of governing the state for the public welfare in the general framework of laws and regulations”, it is a question of politicians. Politics is no longer ideological tendencies but an avenue to place one’s self, one’s relative and one’s clients in the “cursus honorum” that is the face for preferment, the image of personal rule (Jackson and Rosberg 1998:17).

The inherent complexities in the Nigeria state and the undulating crisis of governance is a product of European colonialism and imperialism. This is because the Nigerian state is a British tutelage, modeled after western types both in structure, ideology and behaviors. It is capitalist oriented. This deep-rooted structure overtime has flouted policies and programs geared towards reinigorating a strong nation -building process (Elaigwu, 1997:5 8).

The History of governance crisis in Nigeria has become a tale of drift and instability (Ekeh, 1989:5). The arbitrariness of the Nigerian state is conferred on the political culture, negativity, social reactivity and hate speech and these attitudes have showcased in Nigeria some elements of violence, public corruption, mistrust and emergence of social classes and the tensions, conflict and instability resulting from social inequality. The crisis in Nigeria since independence is thus primarily, “a crisis of institutional governance.” (Ekeh, 1989:5)

Governance- A Conceptual Clarification

Governance according to the World Bank is the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country’s economic and social resources for development (Imobighe, 2012). Good governance constitutes democratic proactive, transparency, accountability and bureaucratic efficiency (Smith, 2007:3- 4, Manda, 2006:272). Governance is expressed through responsiveness to public opinion, responsiveness to public demand policy reactions and re-scheduling of policy advocacy to adjust to and answerable to the expectations of the populace, through the provisions of private and public goods and equitable distribution of services.

Governance is the art of governing or what you could call the management of public affairs (Imobighe, 2012:244). Governance is the expected handwork of government. It is the dividend of democracy. Governance requires “the widest range of talents; a range that should not be limited by party-political divisions; one that could cross party lines and therefore engage citizens more firmly at the “grass root level” (Mackenzie, 2009:1). Governance include public-private

partnerships, new forms of public sector management with their emphasis on accountability to relatively autonomous countries and new forms of policy network that have only a loose connection to the government of the day (Mackenzie, 2009:10).

Rod Rhodes posits that with the growing formation of self-organizing and inter-organizational networks that are now integral to governing the country, these networks become more autonomous and resist central guidance from the government. Therefore, it is imperative to distinguish the formal apparatus of government and the activity of those governing over us from the ways in which our lives are governed by the establishment of norms that do not flow from central government (Mackenzie, 1996:667).

Governance relates to the processes of granting public power and the use to which such power is put, that is for public service (Imoighe, 2012:445), the work of governance is always in tune with the expectation and aspiration of the people. It is concerned with the formulation and implementation of sound policies that will promote the corporate interest of the entire people. When governance is constituted to attain or meet public needs and demands, it is regarded as good governance (Imoighe, 2012:244).

Governance Crisis, Legal Theory and Political Ideology

Governance crisis emerged from the failure of administrative law and doctrine of separation that evolved between politics and the partisan struggle over political ideology and public policy for the reform of legal doctrines and institutions. The governance crisis is not unconnected with the failure of administrative law to discipline the arbitrariness of bureaucrats and judges. Administrative laws failed because of deeply fundamental and conceptually flawed reliance on separation of powers and anachronism. The pre-occupation with controlling discretion is the wrong conception of administrative law hence an alternative project more suited to the present day should gear towards an elaboration and application of principles of sound governance. Administrative law, properly understood, is of paramount importance. Its enterprise bears considerable credit or blame for the very structure, operation, and even the ultimate efficacy of governance.

The success of government cannot be wholly dependent on able administrators because they may or may not be present. Nor can we depend on the romantic image of voters. In short for the very reasons that the framers and the intellectuals who influence them turned to structural safeguards to promote their normative reason of sound governance and for the very reason that legal realists; steeped in decades of preserve social criticism, appreciated the need for

the structured innovations of the administrative state; so too should we appreciate that the processes and institutions of public law must be central to the renewal of governance. In short, effective legal institutions and processes are a necessary though not sufficient mechanism for ensuring sound governance.

Today Nigeria is in the throes of a dimly appreciated crisis in governance. The administrative state is diseased. The evidence stretches from budget deficits to homelessness; from bank failures to economic recessions, from failure to public schooling to policy problem, from persisting racial inequalities to languishing economic growth.

The Character of the Nigerian State and Governance Crisis

The primary factor that pre-determines the character of Nigeria state is the instrument of foreign organizing lodge by colonialism. Colonialism has no root in the life, culture traditions, habit and experience of the plural multi linguistic society of Nigeria (Nwabueze, 2012:20). Colonialism was forcibly imposed upon people who earlier on hadn't the knowledge of the necessary foundations (Nwabueze, 2012:20). For instance, Nigeria had respect for human life and human dignity and for other fundamental values of humanity. However, Nigeria state undermined these indigenous values and embarked on colonial interest which centered on exercise of power, control and administer the state. It is this factor that condition attitude towards state power in Nigeria (Nwabueze, 2012:20). Therefore, it is not a surprise that the struggle for the control of governance should be characterized by blatant repressions of human rights, rule of law, and of democratic process principles, ideology institution procedures and its traditions of government administration. We should not be surprised also that the plunge into this quest produces excessive arrogance and intoxication and an inordinate desire to personalize and cling on to it for an indefinite length of time, for life if possible (Nwabueze, 2012:21). The crisis in Nigeria since independence is a crisis of institutional governance, originated from colonial administration.

Colonial rule in Nigeria was saddled with regime of force, borne of violence, maintain by violence and legitimize by force. Its frontier were the army barracks and police stations. Its driving force lay in the regular, unceasing and ruthless application of violence (Nwabueze, 2012:2). Living in such atmosphere of violence, the Nigeria state became familiarized to it as the awesome reality in governance. Unfair discrimination became a pervasive feature in the administration of government in Nigeria. There is attitude of alienation rather than identification. Power is exercised not for the benefit of

the public but the purpose of subjugation and exploitation (Nwabueze, 2012:20).

The Effect of Governance Crises in Nigeria

In examining the effect of governance crises that arises in Nigeria, various perspectives have been attempted to capture theoretical frameworks that have been employed to explain governance crises. The various theoretical construct that attempt to mirror governance crises in Nigerian state point to a deep gulf between state and governance. The difficult relation between the state and governance has eroded legitimacy and induce state failure. It has also emanated violent conflict in Nigeria. Worst still the militaristic state-centric and regime focused approach to abate this violence has failed to deliver peace and security to the country. There is no broad public participation in Nigeria. For instance, virtually all the local government councils in Nigeria are run by caretaker committees handicapped by the state governors. Civil servants are owed for several months and pensioners are not even remunerated. In a state like Imo, pensioners negotiated 40% of their pension. These are due to corruption and mismanagement of public fund (Imobghe 2012:253).

There are cases of massive rigging during elections at the state and federal levels. Outcomes of elections in Nigeria hardly reflect the wishes of her people (Imobighe 2012:255). Election tribunals are politicized and judgment truncated. Another issue of governance crisis is the indiscriminate allocation of resources. The problem Nigeria faces is that virtually all resources available are used to service the taste of the Political elites.

Conclusion

To arrest these crises, there is a need for a genuine and thorough transformation agenda, and this should be a road map to secure a better future for Nigeria. Issues of great importance in the bid to curb governance crises would include youth employment, promotion of apprenticeship through vocational training, addressing religious and ethnic issues. Administrative law discretion should not override policies that would enhance good governance. There should be an indigenous mechanism to conflict resolution and national cohesion. If these measures are implemented, governance crisis in Nigeria would be curbed and economy revamped, and our social values reinvigorated.

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