

CHAPTER 4

Bad Governance, Political Instability and Unsustainable Economic Development in Nigeria

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Introduction

The new *National Economic Advisory Council* (NEAC) of Nigeria has expressed concern over the low growth rate of the nation's economy as well as the lack of synergy among government agencies. The presidency revealed this after Buhari had received "an important briefing" by the Professor Doyin Salami – led eight-member council at the Presidential Villa, Abuja on Thursday, February 6, 2020.

The council raised four fundamental issues that are related to bad governance, political instability and economic underdevelopment –

- i. Stresses rate of population growth,
- ii. Calls for clement environment to boost foreign investment,
- iii. Faults lack of coordination among MDAs.
- iv. Wants the Government to act fast to the prevailing economic, political and special life of Nigeria.

Having briefly examined the thrust of NEAC, one would be convinced beyond reasonable doubt that Nigeria is tending towards a failed state and this is quite unfortunate. This is because, Nigeria is expected to have developed more than its present level of socio-economic and political development. One, therefore, should be interested to find out what is wrong with the leadership and economic strategies been employed.

This paper succinctly and carefully digs deeply to the root of what is creating the gap between policy formulations by the government its policy implementation. Or better put, what is causing the political instability or crisis or bad governance and unsustainable economic development in Nigeria.

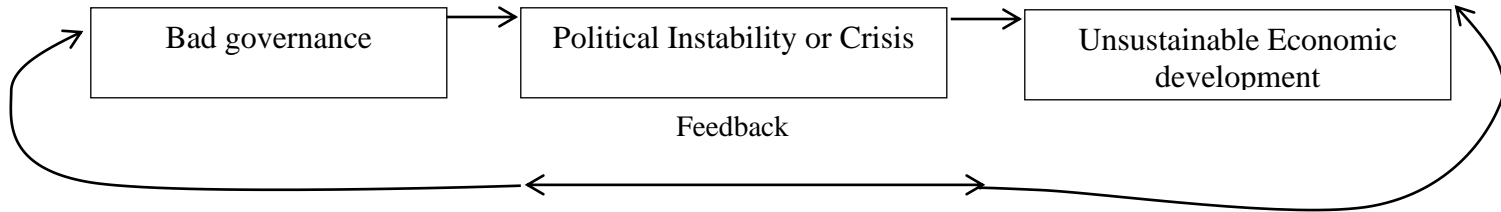
Interrogating the key subject-matters:

There are three fundamental questions that guide the subject matter of this paper to wit:

- What is bad governance?
- What is political instability?

- What is unsustainable economic development in Nigeria as demonstrated in the simple figure below?

Figure 1: Circular movement between Bad Governance, Political Instability and Economic Growth.



Conceptualizing bad and good governance.

Governance is the action or manner of governing a state or organization etc. A more responsive system of governance will be required. Governance comprises all of the processes of governing – whether undertaken by the government of a state and whether through the laws, norms, power or language of an organized society. In international development, good governance is a way of measuring how public institutions conduct public affairs and manage public resources in a preferred way.

The concept of “good governance” thus emerges as a model to compare ineffective economies or political bodies with viable economies and political bodies. There are nine major characteristics of good governance viz – participation, consensus, orientation, accountability, transparency, responsiveness, effectiveness and efficiency, equitability and the rule of law.

On the other hand, bad governance is the unfavourable relationship between those who govern and the governed. For example, those countries recently ranked by (TI) Transparency International using bad governance as indicator are Haiti, Myanmar, Iraq, Guinea Bissau, Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Chad, Bangladesh, Uzbekistan, Equatorial Guinea and Nigeria, among others.

Indeed, what makes governance of any society bad hangs on two legged established beliefs, namely:

1. The government and/or laws rewarding practices that are unjust and unfair to all; and
2. The Government using force against law abiding citizens or failing to punish those who are breaking laws.

Arising from the foregoing, certain fundamental questions need to be asked on bad governance. These are:

1. What are the factors of bad governance?
2. What are the causes of bad governance?
3. What are the features of bad governance?
4. What is the difference between a good governance and bad governance?
5. Why is the government bad?

These and other questions deserve debate and further discussion.

What is Political Instability?

A crisis whether political or not is from the Greek word “Krisis” meaning “disorder”. The standard definition of political instability is the propensity of a government that has collapsed either because of crisis or conflicts or rampant competition between various interest groups. Economic growth and political stability are deeply interconnected in relation to political instability. Political instability can be defined further in at least two ways. A first approach is to define it as the propensity for regime or government change. A second is to focus on the incidence of political upheaval or violence in a society such as assassinations, demonstrations and so forth.

Concept of Economic Development

The concept of economic development or progress is highly ambiguous. Ambiguity in terms of its relativism. That is to say, there is no universally acceptable definition of economic development. There is no uniform measuring instruments to measure economic development or economic progress analytically and empirically. This is so because, what country “A” may consider as economic development may not be considered as economic development in country “B” or country “C”. The economic reality and orientation of economic development of various countries in the world differ. Notwithstanding, there are certain irreducible characters of a developed economy. While it is not within the purview of this paper to go into details of these characteristics of development, it is our concern here that there are many factors that can influence economic development in any given country, Nigeria, not an exception. These factors among others include but not limited to:

- i. Rate of population growth/human resources.
- ii. Capital formation.
- iii. Cost/benefit analysis.
- iv. Formulation of right public policy.
- v. Implementation of public policy.
- vi. Technology.
- vii. Industrialization.
- viii. Agricultural development.
- ix. Security.
- x. Leadership.

Effects of Political Instability on Development?

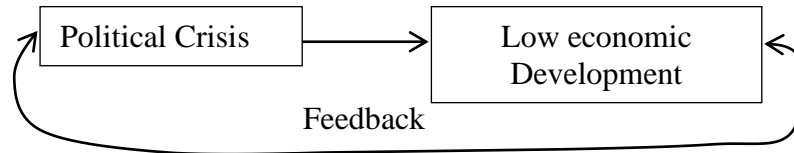
Political instability has negative effect on economic development for at least two reasons. First, it disturbs market activities and labour relations, which in turn have adverse effects on productivity. Secondly, political instability decreases economic growth because it affects investment negatively.

Some of the indicators of political instability are – social unrest, attitudes of nationals and policies of government. No wonder then that most politically stable countries in the world such as Australia, Switzerland, Sweden, Netherlands, Norway, Luxembourg, New Zealand etc witness

stable and progressive economies even more than some highly, industrialized countries like the US, Japan, France and UK etc in line with the UN Human Development Index (HDI) ranking.

This presupposes that political instability and economic growth has a circular relationship. That is to say, the relationship between political crisis and economy is circularly causal as demonstrated in the simple diagram below:

Figure II: Circular causal relationship between Political Crisis and Economy



As demonstrated in the diagram above, political crisis can negatively and positively affect, the economy. Political crisis in form of inconsistencies in policy formulation and implementation is having a negative implication on the economy. The most damaging force on the economy of any nation is that of leadership. Bad leadership of any given nation is highly inimical to the economy and vice-versa.

President Buhari’s Administration on Governance, Political Stability and Economic Development, 2015-2020

The Buhari’s administration no doubt inherited some challenges when he assumed the leadership of Nigeria in 2015 with a promise of “change” in all ramifications. People’s expectation was so high towards this drastic change. However, Buhari’s administrative style seems to some people to be weak and inapplicable to the prevailing political reality and economic situation of the country. There is apparent consensus among major stakeholders beyond party affiliation and political divide that Nigeria since 2015 has not fared well in terms of political instability for obvious reasons. The instability here does not implies change of government from Military to Civilian or from Civilian to Military. Far from this, the instability in this context has to do with pervasive nature of insecurity that has enveloped the country including the unsustainable norms and values of democratic government.

The quality of governance in Nigeria has been below standard and this makes sustainable development seem so far away to be achieved. The reason for political instability in Nigeria is due to the failure of certain key institutions that ensure good governance in the country. This implies that, with good governance, political stability can be achieved and overall sustainable development. From this point, we can now examine sector-by-sector analysis of socio-economic and political upheaval of Nigeria.

Sectorial Analysis

1. Leadership

Today, Nigeria, unlike in the past, appear to have been privatized. The privatization being referred to here is not in the sense of what the Bureau of Public Enterprises (BPE) does under the National Council on Privatization during President Olusegun Obasanjo's government. It is not about privatizing and commercializing state-owned enterprises and licensing private interest to be a player in the management of the country's economy. The privatization of Nigeria is in the mould of a few individuals in leadership positions acting without norms and values and operating the country as if it is their private estate. They act with impunity. To them, the rule of law is a theoretical textbook expression which should have no bearing on governance.

To buttress this poor leadership – the Northern Elders Forum (NEF) said on Saturday, 8, 2020, in major national dailies that, President Buhari had failed to secure and pilot the affairs of the Nigerian nation. The Professor Ango Abdullahi – led NEF stated this at a press conference on the state of the nation in Zaria, Kaduna State on Sunday the 9th of February, 2020. It was said that Buhari had failed not only the North but the entire country with his style of leadership. They said that they were disappointed by the Buhari's regime in terms of the security of lives and property of Nigerians. The forum demands a thorough overhaul of the leadership of our security and public safety agencies and higher levels of competence, integrity and accountability in the manner our troops and the police and security agencies deal with security challenges. The forum concluded that by any standard of judgment, the leadership of President Muhammadu Buhari has failed the nation in vital area of improving its security, poverty in Nigeria.

2. Infrastructural Sector

The parlous state of infrastructure has continued to slow down Nigeria's economic growth. The country's road network is a state of decay. Be they federal, state or local government roads, many of them are ridden with potholes and gullies thereby causing avoidable road accidents and securities risks as the bandits take advantage of the bad portions of the roads carry out armed robbery and kidnapping. Today, many people even at individual discomfort sometimes prefer to fly because of their safety and security concern as major highways have become safe havens for criminal elements like kidnapers, armed robbers, assassins and all foundations of miscreants.

3. Education Sector

Nigeria's education sector is comatose at present. Public schools which house over 80 per cent of pupils and students are in a state of disrepair. Learning in many public schools is now taking place in ramshackled and dilapidated structures. Learning materials are grossly inadequate with teachers and lecturers poorly remunerated and motivated.

4. Health Sector

Nigeria's health sector, like education is another sordid story. Many of our public hospitals are in deplorable conditions. They are poorly equipped and inadequately staffed. The patient to doctor ratio is abysmal. Former president of the Nigerian Medical Association, Prof. Mike

Ogirima, in March 2018 and in an interview said at the moment, Nigeria had a ratio of one medical doctor to 6,000 people in a given community. This is rather too bad in expression.

5. **Security**

Security-wise, no one will say the country is safer and better secured than it previously was. Before the advent of Boko Haram insurgency, Nigeria grappled with ethno-religious conflicts, banditry and kidnapping for ransom. Thrown into the mix now, are the herders/farmers clashes which have led to thousands of death as well as destruction of farmlands and livestock worth billions of naira. This has exacerbated the deep-seated animosity between Fulani herders and farmers across the country.

6. **Power Sector**

Electricity provision in the country is still very insignificant. At the best of time, the power generation is still hovering about 7,000MW. This is grossly inadequate to efficiently run the economy. Epileptic electricity supply has exponentially increased the cost of doing business in Nigeria as most companies have to run their business on power generating contraptions of all kinds. This has also substantially led to increased of fuel consumption.

7. **Oil Sector**

Ironically, 59 years after independence, the country still exports crude oil only to import refined petroleum products as our four state-owned refineries have gone comatose. Now, Nigeria is stuck with the corruption-laden fuel subsidy regime. According to record (Punch, December 11, 2019 – “Nigeria to spend N750.81 billion on fuel subsidy in 2020.

8. **Corruption**

Grand corruption remains a potent threat to Nigeria’s continued existence. While attempts are being made by federal agencies like the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, Independent Corrupt Practices and other Related Offences Commission, Code of Conduct Bureau and Tribunal and the police to fight the monster, the perpetrators have been finding creative and ingenious ways to escape punishment. In spite of the Administration of Criminal Justice Act, persecution of corruption cases is still being done at a snail’s pace. Just imagine what the billions of naira being stolen by our political leaders could have done to fix the infrastructural deficit of the country.

9. **Social Vices**

Social vices have reached an alarming rate in Nigeria. We are now experiencing mass assassination, armed robbery, drug addiction, kidnapping etc.

10. **Unemployment of the Youth**

Nigeria is making unforgotten history on mass employment of many graduates from higher institutions without job.

11. **High debt profile**

Minister of State for Budget and National Planning – Mr. Clem Agba said that huge debt is not plunging the nation into problem. This is not acceptable and this I think is not correct. Our High Debt rate in Nigeria is a matter of concern. The debt profile of Federal, State and Local Governments are now running to many trillions. It is now very difficult how such debt would be repaid

12. **Population growth**

The population growth at the rate of 3.2% is now a serious problem. This is because the population is growing higher than the Gross Domestic Product GDP. The population of Nigeria is growing at Geometric progression; the subsistence (food) is growing at Arithmetic progression.

13. **Rule of Law**

The rule of law has been negatively tampered with under Buhari's administration. It should be recalled under the principle of rule of law that "No one can suffer if he does break the law". Many are suffering without breaking the law. Again, "nobody is above the law" is more or else a slogan in Nigeria. Some proved to be above the law in many instances. Justice are delayed in the current dispensation.

The Way Forward

I. **Leadership:** As Nigeria marked its 59th anniversary of nationhood in 2019, President of the Senate, Ahmad Lawan, appealed to the citizens, particularly the political elite, to remain committed to the unity of the nation. In an independence anniversary message he personally signed in 2019, Senator Lawan acknowledged the enormous challenges facing the country, but noted that as patriotic citizens, Nigerians must collectively not lose sight of the potential of Nigeria achieving greatness. He further assured the nation that the 9th National Assembly under his leadership would provide the needed legislative support to stimulate growth and development. This is well said, but one advises that he should pursue this to its logical conclusion.

II. **Implementation of Major Constitution Conferences:** There should be no more delay in implementing the recommendations of the past constitutional conferences to devolve power to the states and achieve resource control and fiscal federalism to safeguard the union.

III. **Reform:** Nigeria must urgently reform, operate workable federalism and organize to allow for peaceful resolution or separation. As presently constituted and structured, there is

nothing sacrosanct about a political contraption, called Nigeria. The amicable separation and success of the Czech and Slovakia republics prove this very point right. There is no viable alternative to restructuring and unless we make the right choices, an untidy implosion is neither far-fetched nor too far way. Far from being celebration time. This is a time to act to save the tottering edifice.

IV. **Atiku's advice:** Also at the 59th independence anniversary of Nigeria in 2019, former Vice President, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar, has called on citizens to put the country first and work for its betterment. Abubakar, who was the presidential candidate of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) in the 2019 elections, gave the advice in a statement in Abuja, saying "no one is bigger than the laws of the land". He urged lovers of Nigeria to take concrete steps to aid Nigeria's progress by not just praying and showing understanding but also taking democratic action to ensure that the ideals of the country's founding fathers were protected. He said everyone had a role to play in making Nigeria great. By quoting him, "you see, when we put Nigeria first; we not only revive the Nigerian dream, we also revive unity and faith, peace and progress. These were the ideals that our founding fathers had in mind when they came together to put forward this new and independent nation 59 years ago. He further said "Nigeria belongs to all of us and we all have a role to play in making our nation great. Nigeria should be the beacon of hope, democracy and freedom, to not only the African continent, but to the black world over".

V. **Federal Character:** To begin with, not a few observers of the polity would agree that Nigerians have not been as divided along ethnic and religious cleavages as we find ourselves today. For instance, while some concerned Nigerians had expected President Muhammadu Buhari to be guided by the noble mantra of federal character and give out political appointments to guarantee ethnic equity. That of his first term were obviously skewed in favour of the North and his political acolytes. This has to stop.

Now we are in his second term and the paradigm has yet to shift. Add the controversial Ruga policy and the increasing vexation of the Myetti Allah group in national discourse. What about the inexplicable move by the Katsina State governor, Alhaji Aminu Masari, hobnobbing with bandits in the name of a spurious amnesty? So, the lives of their voiceless victims are worthless compared to that of the mindless killers! This must certainly stop.

(VI) **Political Spheres:** According to Umar Sani, spokesperson for the PDP presidential campaign, Masari's recent move is a clear indication of the failure of security across the country. Yet, there is another worrisome development that is currently riddling the political sphere, that calls for utter caution and concern. Barely five months of Buhari's second term, the issue of which of the geo-political zones to produce the 2023 presidency has taken precedence over how to pull Nigeria out of the ignoble status of the world's poverty capital. Or, how to get the army of our job-seeking youth running into millions out of the violent streets. There are already posters of the Kaduna State governor, Nasir Rufai adorning, the walls of some cities as he reportedly gears up for the plum political post. Both Babachir Lawal and Ahmed Yerima of the Arewa Youth group are making it loud and clear that the North is not about to hand over the presidential baton to any other section of the country in the next dispensation. This must stop.

(VII) Breaking/Separation: This has expectedly triggered off worries, anger and disbelief in some of those zones. Some people are even thinking of how Nigerians can go their separate ways, a move that is against the grains of the 1999 Constitution and is treasonable! In response, however, Chief Ayo Adebajo, a lawyer and nonagenarian chieftain of Afenifere, had this to say in a recent media chat: “People are talking of breaking up because the term of coming together has been abrogated by the Northern Muslims who are dominating us. This is why the young elements, extremists in the South-East, South-South and Middle Belt are yearning for a break-up just because of their refusal to yield to our demand for peaceful co-existence”. This situation calls for utmost caution, especially from the executive arm of government.

Truth be told, Nigeria cannot be governed by instilling fear in the helpless, hungry and hounded citizenry; with military operations such as Crocodile Smile, at a time some local government councils have been overtaken by the insurgents up there in Borno State. Methinks our military men would be of better use protecting our territorial integrity than riding roughshod on a people asking themselves what is really the worth of being called a Nigerian. Unity is never forged by the fierce flames of fiat, or by feisty, fratricidal force of inequity. No! Not in a democracy. And not in the 21st Century for a country made up of some 200 million people; or diverse ethnicity, culture class and religion.

Rather, unity evolves out of the clear understanding of who we are as a people and the mutual respect for our obvious differences. There is a bond of brotherhood that binds us all, if only we are humble enough to admit it; that we are here to complement one another’s efforts and overcome our weaknesses. Let us therefore, listen to the voice of reasons. According to the President General of Ohanaeze Ndigbo, Chief Nnia Nwodo, restructuring Nigeria is the answer to the waves of agitations currently hitting across Nigeria. At a lecture titled: Restructuring Nigeria: Decentralization for National Cohesion delivered in 2017 at the Royal Institute of International Affairs, Chatham House in London, Nwodo said, “Our present constitution is not autochthonous. It was not written by the people of Nigeria. It was not approved in a national referendum. In jurisprudence, its effectiveness will score a very low grade on account of its unacceptability”.

Conclusion

Our historic mission today is to keep in mind those dreams of our founding fathers, put our hands to the plough of nation-building and hand over to future generations a great foundation to build on. It is imperative on all of us, therefore, to play our parts individually and collectively to build the nation with a vision and achieve our destiny of prominence and influence on the global stage. With our creativity, resilience, hard work and eagle spirit, we shall surely ride the storms of these challenges to reach the heights that we desire.

We have no need to despair as a people. The leadership of this country must work hard to improve the lives of Nigerians. It should be recalled once again that, the leader of Northern forum recently said that our president lacks the will and competence to rule Nigeria and that he has done little to eradicate the menace of Boko Haram insurgency and social vices perverting negatively, the glory of Nigeria. The Government of Buhari has spent trillions of Naira to fight Boko Haram insurgency with little or nothing concrete to show. The Architectural security

system of Nigeria is faulty and something drastic must be done urgently. If possible, all the service chiefs should be sacked without delay. They appeared incompetent to solve the problem of Boko Haram Insurgency.

The big question that comes to mind is that, are we going to continue to live in perpetual fear in our country? Bearing in mind that millions of Nigeria are poor. We are rotating round the vicious cycle of poverty. Our per capita income (PCI) is exceedingly very low indeed. The standard of living is low and with high inflation. People are suffering in silence without any hope for better future. It is high time we debated exhaustively how we can break the vicious cycle poverty in Nigeria. As reported by the Punch newspaper of 11th of February, 2020, it was reported by the World Bank 87% of Nigeria's poverty rate is in Northern part of the country. Nigeria as a country cannot continue to operate in the prevailing manner. Our leaders should be more committed in proving solution to the multifarious problems facing us as a country. We have nowhere to hide our faces. The country belongs to all of us.

Finally, the analysis so far has clearly shown that everything is not well in Nigeria now. The 60years of political independence is more or less an economic dependence. It has been shown beyond reasonable doubt Nigeria is still a developing country.

One concludes that poverty in our land demands reviewing our strategy according to Lanre Adewole in Nigerian Tribune of 20 October, 2019. According to him, the problem of poverty in a country is solved by instilling in the people entrepreneurial skills; the ability to identify needs and move to meet such. That is the strength of many of the world's thriving economies. A country that has many wealth creators among its citizens cannot be pulled down by the weight of poverty. The government should start thinking along that line.

Poverty would not be banished in the land by alleviating it. The only way to kick poverty out of Nigeria is by raising a generation of entrepreneurs who will embrace wealth creation. Until we see wealth creation a strategy for combating poverty, many Nigerians will continue to be listed among the most wretched on the planet. That would be a shame, considering our humongous resources. Above all, Nigeria's Unity is desirable, anytime a Nigerian leader – past or present says the country's unity is non-negotiable, it indicates that there is something wrong with its unity. It means that the unity of Nigeria is shaky and uncertain. Here, everyone must abide with the unity of this country for the preservation and perpetuation of good governance, political stability and sustainable economic development in Nigeria.

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