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Governance and Political Crisis in Africa: Implication to Economic Growth and Development

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Abstract

The paper examined governance and political crisis in Africa with the aim of establishing that there is a relationship between bad governance and political crisis in most post African states. The moral and natural purpose of governance consists of assuring on behalf of those governed a worthy pattern of good, avoiding an undesirable pattern of bad. Good governance has been a challenge bedeviling most states in Africa. Several cases of political violence, riots, instabilities or uprising were waves of political crisis occasioned with bad governance. This has a great implication on economic growth and development as resources are expended to seek for resolution, restructuring, rebuilding and reintegration. The paper employed qualitative method using secondary data and adopted the theory of state fragility as its framework of analysis. It is revealed that the causes of most political crisis in Africa are not farfetched from greed, inordinate ambition, and quest for excessive control of political power without understanding the underlying principle of governance which is entrusting and to serve. The paper therefore recommends that the citizens, civil societies, political parties, legislative bodies, must act in concert to reinvent ethical values of governance, advocates for strong institutions that would enhance good governance devoid of political crisis. Participatory approach is needed to address the problem of governance in Africa.

Keywords: Governance, Political Crisis, Economic Growth, Development, Implication.

Introduction

The concept of governance is not new and is probably as old as human civilization. Governance relates to the quality of relationship between the government and the citizens whom it serves and protects. In Africa, there are a lot of talks regarding to governance and this is meaningful as long as there is accountability, people's right and freedom, and transparency in the government. It is unfortunate but true that good governance has eluded from many states in Africa. This has breed inequality, underdevelopment, conflicts and political instabilities in Africa. The state of governance in most states in Africa has led to cases of unresolved issues such as political crisis orchestrated by mostly political class who has deviated from

democratic ethos and principles of good governance. Seteolu (2004:70) pointed out that:

The governing class has been target of pillory, vilification, condemnation and disdain in view of the pervasive and persistent socio economic and political crisis. He further stated that the economic domain has been characterized by huge external debt overhang, net capital flight, collapse of social infrastructure, food crisis and insecurity, pervasive poverty, unpopular, repressive and alienating economic policies.

The staggering wave of political violence, insecurity, increase in crime rate, economic recession, corruption and many others are as a result of bad governance. Governance has become a recurring issue in the discourse on African project due to its emphasize on effective management of state resources to promote development and service delivery. A scrutiny of the World Bank governance indicators for Africa for the period of 2000 to 2015 shows that government efficiency dropped from 28 to 26 percent within the period. Other indicators like political stability and absence of terrorism and control of corruption also fell within the period. World Bank Report (2000)

It is against this backdrop that the paper interrogates the relationship between bad governance and political crisis in Africa which has great implications on economic growth and development. The paper further provides an insight on how bad governance in Africa has weakened institutions which would have act as checks and balances to ensure effective performance of governance and sustainable development. The manner which some African leaders perpetuates themselves into power and remained there for long without adhering to some of the principles of good governance such as accountability, stewardship, conduct of fair and free election, respect for human right and many others are indications that governance has a great challenge in Africa. There seems to be a total collapse of ethical governance with the abuse of every moral norm of administration and a loss of conscience towards rightness and objectivism in polity. For example, states like Sudan, Burundi, Cote d'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, Egypt, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, Mali, Sierra Leone, Liberia to be mentioned but a few once witnessed political crises as a result of lack of ethical values of governance that promotes good democratic principles. The paper is structured into five sections with the introduction appearing at the apex, section two discusses the theoretical perspective on governance and challenges of governance in Africa, section three discusses the nexus of governance and political crisis, section four examine the implication of governance and political crisis on Africa economic growth and development. Section five concludes by making useful recommendations.

Theoretical Perspective on Governance

Governance, as a management concept has progressively become a major concern for the success of any development initiative. The term is broad and subject to varying interpretations. Governance is referred to as the traditions and institutions

by which authority in a country is exercised for the common good. This includes (i) the process by which those in authority are selected, monitored and replaced. (ii) the capacity of the government to effectively manage its resources and implement sound policies and (iii) the respect of citizens and the state for the institutions that govern economic and social interactions among them (World Bank, 1989).

Adamolekun (2002) view governance as the process of exercising political power to manage the affairs of a nation. He listed the main elements of governance as; rule of law, freedom of speech and association, free and fair election, accountability, probity and transparency and result oriented leadership. Governance means initiating, directing and managing public resources, organizing people, directing subordinates to put in their best to achieve good result in a given assignment. It is about ensuring that things are done accordingly, accountability is maintained through the instruments of governance. In the realm of public affairs, governance is seen as the range of policies public officials make and means they employ to manage the affairs of society (Ukaegbu,2010).

World Bank Report (1989), identifying the crisis on the continent as one of governance refers it to be the extensive personalization of power, the denial of fundamental human rights, widespread of corruption and the prevalence of illegitimate and unaccountable government. More so, governance is seen as a set of values, policies and institutions through which society manages economic, political as well as social processes at different levels, on the basis of interaction among the government, civil society and private sector. Governance relates to the quality of relationship between the government and citizens whom it serves and protects (Afegbua, 2012)

Sahni (2003), states that governance has social, political and economic dimension. It is seen as one in which the concerned authority if any exercises power, exerts influence and manages the country's social as well as economic resources leading to better development. The importance of governance entails a process of organizing and managing legitimate power structures, entrusted by the people, to provide law and order, protect fundamental human rights, ensure rule of law and due process of law, provide for the basic needs and welfare of the people and the pursuit of their happiness. (Galadima, 1998)

According to Barkan (1992), governance involves less in the way of administrative management and more in the way of political management; with its emphasis on developing networks of reciprocity and exchange, governance increases the possibilities of accomplishing more while spending less. In the view of Ogundiya (2010), governance is seen as the process that is employed to achieve the noble end of the state. He further states that governance is better conceived from Lasswell's traditional definition of politics as who gets what, when, and how and perhaps how much. Thus, governance has a lot to do with the allocation of values in the society, which to a large extent, is political in nature. In another dimension, Adelegan (2009) writes that:

Governance is a very complex issue, which to all intents and purposes, gives authority to some people to legally control a country and its people, and be

responsible for introducing new laws, administering justice, organizing public services, fashioning regulatory policies, and generally overseeing the conduct of the general populace (Adelegan, 2009, p.1).

Governance is legitimate in a real sense when the government is installed by the people through institutional arrangements that are put in place by the people and when the performance of the ruler is adjudged good and accepted by the people.

Ndehfru (2007) sees governance as a fundamental process through which the lives and dreams of the citizenry are collectively pursued by deliberate and systematic strategies and policies, for the realization of their maximum potentials. He went on to argue that this process is a combination of responsible leadership and enlightened public participation. The type of governance a society enjoys depends on the substance of not only the leaders but also on that of the followers. Indeed, even in a situation where the citizens play spectatorial roles in the society, their participation in watching what is ongoing in the complex society; and their reaction to it would predominantly determine or modify the behavior of the leadership (Dowse and Hughes, 1972). Furthermore, governance is described as the overall manner in which public officials and institutions acquire and exercise their authority to shape public policy and provide public goods and services (de Ferranti et al, 2009).

According to Kaufmann (2005), there are six major indicators that capture the quality of governance; (i) Voice and accountability: This refers to the participation of the civil society in monitoring and measuring political decisions on civil and human rights (ii) Political Instability: It examines the vulnerability of government to changes through violent threats or unconstitutional means (iii) Government effectiveness: It measures the quality and the competence of civil servants in service delivery including their credibility as well as the effectiveness of the bureaucratic process (iv) Regulatory quality: It measures whether the policies are friendly to business environment. (v) Rule of law: It measures whether the quality of law enforcement including the police, the courts, as well as property rights are not vulnerable to crime or violence (vi) Control of corruption: It measures the exercise of public power for private gain, including bribery and extortion.

It is very clear that the level of bad governance exhibited by the leadership in most African states has been to a great extent enhanced by the political orientations of the followers. For instance, in Africa, for other forms of corrupt and related vices to thrive, the formidable solidarity and cooperation of both the leadership and followers must take the central stage. Most Leaders in Africa commit crimes with impunity and walk the street free and even rewarded with higher offices and honors while the followership looks the other ways simply because those involved share the same primordial ties or belong to the same religion, group, party and ethnicity with them.

Good governance is a key instrument that oils a sustained peaceful, secured and overall development of society as it likely to breed peace and provide for security of lives and property, which will in turn create the enabling environment for sustainable development to thrive. Odock (2006; cited in George-Genyi, 2013:57) states that good governance is 'a system of government based on good leadership,

respect for the rule of law and due process, accountability of the political leadership to the electorate as well as transparency in the operation of government''. He further noted that the full exposition of the theory and practice of good governance hinges on the role played by leadership. A cursory look at his view implies that good governance is an enterprise jointly undertaken by both the leadership and the followers.

In this paper, the understanding of governance and political crisis in Africa is premised on the paradigm of state fragility theory. The state fragility theory stresses the fundamental failure of a state to perform functions necessary to meet citizen's basic needs and aspiration. The centrality of this theory further posits the weakness and incapability of government in assuring basic security, maintaining rule of law and justice, or providing basic services and economic opportunities for their citizens, curtailing wide spread corruption and criminality. Rotberg (2003), notes that in a fragile state, there is a tendency for increased criminal violence which further weakens the states authority. States are usually associated with tensed, deeply conflicted and dangerous warring factions whom most times lead to breakdown of law and order. Critics with regard to this theory argue that most studies of state fragility are based on a uniform, state-centric and simplistic analysis of political institution. However, the justification of this theory is premised on the fact that good governance has been a challenge to most states in Africa. Most states in Africa has not known or felt the impact of good governance since their independence. As a result of this, governance in its entirety has become a problem in the sense that the necessary ingredients for good governance are hardly found. This has affected economic growth and development, promoted corruption and political instability, engendered weak institutions in the continent. Majority of the Leaders in Africa have failed to adhere to the principles of good governance and this in turn has led to vicious circle of governance crisis.

Governance and Political Crisis in Africa: The Nexus

For over many years of independence of African States, African quest for economic growth and development had only marginal success. This has been attributed to bad governance. Several attempts at explaining the inseparable links between governance and political crisis have generated perspectives such as the effects of good or bad governance on the political system. Governance promotes political crisis where it manifests in corrupt practices, greed, inordinate ambition, quest for excessive control of political power and many others. Bad governance has been understood to reflect a general tendency of a public institution not being able 'to manage public affairs and public resources'. Bad governance becomes more pronounced when a state or government fails to meet the needs of the society even though it makes use of the best of all the resources at their disposal. The issue of bad governance has weakened governance institutions that have resulted to economic stalemate, political apprehensions or crisis and breakdown of social peace and stability. Most political crisis within the regions of Africa has a relationship with bad governance and leadership failure.

In view of Bissessar (2009) bad governance is regarded as a symptom of institutional and leadership failures, explicitly ‘manifested by its long list of dictatorial leaders, non free media and undemocratic elections’. Citing Jespersion, Owoye and Bissessar (1992) note that:

Africa performed well in the early years of its independence, but failed in its performance tests past 1973 as the region is now characterized by low growth rates, declining agricultural production, stagnating manufacturing, rising imports, and rapidly expanding external debts... has had many coups, civil unrest, ethnic violence; and widespread bureaucratic corruption alongside administrative inefficiency, and institutional ineptitude or outright failure.

They further noted that highly manifest corruption and its related practices have been identified as major constraints on Africa’s economic, political and social development. Also, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific (2016) confirm that:

Bad governance includes governments that are ineffective and inefficient, not transparent, not responsive to the people, not held accountable for their actions, inequitable and exclusive to the elites, non-participatory; do not follow the rule of law and lacking policies that are consensus driven ([http://www.unescap.org/pdd/prs/project Activities/ongoing/gg/governance.pdf](http://www.unescap.org/pdd/prs/project%20Activities/ongoing/gg/governance.pdf)) (cited in Owoye & Bissessar, 2009:1)

In this vein, Owoye citing Calderisi (2006) maintained that persistent problems of inept leadership, institutional failure, and pandemic corruption as factors of bad governance in Africa. For Calderisi, ‘Africa’s problem is that it has never known good government..., and no continent has experienced such prolonged dictatorships’. (cited in Owoye, 1992). However, agreeing with Owoye and Calderisi, Ayittey (2012) opines that :

Corruption epidemic in African nations owes its existence to the long term tenure of their dictators, and he made this explicit by providing a graphic exposition of a long list of African dictators most of whom have held on to political power ranging from thirty to forty years.

He further maintained that these dictators owe their successes to the effective control on the central bank, civil service, judiciary, the electoral commission, media as well as the security forces. Thus, corruption remains unabated in the continent because ‘weak or failed institutions cannot control the excesses of their dictators’, due primarily to the fact that they were built on the unstable foundation of bad governance and pandemic corruption.

Political crisis is an uncertain political situation that is expected to lead to instability, unstable and dangerous situation affecting an individual, group, community or whole society.

Kew (2006) noted that one of the major factors responsible for political instability is the failure of the political class to sufficiently adhere to the basic tenets of democracy and constitutionalism. To buttress this view, Burundi political impasse serves as a concrete example. Nkurunziza in his quest to remain in power and to run for third term which is against the electoral law and constitution of Burundi which proscribed only two terms for the office of head of state succeeded in plundering Burundi into political crisis which cost over the lost of two hundred thousand lives and more than four hundred thousand people displaced. This is also synonymous with some African states such as Zimbabwe, Equatorial Guinea, Cote d'Ivoire, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea-Bissau, Rwanda, Kenya, Sudan, Libya, Egypt, Republic of Zaire, Mali and many others whose leaders remained in power for over decades which their inordinate ambitions has resulted to political crises. As Harrison (2006:2) has rightly noted, this situation has given rise to abuse of power, brazen corruption, disregard for due process and rule of law, intolerance of political opposition, abuse of electoral process and the weakening of institutions. This contradicts the tenet of governance which presupposes the process of social engagement between the rulers and the ruled in a political community. (Adejumobi, 2004)

Implications of Governance and Political Crisis on Economic Growth and Development

Governance has been identified as indispensable for social change, economic growth and human development of a country (Mangu, 2008). Governance is a broader concept. The changing nature or approach to governance has a greater impact on economic growth and development. In the context of economic growth, governance has increasingly become a major instrument for the successful growth performance. In Africa, governance has been a concern since 1960s when some African countries got their independence (Khan, 2006). Poor governance adversely affects economic growth which has manifested through corruption, political instability, ineffective rule of laws and weak institutions.

In the words of Khan and Senhadji (2001), poor governance by African countries has led to poor economic growth since it affects negatively investment, productivity, foreign aid and consumption. The inability of African leaders to harness the nation vast resources and reserves towards socio economic development continuously calls to question the composition of the fabric of governance in Africa. There seems to be a total collapse of ethical governance with the abuse of every moral norm of administration and loss of conscience towards rightness and objectivism in policy. It is a truism that the quality of governance in a country directly affects the level of stability, economic growth and development that a country enjoys. Bad governance result to underdevelopment and political instability in Africa. (Ologbenla, 2007)

According to World Bank study of Sub Sahara Africa, “the problem of Africa’s development is a crisis of governance”. The study further affirmed that:

Because of the selfish interest of some state officials, who have served in one capacity or the other and have deliberately refused to give account of their activities while in office, such office become personalized. Thus, paving ways for unnecessary patronage, which consequently undermine the authority of the leadership. It thus, becomes difficult for a sustainable and dynamic economy to grow in such environment (World Bank, 1989).

For any Government to rule effectively and achieve sustainable development, it has to ensure good governance. Governance depends on a range of factors including administrative capacity, the country’s stages of development, the external conditions that it faces, and the information available to it for taking decisions. The quality and effectiveness of governance enhances the state’s capacity to deal with issues such as problem solving, conflict resolving capacity and the efficient performance of its functions, based on involvement of societal coalition for development. The prime duty of a state is to protect its citizen, promote growth, sustain development and social justice. Both protection and equity driven development are essential and in order to achieve the goals of welfare, peace and order have to be ensured. Otherwise, proper development is not possible. In most states in Africa, the underlying principles of governance such as entrusting, serve and accountability is absent because of greed, inordinate ambition to continuously remain and control all the paraphernalia of power, low literacy, fickle mindedness of the people and widespread corruption.

The fact is that, a crisis of governance exists in Africa. Instances of lack of good governance are too many to mention. They are manifested by pervasive corruption, misappropriation of state funds, absence of transparency and accountability, lack of respect for rule of law and reluctance to delegate power to grass root organizations. The result is propensity of the state to rule but not to govern which signifies inhumane governance. As demonstrated by many scholars, governance is critical for the establishment of democracy and for democratic consolidation. As observed by Huntington (1991), democracy will spread in the world to the extent that those who exercise power in the world and individual countries want it to spread. The banes of political crisis in Africa are caused by bad governance and the inability of African political class to work in tune with the ethos and democratic principles of governance. This has undermined the political, economic and social system thereby creating vicious circle of crisis which impedes growth and development.

To exemplify this are some African countries such as Burundi, Guinea Bissau, Mali, Kenya and many others whom their leaders’ decisions or quest to stay in power has caused political crisis. However, there are some African countries whose leaders have stayed in power for over two to three decades thereby seeing governance as a private oriented position. They are not accountable and responsive to

principles of good governance. Though such countries could or may have enjoyed political stability but has challenges of economic growth and democratic choice in making proper representation. This has negative implications on democratic values and development of a political society. For example Teodoro Obiang (Equatorial Guinea), Jose dos Santos (Angola), Paul Biya (Cameroon), Yoweri Museveni (Uganda), Mswati III (Swaziland), Omar Al Bashir (Sudan), Robert Mugabe (Zimbabwe), if not he was recently ousted by the military has stayed in power for decades. These countries are considered among the poor in Africa. (Freedom House, 2015). In these countries, the will of people via periodic free and fair elections have been truncated. Any attempt to raise a dissenting voice is met with force, intimidation and persecution. At times political crisis that has triggered in these countries were suppressed and squashed by security operatives. However, a scrutiny of the World Bank governance indicators for Africa for the period 2000 to 2015 shows that government efficiency dropped from 28 to 26 percent within the period. Other indicators like political stability and absence of terrorism and control of corruption also fell within the period.

More so, some African countries went through governance failures and corruption at the same point in time but their governance capacity made them recover and ensure the maintenance of rapid growth performance through constant demands to improve government and reduce corruption. For example Botswana, South Africa and few others. This could not happen if governance capacity was poor and non-sustainable.

Conclusion

Governance has increasingly become a major instrument for the successful growth performance and development purposes in the world. The paper explores the relationship between governance and political crisis with the aim of establishing that Africa's economic growth and development suffers a setback as a result of bad governance. Also, most political crises witnessed in Africa are not far-fetched from greed, inordinate ambition and quest for excessive control of political power by leaders in African states. In the words of Ocheni and Nwankwo (2012:46), this style of governance has orientation passed on from the colonialist who only sought, pursued and harnessed self-interest while sacrificing the betterment and good of the colonized. The first and second objective of colonialism is political domination and exploitation of the colonized country.

Significantly, Africa is among the continents of the world endowed with human and material resources that are capable of improving socio-economic status and living standards of the people. The inability of African leaders to harness the nation's vast resources and reserves towards socio-economic development continuously calls to question the composition of the fabric of governance in Africa. It is a truism that bad governance results to underdevelopment and political instability. It has adverse effects on investment, productivity, consumption, foreign aid, promotes corruption, engenders weak institutions and undermines the ethos of democratic principle of governance which is entrusting and to serve. There is need to reinvent

ethical values of governance, advocates for strong institution that would enhance good governance devoid of corruption, political instability, incompetence, sit tight leadership style, lack of accountability, political bickering leading to the enthronement of mal administration and mismanagement of public resources. Concerted efforts are needed by the public, stake holders and those in governance to improve the performance and integrity of civil services.

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