

# Good Governance and Sustainable Socio-political Development in

## Nigeria: A Discourse

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### Abstract

As a universally accepted socio-political instrument in overcoming the challenges of socio-political instability good governance provides opportunities for popular participation in decisions that affect the life of the people, access to power and transparency, predictable and stable legal frameworks – rule of law – that promotes equality of citizens as well as accountability of those in power. Often socio-political policies presumably designed to meet the need and promote the sustainability of socio-political development are deliberately manipulated by the political leaders and in the process circumvent constitutional provisions thus making the reality of a sustainable political system through good governance a pipe dream. This work presents an understanding of good governance and sustainable socio-political and economic development, the essence of the state which is not embedded in the constitution but also a function of the ideas and nature of problem confronting the state. Good governance no doubt is pivotal to successful and sustainable development; hence for enduring developmental progress to take place the basic tenets of good governance must be well institutionalized.

**Keywords:** Good governance, Accountability, Sustainability, Corruption, Development

### 1. Introduction

Only when we are clear about the kind of society we are trying to build can we design a socio-political system that will serve the desired socio-political goals for which a sustainable political system is obtained. To Julius Nyerere (1967) a sustainable socio-political development can be achieved when the socio-political system is based on the principle of equality, respect for human dignity, sharing of distributive socio-political resources by all and exploitation by none.

More often socio-political policies presumably designed to meet the need and promote the equality of all citizens are deliberately manipulated by the political class – a relatively small group of people that is conscious and active in politics and from whom the national leadership is drawn. However this class, mostly instrumental to the patron-client network within government has, in a sense, cultivated alliances where their primary interest is their socio-political gains through the manipulation of the system to the detriment of the majority, they acted in contempt of constitutional rules and agreements they had sworn to uphold to enhance their own power, ignore or deliberately circumvent constitutional provisions and thus making the reality of a sustainable political system in the polity through good governance a pipe dream.

In a situation like this, the authority of governments over their people tends to be progressively eroded; which invariably reduces compliance with decisions and regulations. In this way, the socio-political and economic rights of citizens are affected and the demand for this leads to conflicts which affect the sustainability of socio-political development negatively. Therefore good governance is predicated upon mutually supportive and cooperative relationships between government, civil society, and the private sector. The nature of relationships among these three groups of actors, and the need to strengthen viable mechanisms to facilitate interactions, assume critical importance. Consequently one of the major challenges to having a sustainable socio-political and economic development Nigeria today is dearth of good governance.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. Section two look at the concept of governance, section three explains good governance. Section four look at some of the problems associated with sustainable development in Nigeria. Finally, section five concludes that the sustainability of socio-political and economic development in Nigeria hinges on corrupt free governance with strong open, transparent efficient and accountable political institutions.

## 2. The Concept of Governance

In the last two decades, the concepts of governance and good governance have become extensively used in both the academic and donor communities – the Western world. This is why governance can be used in several contexts such as corporate governance, international governance, national governance and local governance. This has significantly contributed to the arrays of connotations given to the concept. These two traditions have different conceptualizations. On one hand there is the academic approach, which focuses mainly on the study of the different ways in which power and authority relations are structured in a given society/country for the sustainability of such society. On the other hand there is the donor community's approach, which places value on the role state structures play in ensuring socio-political and economic policy justice and accountability through open policy processes.

However governance has been variously defined by scholars as the management of society by the people, or as the exercise of authority to manage a country's socio-political affairs and resources. Udo (2004) however comments that there has hardly been unanimity as to its core meaning, and as to how it could be applied in practice. Though the term has always been given a significant place by the donor community in the frameworks for socio-political and economic development but the fact is the term is yet to have a standard meaning.

The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (6th edition) defines governance as the activity of governing a country. Streeteen (n.d) perceive governance to be the sum of the many ways in which individuals and institutions, public and private, manage their common affairs. Hence a continuing process through which conflicting or diverse interest may be taken. Balogun (1998:3) however believe that some scholars view governance as the act of governing, while others draw a corollary between it and the democratization process, the process of empowering the civil society actors and institution, and some others view it in a more nuanced form as the problematic relationship between the state and civil society. The term governance no doubt has gained great usage in contemporary public administration. Scholars and theorists in the field believe that the term governance is an organizing concept that guides the political leaders as administrative practices shift from the bureaucratic state to what Osborne and Gaebler (1993) see as third-party government.

In a shift from the above Eregha (2007) perceive governance to be the total ability to organize, synthesize and direct the various actions of the working parts of the government machinery in order for such a government to perform meaningfully, creditably and acceptably. What this suggests is that governance is a rational concept that place value on the nature of interactions between the state and the people and among the people themselves. Akpotor (cited in Eregha, 2007) submitted that governance covers all aspects of the relations – complex or simple – that exist between a government and a people. Therefore the extent to which the people's affairs are managed depends on the class of people in power. Which in other words means governance could be good or bad.

Conceptually, governance is different from politics but as a human phenomenon, governance is exercised within a given socio-political and economic context and belongs to a broader department of politics. When it comes to the allocation of values, politics is authoritative but governance has to do with the process and mechanisms of allocating these values without jeopardizing the principles of equality, justice and fairness. Hence, governance is the process employed by the state to attain a range of desired socio-political goals (Ogundiya, 2010). To Jon Pierre (2000) governance is a means of sustaining coordination and coherence among a wide variety of socio-political actors with different purposes and objectives. The actors in this regard may include political class, interest groups and the civil society as well as non-governmental organizations, hence the assertion that governance is different from politics.

From the above governance can be seen as the exercise of political, economic, and administrative authority to manage a country's affairs at all levels. In essence It explained that governance has three dimensions: political, administrative and economic. Political governance is the process of decision-making to formulate policies. Political governance however seek to prevent and reduce intra and inter-state conflicts, implementation of constitutional democracy, which include free and fair election and the rule of law that guarantee the promotion and protection of

rights of the people. Administrative governance is the system of policy implementation and promotes accountability as well as efficiency of public office holders while economic governance includes the decision-making processes that affect a country's economic activities and its relationships with other economies. Incorporating all three, good governance defines the processes and structures that guide political and socio-economic relationships.

In a departure from the above for real socio-political and economic development to take place in a state there is need to create an atmosphere of peace and stability which will boost confidence and faith in every individual and group that make up the country. This brings us to the fact that governance cannot be explained in isolation without the institutions through which the act of governance is carried out. The sustainability of a polity no doubt requires a workable political system devoid of manipulation from the political leaders. Put in another words for socio-political sustainability of a state, the political instrument through which the character of the people is measured remains very significant. Therefore the success of national integration cum development in a state depends on the viability of the political institutions devoid of manipulation.

Institutions are seen as durable systems of established social rules and conventions that structure repeated human interaction through which a society (state) undertakes certain functions which may be political, economic or social (Hoggson, 2001, North, 1989). In essence, an institution is a regulatory agent that specifies and motivates how groups and individuals in a society perform certain or specific socio-political and economic functions. In a political system, institutions no doubt would have a profound influence – negative or positive – on the pattern of socio-political and economic performance. Political and economic institutions are two variables that significantly rely on each other, giving us an insight into the fact that economic development may best be promoted by political institutions and vice versa.

Diamond (2012) observes that while economic institutions are critical for determining the prosperity of a state, it is the politics and political institutions that determine what economic institution a country has. By political institution we mean an organization which creates, enforces and applies laws that mediate/manage conflict, make policies on the economy and the social (regulatory and welfare agencies) system. Examples of political institutions include political parties, the courts etc. The term may also refer to the recognized rules and principles within which the above organizations operate including such concepts as the right to vote and to be voted for. Political institutions affect economic institutions by providing the political frameworks that creates rules that either facilitate or militate against the growth of the economic institutions. Thus, sustainable political institutions will lead to progressive economic institutions. Put in another word the growth and well-being of the state depend on the workability of the political institution in place.

On the other hand, economic institutions can be viewed as those institutions that perform economic functions in relation to establishing and protecting the economic rights of groups and individuals and as well permit cooperation in a state. Inclusive economic institutions are those that allow and encourage the participation of groups and individuals in economic activities and allow individuals to make the choices they wish, observes Diamond (2012). All-encompassing economic institutions arise from political institutions that share political power, particularly in a multi-ethnic state instead of allowing power to be vested in individuals. In other words, political power rests on the broad participation of citizens in the decision making process. This would deprive the political class of their exclusive control of socio-political and economic power. Significantly, economic growth can be promoted by political institutions. Hence political institutions are a deep cause of development Flachaire et al. (2011).

The above shows that good and workable political and economic institutions are unequivocally needed for the sustainability of a political system. In other words good institutions refers to laws and practices that serve as a motivational factor for citizens (groups and individuals) to work hard, and become economically productive, and thereby enrich themselves as well as the state. Precisely, good economic and political institutions will likely increase the possibility of resolving re-distributional conflicts in a state.

A close observation of the above submission shows that for political and economic institutions to function in multi-ethnic state of Nigeria there has to be inclusive governance that will serve as a corrective measure to social-political exclusion, inequality and the hegemonic dominance of the political class. Inclusive governance refers to the perception that every individual and group in a state has equal socio-political and economic rights to be part of the society which invariably enhances governance and promotes effective institutions, sound socio-economic policies,

and respect for values of everyone in the state. What this suggests is that the sustainability of a system depends on the functionality of strong economic and political institutions where the political institution is functionally designed to serve the interest of the people.

### 3. Explaining Good Governance

The relationship between governance and development has raised the international policy agenda. There is widespread agreement that governance matters intrinsically and for improvement in economic and social outcomes. Good governance is perhaps the single most important factor in promoting socio-political and economic development. But what exactly is good governance? Thinking about how best to govern is not a new issue. According to Ogundiya (2010) it was central to Aristotle's thinking about how best to facilitate people's ability to lead flourishing lives in Ancient Greece. In the literatures on governance, virtually everyone agrees on some key points; that governance refers to process – how things are done, that a discussion of governance requires more than a focus on government. It also relates to the nature of relations between state and society. In essence it refers to the nature of rules that regulate the public realm – the space where the state, the political and economic actors interact to make decision and promote values for the whole organization and demonstrate the values of good governance through effective and transparent socio-political decisions.

Therefore good governance; when defined in terms of this paper means fair and equitable allocation of resources for the achievement of the end or purposes of the state, which is the promotion of the common good of the citizens. Good governance provides opportunities for popular participation in decisions that affect the life of the people, access to power and transparency as well as accountability of those in power. Thus socio-political stability is a product of good governance.

Good governance, no doubt, is a universally accepted socio-political instrument that every nation can use to stem the challenges of political instability. Which is why Munshi (2004) believes good governance signifies a participative manner of governing that functions in a responsible, accountable and transparent manner based on the principles of efficiency, legitimacy and consensus for the purpose of promoting the rights of individual citizens and the public interest, thus indicating the exercise of political will for ensuring the material welfare of society and sustainable socio-political development with social justice.

Eyinla (cited in Omotola 2007) sees good governance as accountability, security of human rights and civil liberties, devolution of powers and respect for local autonomy. Good governance is closely linked to the extent to which a government is perceived and accepted as legitimate, committed to improving public welfare and responsive to the needs of its citizens, competent to assure law and order and deliver public services, able to create an enabling policy environment for productive activities and equitable in its conduct.

Therefore, a system of good governance would consist of a set of rules and institutions, a legal frame work for development and a system of public administration which is open, transparent, efficient and accountable. In other words it is a system that sees nothing in corruption, nepotism; exclusivism etc. but embrace political actions that engender socio-political productivity. Good governance comprises the existence of effective mechanisms, processes and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations and mediate their differences. Significantly good governance can be judged within these four premises (a) individuals and groups must be allowed to participate in decision-making, either directly or through their elected representatives. Of course this is built on freedom of association and speech, as well as on the capacity to participate in governance constructively (b) decision-makers in government; the private sector and civil-society organizations should be accountable to the public as well as to institutional stakeholders (c) a fair, predictable and stable legal frameworks – rule of law – that enforces impartially, particularly the laws on human rights as well as promote the equality of all (d) transparency, this is built on the free flow of information. Processes, institutions and information should be directly accessible to the citizens.

The above inform us that good governance also involve democratic politics. It is precisely for this reason that development cannot simply be managed into motion by some idealized system of good governance, evacuated from the world of politics. Scholars have suggested that neither democracy nor good governance is independent variables. They are dependent ones, and whatever their relationship with socio-political as well as economic growth and

development may be, both are the product of particular kinds of politics and can be found in states which promote and protect them.

As a universally accepted socio-political instrument it could help in overcoming the challenges of socio-political instability. Good governance could be used to invite judgment about how a country is governed. It enables the raising of evaluative question about proper procedures, transparency, responsiveness, the quality and process of decision making, and other such matters (Doombos, 2001: 94). Therefore if socio-political development/stability must be achieved; Nigeria must aim for growth that cannot be easily reversed through the political process of imperfect – bad governance.

Good governance is measured by the level of its performance; that is its ability to effectively deliver the most crucial socio-political goods-beginning with security-to citizens of nation-states. The hierarchy of political goods begins with the supply of security, especially human security within which citizens are able to resolve and manage disputes without recourse to arms or other forms of coercion. It can also be measured through the provision of political and civil freedom, that is, participation of citizens freely, openly, and fully in politics and the political process. This encompasses the right to compete for political office, tolerance of dissent and difference; as well as fundamental human rights, a fiscal and institutional context within which citizens can prosper, support for civil society, a method of regulating the sharing of the environmental commons etc. This eventually creates an environment that is conducive to socio-economic and political development. Together, the management, supply and delivery of these goods constitute governance, and the extent to which nation states do or do not perform well.

Madhav (2007) believes good governance has much to do with the ethical grounding of governance and must be evaluated with reference to specific norms and objectives as may be laid down. It looks at the functioning of the given segment of the society from the point of view of its acknowledged stakeholders, beneficiaries and customers. It must have firm anchorages in certain morals, standards, values and principles. One fact that should be noted is that the question of dealing with governance, though related to democracy is culture specific and system bound. This depends, to some extent, on the historical experiences of a nation, its culture, and the aspirations of its people and the stated socio-economic and political objectives of the state, including individual and group preferences, current issues, the expectations of the governed, type of political system as well as the ideological and the religious disposition of the state. Hence, the conceptualization of governance as the totality of the exercise of authority in the management of a country's affairs, comprising of the complex mechanisms, processes, and institution through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights and mediate their differences.

#### **4. Associated problem of sustainable development in Nigeria**

To describe governance as good or bad, an understanding of the essence of the state which are not embedded in the constitution but also a function of the ideas and nature of problem confronting the state is required. The essence of the state to earlier thinkers such as Aristotle, Plato, and Rousseau is to promote the common good of the citizens notwithstanding their political or ethnic status.

Governance no doubt matters instrumentally for socio-political and economic development as well as performance. Better governance is positively associated with improved investment and growth rates. Government effectiveness, an efficient bureaucracy and the rule of law are associated with better economic performance. Sustainable development is seen as the process by which a type of socio-political and economic change is introduced into a system in order to produce a better production and improved social arrangement. However, the level and rate of socio-political and economic development of any particular society is influenced by variables such as the political culture, leadership and governance. In Nigeria lack of good governance has become an impediment to true and real development in the polity, hence development is all about positive societal organization for the benefit of all.

Here, we posit that lack of good governance in Nigeria is a manifestation of its leadership and institutional failure and corruption is one of its indicators. Corruption has been defined as the perversion of integrity or state of affairs through bribery, favor or moral depravity, an act in which the power of public office is used for personal gain in a manner that contravenes the rules of the game (Jain 2001, Lawal 2007). When corruption acts like a debilitating Trojan horse, it is bound to negate development and even democracy. Scholars have come to agree that corruption can be categorized into the productive and the unproductive, where the latter is associated with most African states

and the former with the Western world). Therefore the failure of governance in Nigeria is a function of the nature and character of the Nigerian political elites.

Significantly Nigerian leaders are self-aggrandizers and self-perpetuators who subvert and debauch every key institution of government to serve their needs and not that of their people. Therefore the problem of sustainable development in Nigeria is both a symptom and consequences of bad governance. Corruption no doubt is endemic in most African societies it occurs in the political, economic and administrative spheres. Corruption is worse in countries where institutions, such as the legislature and the judiciary are weak, where rule of law and adherence to formal rules are not rigorously observed, where political patronage is the standard practice, where the independence and professionalism of the public sector has been eroded and where civil society lacks the means to bring public pressure to bear (Lawal, 2007:1). Arguably, all these are found in Nigeria socio-political system and significantly, a major threat to good governance and expected socio-political development.

Scholars and other international experts rank public sector corruption or the use of public office for personal gain, as a major constraint that has hindered Africa economic, political, and social development. In relation to this is the rate of poverty which has creatively become part of Nigerian life. Persistent socio-political and economic poverty is a destabilizer, especially if such poverty is shared in a grossly unequal manner, or is widely regarded as being unfairly distributed as the few who are relatively rich indulge in conspicuous consumption. Known or suspected corruption among the political class often makes the problem worse. It should be noted that corruption throughout the society is more difficult to overcome. Significantly political instability, real or imagined, can be a source, and is often used as an excuse, for bad governance.

Historically Nigeria relatively performed well in the early years of independence but from the 1970s everything seems to have failed or collapse totally as a result of low economic growth rates, declining agricultural production, stagnating manufacturing, rising imports, and rapidly expanding external debts. It should be noted that agriculture was the mainstay of Nigeria economy before the discovery of oil in commercial quantity; unfortunately the groundnut pyramid in the north, cocoa in the west and palm oil in the east has all disappeared. Apart from administrative inefficiency of Nigerian leaders economic mismanagement has since been the bane of sustainable socio-political development in the country coupled with many civil unrests, and ethnic violence. Political leaders using the instrument of office manipulate political institutions to perpetually and dictatorially remain in office. What this suggests is that bad governance in Nigeria is manifested by its unfashionable and undemocratic administrative system.

It is important, however, to realize that good governance as a norm cannot make sense unless it is predicated on the presupposition that the experience and knowledge of bad governance is possible and real. On this basis the norm of good governance is the political ethic that will probably challenge and possibly replace the reality of bad governance. The argument here is that good governance is pivotal to successful and sustainable development. The presumption is that for enduring developmental progress, the basic tenets of good governance must be well institutionalized. The point, however is that neither good governance nor development can take place in an atmosphere of chaos and anarchy.

Significantly good governance is fundamentally applicable to all sections of the society and public accountability and transparency are as relevant for the one as for the other. It is when all these and various other sections of society conduct their affairs in a socially responsible manner that the objective of achieving the larger good of the largest number of people in society can be achieved. Good governance can also be seen as a commitment and the capability to effectively address the allocation and management of resources to respond to collective problems (socio-economic and political problems). In view of these assertions one can say that where there is accountability, transparency and effective management, the views and the positions of individuals and groups, will be considered.

According to the Nigeria vision 2010 document (Nigeria World Document, 1997) good governance is equivalent to accountability in all its ramifications. In essence good governance calls for a socio-political system which guarantees socio-economic and political rights of the citizen. In his comment on African leaders Wole Soyinka (a Nobel Prize Laureate in Literature, 1986) said "Africans dreams of peace and prosperity have been shattered by the greedy, corrupt, and unscrupulous rule of African strongmen. One would be content with just a modest cleaning up of the environment, development of opportunities, health services, education, and eradication of poverty. But unfortunately

even these modest goals are thwarted by a power crazed and rapacious leadership who can only obtain their egotistical goals by oppressing the rest of us” (Cited in Owoye and Bissessar, n d: 14-15). Most Nigeria leaders seems to have disregarded the importance of constitutions or state institutions like parliament; they disregard the principles of checks and balances and in the process, they wielded enormous power and authority which allowed them to subjugate all relevant socio-political institutions and prevent the necessary checks and balances common to good governance.

Nigeria no doubt is a multi-ethnic society with every ethnic group clamoring for government attention but when the socio-economic and political needs of the people are not met; it leads to frustration and its attendants are political instabilities and insecurity among the people. The sustainability of a political system that engenders all round development considerably depends on the functionality of certain elements within the polity and the role played by the political leaders in ensuring equitable distribution of socio-political and economic goods. But where people do not feel secure socially, politically and economically, the result, invariably, will be conflict, development eventually goes into reverse.

One of the plethora challenges facing Nigeria today arguably is the centralization of socio-political and economic power. This no doubt has serve as an impetus for corrupt leaders not wanting to leave office for fear of being investigated for corruption and their abuse of office. In the few instances where political leaders left office voluntarily, they hand-picked their successors and continued to dictate policies from behind the scenes thus covering their tracks to remain in power for a long time. Centralization is a form of government that ensures that socio-political and economic relations radiate to and from a center. Centralized government often claims a leading position among other national agencies by virtue of its jurisdiction over the level of governmental units. In a situation like this, power is exerted by a de-facto political executive leader to which all levels of government are considered subject. In essence all constituted governments are to some degree necessarily centralized. In essence what is available to each subordinate government is determined by the central government. This is opposed to a decentralized system. For example the decentralized system adopted in the Nigerian in the name federalism seems to be in principle; in practical, the system is highly centralized, which has always facilitated the insubordination of groups in the country that feel disadvantaged against the source of deprivation.

Contrariwise decentralization is considered a strategy of governance and a gradual process of reform that is intended to transfer power and resources to a level of government that is closer to the people, better understood and more easily influenced (Wekwete, 2004:4). The underlying aim of decentralization is to enhance the level of participation of civil society in governance. Decentralization seeks to address efficiently the limitations of over-concentration of power, authority and resources at the center, the lack of equity in the allocation of resources and the insufficient representation of various political and ethnic groups in the decision making process.

Considering the fact that Nigeria is a multi-ethnic states Brian (1981) argued that a highly centralized arrangement is best for states which did not have its origin in separate political units voluntarily seeking political union, but is a creation of the colonial administration. Since these different political entities were brought together involuntarily, there will always an element of distrust among them, with each ethnic group wanting to exploit any opportunity to control the center to the detriment of other ethnic groups. This has been the experience some of the multi-ethnic states in Africa to date an advantage some of their leaders have taken.

However centralization of socio-economic and political power may serve two purposes (a) socio-economic and distributive purpose that brings sustainability of the polity (b) it can also serve the purpose of socio-political instability where it is been manipulated for the purpose of exerting the hegemonic status of the political class and one group over others. Whichever way the driving force of this action goes, if it is for socio-economic and political sustainability, it must seek to balance the demands of every group, to prevent conflict. What this translates to is that the greater the concentration of resources in the national government, the greater the motivation of groups and individuals to capture the center and in the process destabilize the polity.

From the above good governance can be said to be almost everything. Once the state gets it right (politically) nothing else matters. This means that any state devoid of good governance tends to exhibit an increase in criminal violence, the provision of limited quantities of essential political goods, flawed socio-economic and political institutions, corruption flourishes, the state; driven by ethnic hostility victimizes its own citizens who are regarded as

political enemies or hostile. However, when democratic values and the fundamental human rights of the citizens as entrenched in the constitution and its manifestation visible within the polity, there is a tendency to achieve societal goals. In other words where citizens accept their fundamental obligation to work for the common good and benefit of the country, with regard to political, social and economic equality, the promotion of a common bond occurs that disregards disunity and promotes national integration and the sustainability of the polity.

In the political arena of most countries in Africa, political institutions have become a platform for personal enrichment and promotion of group interest. Nigeria is however not left out as its weak political institutions have negatively impacted the sustainability of socio-political development in the country. Political institutions are organizations which create, enforce and apply laws; that mediate conflict; make government policy in the economy and social system, and otherwise provide representation for the citizens (Alistair, 2012). Political institutions provide, in a sense, the rules of the game in political life and are themselves created to resolve some socio-political and economic problems. Some of the general problems that political institutions might resolve are the problems related to collective action, delegation of power etc. Examples of such political institutions include political parties, trade unions and the courts. The term also refers to the recognized structure of rules and principles within which the aforementioned bodies operate. This includes such concepts as the right to vote and be voted for, responsible, responsive and accountable government.

The sustainability of a polity, of a necessity, requires workable political institutions devoid of manipulation from the political leaders in the polity. These conditions, considering the dynamic nature of ethnic groups in Nigeria, may be social, economic and political, where the political conditions underpin the social and economic factors. In other words, for the sustainability of a state socially, economically and politically, the political instrument through which the character of citizen in the polity is measured remains very significant. Thus a weak political institution no doubt remains detrimental to socio-political development of a state.

Kaur (2007) opines that the primary reason for adopting democratic governance in advanced states must have been informed on the basis that it was linked to development and as well regarded as a channel to the realization of individual and group socio-political values. Considering the context in which this topic is been discussed, democracy can be viewed as a political system that gives room for the participation of people through the electoral process and does not give room for the politics of exclusion; rather, it ensures that every group is fully involved in the governance/decision making process. In other words, it should be seen as government that is based on the acceptance and operation of rule of law, particularly where the rights of every individual devoid of group consideration is guaranteed and thus, enhance the socio-economic sustainability of the country. That is, it enhances the process of development.

One aspect of democracy which is relevant to this study is developmental democracy. This is a democratic system that provides a multidimensional avenue for socio-political and economic experimentation (Sklar, 1983). If a suitably broad concept of development to incorporate the general well-being of the population at large is taken, including some basic civil and political freedoms, a democracy which ensures these freedoms is almost by definition more conducive to development (Bardhan, n.d.). By interpretation, developmental democracy focuses on the work of growing capacities for self-directed and collective socio-political action across differences for problem solving and the creation of individual and common goods. It conceives of democracy as a society promoting developmental actions and points towards institutional and cultural change (Boyte, 2008). Unfortunately, the deepened social fabric of the country characterized by almost 280 ethnic groups through which the various ethnic leaders, particularly the major ethnic groups, gain ascendancy and exert their hegemonic power has not allowed the system to work. The result of this is the spate of civil and ethnic conflicts in the country. Of course this has shown that, even after 52 years of political independence Nigeria has not been able to produce a strong and viable political institution capable of effectively stemming conflicts over distributive socio-political and economic resources. Therefore the sustainability of socio-political development of a state depends on the viability of the political institutions of such state.

One thing that should be borne in mind is that, as a result of the policy of divide and rule, the country has not been able to produce a national agenda for national socio-political and economic integration that engenders a sustainable development. Rather, the country has produced a leveling ground for the emergence of ethnicity and the challenge of how to have a strong political institution that can engender all round development.



The foregoing means that political institutions in Nigeria, right from the onset, have been weakened with the result that it became difficult for democratic institutions which should be the vehicle for development to thrive. Perhaps, the reason one can still refer to the statement made by one of the regional political juggernauts, Awolowo, that “Nigeria is not a nation. It is a mere geographical expression” (cited in Diamond, 1988:26). At a time when Nigeria needed a viable democratic environment, ethnicity through the activities of the political parties, thrives in the Nigerian polity. This has shown that the political institutions of the First Republic lacked the political capability to fully integrate the components of Nigerian societies. It is on this weak political institution that Nigeria after independence has been building (Oyediran and Agbaje, 1991). Arguably, one can consider Nigeria as a country built on an unstable foundation of bad governance

This explains why the reorganization of Nigeria into smaller units/states could not change the trend of party politics even with the adoption of a multi-party democracy in the polity. For example there were six political parties in the second republic among which the three major parties all morphed from the old pre-independence political parties and with the same set of leaders. As a result of this, the parties were weak and lacked the socio-economic and political ideology needed for the country to rise above ethnicity except for the political ideology of their leaders. Uwazurike (in Oyediran and Agbaje, 1991) commented that the Nigeria political pattern exist as an unstable form of democracy, with most of the political parties narrowly based and tied to the whims and caprices of their leaders whose ideological vision is not nationally oriented but personal biases. These are the reasons for the lack of continuity in the country’s developmental programs.

For most of the people in a democratic state, for example in Ghana, United States of America, South Africa etc. elections have meaning. The reason is not far-fetched. It is because; through the process of election the majority (the electorate) makes crucial decisions that will lead to the choice of policy makers who will engender socio-economic and political stability of the country. This means that there is a link between the electoral practice and socio-political sustainability in a country. One feature of a weakened Nigerian political institution is electoral fraud. Every election held in Nigeria since independence, with the exception of the June 12, 1993 election which would have ushered Nigeria into a new political experiment, has been marred by extreme rigging, the resultant effect of which has always been conflict in the country. The reason one can give here is that there has been the absence of an independent electoral body. Ironically, the electoral body is said to be independent but the fact that the members are appointed by the government (incumbent) has not made them free from the control of the government in office. In fact some of its officials while compiling the result of elections have been known to engage in electoral malpractice to please the political leaders, thus justifying the saying that “he who plays the piper dictates the tune” The partisan nature of the electoral bodies in Nigeria, has been reflected in all the elections held in Nigeria particularly that of 1983, 2003, 2007 elections. It has been argued that one of the major factors that led to the fall of the First and Second Republic was the electoral fraud orchestrated by the Federal Electoral Commission (FEDECO) that conducted the election.

The political situation in Nigeria appears to be very problematic and weakened due to the lack of an institutionalized political body free from manipulation and corruption. This has led to a lack of faith in the impartiality and transparency of Nigeria’s political institutions. However, the importance of strong political institutions cannot be overestimated. They would not only boost the country’s socio-political values, but would also boost the morale of the country in the committee of nations and also strengthen the frame work for addressing the threat of ethnic conflicts to national integration.

The political system in Nigeria also lacks a peaceful mechanism for settling political disputes. The rules of the game are not adhered to in order to produce a better and more egalitarian society. In addition, element of a result oriented democratic state such as accountability, responsibility, responsiveness, tolerance of opposition, respect for the rule of law, human rights and constitution are practically lacking. Without any doubt, this has been a serious challenge to peace, justice and the sustainability of socio-political and economic development.

The institution of the judiciary plays a significant role in the sustainability of a polity. In South Africa for example the judiciary is held in highest esteem for its significant role play in the sustainability of the polity. Apart from the primary role of acting as an instrument of checks and balances on other arms of government, the body plays a significant role in sustenance of the rights of the populace. Unfortunately, the role of the judiciary has been downplayed in the Nigerian political setting owing to the manipulatory tendencies of the political leaders thereby reducing the body to a toothless dog that can only bark but cannot bite.

One fact that should be pointed out and which has caused the judiciary to lose its revered autonomy is the role played by the military in the Nigerian political setting. During the military era military tribunals were set up to co-exist with the civil courts in the administration of justice. This meant that the judiciary was incapacitated and denied its fundamental role of defending the rights of the citizens. The judiciary under civilian administration is equally manipulated. For example, the appointment of judges of the Supreme Court and attorneys as well as attorney general of the federation is tied to ethnic considerations, which means that it is possible to jettison merit and embrace mediocrity. This has actually given room for deliberate manipulation of electoral cases. The attendant result is that a political crisis which ought to be resolved without any problem is allowed to degenerate to conflict, thus eroding the power of the judiciary.

The above submission has not only reflected but has shown the weakness inherent in Nigeria political institutions. The struggle for political power, with the aim of controlling public revenue has not allowed the country's leadership to give adequate attention to national integration. To borrow the words of Simonsen (2005) reversing the ethnicization of socio-economic and political conflict is not as easy as increasing it; reversal may nevertheless be possible and the design of political institutions can play a role in that. In essence, a deepened ethnicity can still be corrected but it can only be done by strengthening the political institution and, de-ethnicizing politics and the institutions that control political bodies. Thus, where every group is duly represented, and the dynamic integrative approach of socio-economic and political institutions is embraced there is bound to be peaceful co-existence of the ethnic groups which invariably engenders a sustainable socio-political development. In other words, if political institutions that de-emphasize the politics of exclusion are developed and strengthened, then there is the possibility of political institutions succeeding in melting the unending and emerging socio-political crisis.

No state is really strong unless its government has the full consent of at least the majority of its people; and it is difficult to envisage how that consent can be obtained outside democracy. The key to a government's effectiveness and its ability to lead the nation lies in a combination of three elements: One its closeness to its people, and its responsiveness to their needs and demands; in other words, democracy. Secondly, its ability to coordinate and bring into a democratic balance the many functional and often competing sectional institutions which groups of people have created to serve their particular interests. And thirdly, the efficiency of the institutions (official and unofficial) by means of which its decisions are made known and implemented throughout the country.

## **5. Conclusion:**

In Nigeria good governance no doubt is a socio-political tool that can be used to reduce the vulnerability of individuals and groups to socio-political and economic deprivation. With good governance the civil society can be mobilized so as to increase the rate of development and even to ameliorate the impacts of bad governance. Of course this requires the participation of individuals and groups, accountability of those in government to the people, upholding the tenets of the principle of rule of law and transparency in governance.

A sustainable socio-political and economic development is therefore seen as the process by which a type of socio-political and economic change is progressively and creatively introduced into a political system in order to produce a better and egalitarian society devoid of political and economic corruption. A system of good governance consist of a set of rules and institutions, a system of public administration which is open, and sees nothing in corruption, nepotism; exclusivism etc. but embrace political actions that engender socio-political productivity.

The sustainability of socio-political and economic development in human society is therefore not a one-sided process but rather multifaceted. What this suggests is that it is seen as a means of generating maximum socio-political freedom as well as the ability to create responsibility. It is the process of bringing about fundamental and sustainable socio-political and economic changes in the society that encompasses growth, embraces such aspects of the quality of life as social justice, equality of opportunity for all citizens, equitable distribution of distributive socio-political and economic goods and the democratization of the developmental process. Without any point of contradiction the sustainability of socio-political development in Nigeria hinges on corrupt free governance with strong open, transparent efficient and accountable political institutions. Good governance no doubt is pivotal to successful and sustainable development. Therefore for enduring developmental progress to take place the basic tenets of good governance must be well institutionalized.

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