

# The Dynamics of Governance and Accountability in Nigerian Public Service: A Backward Look for a Diagnostic Cure

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*Abstract—This paper examines the dynamics of governance and accountability in Nigeria public service. The study employs secondary data from 1962 to 2017, and employs ex-post facto research approach. The paper berates the woes that trail the country as a result of lack of proper governance practice and lack of accountability as political office holders dealt with the public funds for personal gains. The paper recommends attitudinal reorientation, public declaration of assets, speedier adjudication process and the removal of the obnoxious immunity clause in the constitution.*

*Keyword—* Accountability; adjudication; Governance; Whistler

## 1. INTRODUCTION

NIGERIA since independence in 1960 had passed through military and democratic regimes. The coups and transitions in government that had taken place had had both positive and negative impact on Nigeria. Nigeria is a land of abundant resource namely: manpower, material etc. But the most unfortunate thing is that though these resources abound, the management of these resources for national progress has been the problem.

Nnonyelu [1], opined that Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa and has vast arable land that made her in early 60s the largest producer of palm oil, groundnut and cocoa. Eventually the 'sleeping giant' of Africa snowballed to a country whose citizens continue to wallow in poverty, unemployment and other social vices. This situation has led Ndibe [2] to ask "how does one explain a country which has one of the world's vastest reserves of crude oil and gas, but whose citizens continue to wallow in levels of squalor and privation? How in other words do you analyze a people who take such ludicrous delight in their impoverishment that the citizens have inadvertently created the fertile ground for the pervasive lack of accountability and probity in our national life? The massive stealing of our national patrimony has continued for a greater part in the nation's post independence history. And Nigerians are not holding our leaders accountable, that the country has become a large gangland where thievery of societal wealth has become the norm, where public and private citizens have all been corrupted by the infectious bug of corruption.

How do we explain this? How does one explain the rape and plunder; mindboggling looting of the national treasury? How can one explain for instance, that an agency of government, Nigerian ports authority (NPA) is alleged to have collected 150 billion naira as revenue, only to pay in 2 billion naira into the Federation account? How can one explain the absence and total breakdown of infrastructure, the near bankruptcy of the country? How does one explain that several state governments were

owing their workers arrears of salaries? How do we explain the sudden wealth syndrome where charlatans and nondescript characters become billionaires overnight? Why has public office become the easiest and surest route to becoming wealthy? Why do Nigerians regard some ministries, committees, agencies as plum or juicy? How does one explain the social mis-governance or none governance as is often the case? How did we get to the stage where unbridled criminality, kidnapping, armed robbery, insurgency and terrorism, pen robbery now hold the nation hostage?

The study adopts ex-post facto research approach which is a systematic empirical inquiry because their manifestations had already occurred. The study looked at the performance of the political office holders from 1962, to the present dispensation. The following questions are necessary in the study. To what extent has the political office holders misgovern the country and displayed lack of accountability? What had been the efforts of frauds fighting organs in checkmating poor governance and lack of accountability? How would one assess the pre-2015 political office holders' misgovernance and lack of accountability to that of post 2015 era? Although there are other areas of accountability, the investigators would want to confine themselves to financial accountability. The study is intended to achieve the following objectives namely: to identify public officials that are entrusted with public funds and the extent of abuse of such trust; to assess the extent of recovery of looted treasury after 2015 political era.

## 2 CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS

### 2.1 Governance

The World Bank [3] defines governance as the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources for development. Landell-mill and Seregeldin [4] comprehensively defined it as the use of political authority and exercise of control over a society and the management of its resources for social and

economic development. When a government is disciplined, transparent and honest, it sends positive signals not only to the citizens, but also to the international community. Good governance promotes rapid socio-economic development, while bad governance inhibits or drains away the accumulation. Scholars generally agree that the lack of transparency, accountability and good governance had been the fundamental impediments to the rapid socio-economic and political development of the nation state.

Odey (2000) as cited by Oni [5] presented a pathetic scenario when he lamented that: the countless billions that providence poured into our national coffers in the last ten years (1972-1982) would have been enough to launch this nation into the middle rank of developed nations and transformed the lives of her poor and needy. But what have we done with it? Stolen and salted away by people and their accomplices. Squandered in uncontrolled importation of all kinds of useless consumer merchandise from every corner of the globe. Embezzled through inflated contracts of an increasing army of party loyalists who have neither the desires nor the competence to execute such contracts.

## 2.2 Accountability

Accountability refers to the requirement that the government or even government functionaries or ruler explain and justify its actions to the people (they ruled). Adakai [6], opined it means answerability for ones stewardship. Ibrahim [7] defines accountability as responsibility or answerability. To be accountable is to be answerable or responsible for the resources put under one's control and for the authority one is vested with [8]. Accountability's functions are to guide against abuse of power; to ensure that resource of organizations are used wisely and in accordance with the law/procedure and to encourage and promote learning in pursuit of continuous improvement in governance. Accountability breeds improvement in performance and learning. Accountability is taken to be the solution to the challenges of governance. Accountability involves record keeping, reporting, auditing and oversight functions which are necessary in the public organizations. In a nutshell, accountability in organizations is to make the stakeholders aware of whether the resources entrusted into the hands of public agents are properly handled and that government services, programmes, and organizations function well economically, efficiently and effectively.

## 2.3 Types of Accountability

The characteristics of accountability prompt researchers to approach this important concept from their own subject area (paradigm). There is manifold accountability to stakeholders in the public sector.

- a. Political Accountability: This is where public managers, head of agencies and Ministers are called upon to give account in the case of parliamentary inquiries [9].
- b. Legal Accountability: Heads of parastatal and agencies can be called upon by courts to come and give accounts of their conducts on behalf of their agencies. Legal accountability "based on the

specific responsibilities formally or legally conferred on authorities [10].

- c. Administrative Accountability: This accountability forum can only make recommendations for solutions to the problems they have seen but cannot enforce their recommended solutions. This is legal and quasi-legal forum which exercises independent, external administrative and financial oversight and control over the public manager [11].
- d. Society Accountability: Government is being held to account by various interest groups: citizens, social groups, trade unions, labour unions, NGOs, civil society, aid donors, human rights activists and opposition parties. They criticize government policies, decisions and actions for the general good of the society. They engage in a critical dialogue with the government, organize protest actions ranging from peaceful demonstration to destruction of government properties or strikes to press home their demands. Their target is to put pressure on the government to influence their political policies [12].
- e. Professional Accountability: Most of the heads of private/public sectors are also members of professional bodies- like engineers, accountants, doctors, teachers, nurses and so on. These professions have codes and ethics which guide the conduct of members. These codes and ethics are monitored and enforced on members. Any members who behave unethically will have his certificate withdrawn [11].
- f. Organizational accountability: This procedure operates in the organization where the juniors are to give accounts of their assignments to their superiors in a hierarchical order up to the chief executive. This is internal in nature [11].

## 2.4 Institutions/Legislations That Strengthen Good Governance

Nigerian economy is public sector driven. The public have been frustrated for weak governance and lack of accountability. The institutions/legislation that can hold public office holders accountable are:

- a. The National Assembly
- b. The Public Accounts Committee
- c. The Judiciary
- d. The Audit Ordinance (No. 28) Act of 1956 as amended
- e. Finance (Control and Management) Act of 1958 as amended
- f. Independent Corrupt Practices and other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) Act of 2000
- g. Economic and Financial Crimes Commissions (EFCC) Act 2004
- h. Professional Bodies
- i. Code of Conduct Bureau
- j. Budget Monitoring and Price Intelligence Unit (BMPIU)
- k. African Review Mechanism.

### 3. INSTANCES OF POOR GOVERNANCE PRACTICES AND LACK OF ACCOUNTABILITY

Cases of poor governance practices and lack of accountability reported (Daily Trust March 19th, 2016) include the following:

- a. Peter Odile- alleged to have diverted over N100 billion of the Rivers state funds. He was granted perpetual injunction restraining EFCC from probing the affairs of Rivers state in 2007 opining that the Probe would be prejudicial to the smooth running of the state.
- b. Adamu Muazu- alleged mismanaged N19.8 billion of Bauchi state money between 1999 and 2007. He was Governor of Bauchi State. His case has not been concluded as EFCC affirmed that Muazu has case to answer.
- c. Joshua Dariye-alleged to siphoned about N1.2 billion of the Plateau state's ecological fund and another N204 million meant for the state treasury. He is currently facing trial. He was the Governor of Plateau State.
- d. Saminu Turaki- alleged to have misappropriated N36 billion. He was the governor of Jigawa state from 1999 to 2007. He was declared wanted after continuous absence from court in 2014, November 13, he was still absent despite subsisting warrant of arrest.
- e. Stella Oduah- she was the Aviation Minister in former president Goodluck Jonathan. Prosecuted by EFCC over two now infamous armored BMW cars allegedly purchased for N255 million by the Nigerian Civil Aviation Authority. She obtained an interim injunction stopping the EFCC from prosecuting her on the matter. Justice Mohammed Yunusa of the Federal High Court, Lagos granted that the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC), the Attorney- General of the Federation and the Inspector-General of Police from prosecuting her.
- f. Adebayo Alao-Akala - alleged that a contract of N 11.5 billion fraud without budgetary provision and obtaining it falsely, was awarded with the intent of enriching himself and two others. Questioned the jurisdiction of the Court opining that it was abuse of power to put anybody on trial for an offence not proven in Court.
- g. Ayo Fayose- alleged mismanaged N1.2 billion Poultry project when he was governor between 2003 and 2006. On November 22, 2012, he was re-arraigned on 27 count amended charge of over N416 million scam. At a point he wanted the charges quashed through a Court order that the offences were committed in Ekiti and not Lagos, Presently the trial was suspended because of an immunity clause because he was elected Governor in 2014.
- h. Orji Uzor Kalu- alleged diverted Abia state fund to the tune of N5.6 billion while in office in 2007. The Appeal Court ruled that he submit himself for trial.

- i. Boni Haruna- A former of Adamawa state was alleged and charged on a – 28 count charge of fraud and embezzlement to the tune of N10 million and another N16.1 million. The matter dragged until January 31, 2012 for ruling. The ruling was not ready and the matter was adjourned sine-die.
- j. Gbenga Daniel - A former governor of Ogun state-alleged mismanaged the state funds to the tune of N211.3 million between 2003 and 2011. The case had dragged so long though at a stage of prosecution.

More bogging news of lack of accountability and poor governance practices still thrive. Some reported in the Nation news paper Tuesday sept 1, 2015 P3 are:

- a. 2.2 billion dollar arms scandal
- b. A 6.9-million-dollar fraud committed under the guise of buying 3 mobile stages.
- c. A 2.5 billion-naira scam involving the renting of house boasts.
- d. 3.8 trillion naira out of the 8.1 trillion earned from crude oil (2012-2015) withheld by NNPC,
- e. 2.1 billion dollars from excess crude oil unaccounted for.
- f. 109.7 billion-naira royalty from oil firms unremitted by the Department of Petroleum Resources (DPR).
- g. 6 billion dollars allegedly stolen by some ministers between 2009 and 2012
- h. 13.9 billion dollars being proceeds of 160 million barrels of crude oil lost between 2009 and 2012.
- i. 16 million dollars from botched arms deal yet to be returned to Nigeria.
- j. 13 billion dollars Nigeria Liquefied Natural Gas (NLNG) dividends mostly unaccounted for.
- k. 30 billion-naira questionable waiver granted to rice importers
- l. 183 billion unaccounted for at the Niger Delta Development Commission.

### 4 THE STRIDES OF PRESIDENT BUHARI MOHAMMADU

History had it that poor governance practice had been investigated in the past. According to the views of Egwu [11], Probes and Commissions of Enquiry never led to the punishment of culprits and Achebe [13] opined that democratically elected government preached due process and did everything in contravention of due process. Records had it that from the Coker Commission of Enquiry in 1962 in the Eastern and the Western Nigeria to the Joda commission of Enquiry in the North in 1967, and the Asset Investigation Panel of 1975-1976; and the probes into FESTAC '77 Leyland buses and the cement importation scandals were merely executed to divert public attention elsewhere. Is history been repeated by the current recovery of loots of the treasury? A close look shows the contrary. Odunsi [14] opined that EFCC recovered over N473 billion in 2017. Another feat was made also between May 2015 and May 2016 according to Ogundipe [15] that N204, 888, 835, 727.25, \$9,275,363,504.76, £5,992,803.01 and €314,649.17 were cash recoveries and recoveries under in-

terim forfeiture ([www.premiumtimes.com/newsheadlines/20467](http://www.premiumtimes.com/newsheadlines/20467)). It follows then, that when the machineries of governance are properly set, accountability naturally follows.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

One cannot doubt that the infrastructural decay, the erosion scourge in the South and the desert encroachment in the North with the myriad of social vices are signals of the poor governance and lack of accountability. The proper functioning of governance and accountability will ensure economic growth. The paper therefore makes recommendations as follows:

- i. Attitudinal reorientation on the part of bureaucrats and the enforcement of internal control mechanism that guarantees effective functioning of governance and accountability process.
- ii. Nigerians entrusted with governance declare their assets publicly.
- iii. The civil society and the press must vigorously be involved in the fight.
- iv. Speedier adjudication process and stiffer punishment to officials that abuse proper governance and accountability tenets.
- v. The whistler must blow louder to send shivering sensation on potential corrupt Nigerians and recover whatsoever had been hidden anywhere.
- vi. Complete implementation of the cashless economy policy to discourage people from stacking ill gotten wealth in 'Ghana must go' bags in their houses.
- vii. The removal of the obnoxious immunity clause in the constitution.

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