

Good Governance and Sustainable Development in Africa: A Study of Governance in Nigeria

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Abstract

This research seeks to understand how good governance can contribute to sustainable development of a country, and how the absence of it could impact in the negative way. The case study of governance mechanism and set up in Nigeria has been considered for discussion. The democracy of Nigeria has been subjected to the misfortunes of poor governance ever since the time of its independence from the British rule. The country's governance and political rule until now has been bereft of ideas, innovation, progress and overall accountability. In the absence of all the essential factors of a good governance mechanism, little can be expected from the country to protect the civil rights of its people and ensure their development. This research presents an exhaustive literature on issues associated with good governance, International Political Economy (IPE), neoliberalism, as well as the indicators of good governance like voice and accountability, absence of terrorism, government effectiveness, control of corruption and rule of law. Descriptive method was adopted as the issues to be studied in-depth exists in reality and available in the public domain. Findings revealed that Nigeria has failed to climb high up the ladder in all the governance indicators, as specified by the World Bank. The country lags behind and ranked low (in a percentage of 100) in terms of all the governance indicators. It is therefore recommended among others the need for an institutional framework that would help lessen the economic and non-economic risks in the state e.g., to facilitate revenue management, setting up parliamentary committees, ombudsman, creation of institutions of oversight and treasury management.

Keywords: *Good Governance and Sustainable Development*

Introduction

This research focuses on understanding the relationship between good governance and sustainable development using Nigeria as the case study. This research underscores the role of governance

using the Nigerian state, which symbolizes the ideal instance for understanding the interplay between these two economic factors. African countries have been growing at a moderately fast rate since the start of the new millennium, which in turn has led to developments in numerous areas such as infrastructure, mobilization of government revenue, trade, and the provision of social services and vice versa (Africare, 2008). Over the years, Africa was one of the fastest growing provinces in the global economy, and it is appealing to note that this development in performance of growth has been prevalent across countries (UNCTD, 2012). In spite of the development that has been achieved in the area over the last decade, the present blueprint of development is neither sustainable nor inclusive (Ejumudo, 2013). In the case of Nigeria, the prominent challenge that slows down the process of improving sustainable development and economic growth is bad governance resulting to corruption, absence of rule of law and accountability (Norad, 2010).

Nigeria, since the realization of independence from British rule, has always fallen short of the expectations of good governance, based on the corporate governance indicators such as corruption, government effectiveness, rule of law and regulatory quality (Dike, 2014). While numerous factors play a significant role in development, good governance is recognized as playing a fundamental role in the improvement of sustainable development (Subair, 2013). Good governance promotes rule of law in public institutions at all levels, transparency and efficiency (Africare, 2008). In addition, it permits for resourceful and successful management of economic, natural, human, and financial resources for sustainable development. These features of good governance do not in themselves guarantee that society is run well, nor do they ensure sustainable development. However, their deficiency harshly limits that possibility and can, at worst, slow it down (Barro, 1991). The absence of appropriate functioning institutions of governance based on the rule of law that uphold legal firmness and social stability, there cannot be an investment and assumption of risk that form the basis of market economy development, let alone improving sustainable development (Norad, 2010).

With a population of over 237 million people, anything that affects the Nigerian economy will certainly affect the African continent due to the size and foreign policy objectives of the country (Anyiwe, 2006). The Nigerian state has demonstrated various signs of bad corporate governance in terms of corruption, low regulatory framework, voice and accountability and government effectiveness among others (Iyayi, 2003). Several studies have been conducted on sustainable development in Africa (See Edward, 1987; Ogujiuba, *et al.*, 2013; Eyong & Foy, 2006; and Mebratu, 1998). While most of these previous studies did not focus on the role and significance of good governance, bad governance continues to engender any form of national instability in Africa, resulting to slow down in areas like health, education, human skill development and low GDP growth, as typified by the Nigerian State (Tisdell, 1998). It is in light of this that the present research attempts to examine the role of good governance in promoting sustainable development in Africa with particular reference to Nigeria.

Conceptual Foundation

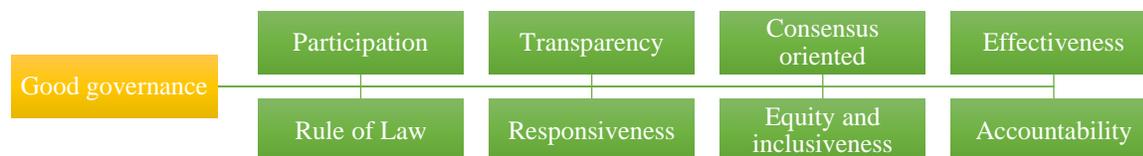
Two basic concepts form the conceptual thrust of this research. These concepts are good governance and sustainable development. This section explores these concepts with a view to providing their conceptual meanings in this discourse.

Good Governance

Guga (2014) described good governance as the skilled management of a nation's resources and affairs in line with the principles of transparency, responsibility, and receptive to publics' requirements. Relatedly, Adetiba and Rahim (2007) conceive good governance as reasonable and impartial distribution of resources for the accomplishment of the purpose of a nation, which is about the promotion of the common welfare of citizens. Good governance provides the opportunity for popular involvement in decision-making which has significant influence on life. Good governance systems comprise sets of regulations, a strong legal outline for development and a system of public management, which is effective, accountable, devoid of dishonesty and partiality (Kaufmann, 2006). Similarly, Onigbinde (2007) states that good governance is the procedure by which governments are chosen, held liable, observed and changed. It is the capability of government to manage the resources effectively and to express, implement and apply sound strategies and principles. UNDP (1997) defined good governance as the exercise of power in the government of a nation's affairs, which include the complex machineries, institutions and measures by which public and citizens articulate their well-being, employ lawful rights and deliberate their discrepancies. In this sense, it can be stated that good governance is a mechanism by which government can effectively manage the national resources for the beneficiaries of the public. According to Ezenyili (2012) good governance comprises extensive policy and specific set of enterprises in order to reinforce the foundation of civil society with the objective of making government more responsible, transparent and democratic.

Good governance is evaluated by the level of its performance and its capability to deliver the essential socio-political goods and security to the public, within which people are able to determine and manage the differences without resorting to violence or other kinds of aggressive measures (Sleifer & Vishny, 1997). Good governance is also evaluated by the facility of political and civil autonomy, acceptance of opposition and basic human rights. ESCAP (2000) has identified eight core characteristics of good governance (see figure 1).

Fig 1: Characteristics of Good Governance



According to the World Justice Project (2015) governance consists of the traditions and the institutions which is used to exercise authority by the government. Governance includes the process through which the government is selected, replaced and the capability to formulate and effectively implement policies. The citizens look up to and with respect to governance institutions which facilitate economic and social interactions in the country (Brown & Marcus, 2006). As per the aggregate of the World Bank, there is a positive correlation lying between six major indices of governance and the development of a country. These factors include covering accountability and participation, political stability, effectiveness, regulatory quality, rule of law and corruption (World Justice Project (2015). Therefore, a causal relationship exists between political and civil rights and results of positive development in a State. According to the World Bank (2013) effective governance indicators seek to measure the quality of public services, civil services, absence of bureaucracy, and quality in policy implementation and commitment of the government in

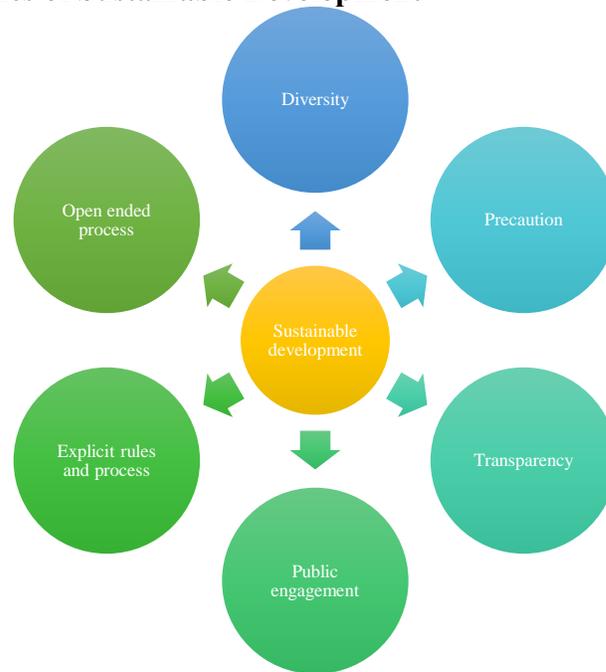
implementing the policies. The political leadership in the country is expected to be flexible, innovative and learning constantly from its mistakes and from examples of governance practices of other nations (Alesina, *et al.*, 1996). The quality of infrastructure, easy online accessibility of government services, and provision of essentials like good education system, public health care, electricity supply and telecommunications are characteristics of efficient governance (Leftwich, 1994).

The prevalence of red-tape signifies the degree to which bureaucracy meddles with the discharge of essential public services and slow down business activities (Doidge, *et al.*, 2007). The good governance practices should aim at curbing these limitations, have strategic priorities and government should implement reforms without any hindrance. The sustainable governance practices must ensure that the government revenues are generated by low taxes, tariffs, export rebates, broad tax base, low administrative and compliance costs and effective tax administration system (Millenium Challenge Corporation, 2014). Therefore, in relation to the present research, good governance is considered to be the process and institutions focused on exercising authority within a nation. This particular phenomenon of good governance is aimed at influencing several areas of the political-economic arena, including transparency and responsibility in government actions, management of resources, political governance, political stability, rule of law, effective governance and control of corruption and impartial distribution of resources (Kemp, *et al.*, 2005).

Sustainable Development

The concept of sustainable development first appeared in the World Conservation Union Report, which called for, encouraged and constitutionally new outlets of development that spread the desires of the present generation without divesting the future generation of resources (Umar, 2008). Sustainable development as such development which satisfies the requirements of the present without sacrificing the capability of future generation to fulfil their individual requirements. Schnurr and Holtz (1998) states that sustainable development is essentially about the efficient incorporation of social, economic and ecological thoughts at every level, i.e. from local to international, over the long run. Rosenau (2003) stated that sustainable development is the extension of extents where circles of social, financial and environmental quality intersect with each other. Mebratu (1998) used pillar-based approaches in order to define sustainability. According to him, there are three pillars of sustainability, which are social, economic and environmental. However, in reality, the pillar-based approach of sustainability has suffered due to inadequate consideration to interdependencies and tendency to simplify constant separation of the three pillars. Brundtland Commission (1987) outlines six characteristics of sustainable development (see figure 2):

Fig 2: Characteristics of Sustainable Development



According to Eyong and Foy (2006), sustainable development in a country can take place when the real income increase, education standards rise and health of the population improves. Sustainability in a nation can improve when the government incorporates sustainable practices as a part of its administration and governance mechanism (Subair, 2013). The sustainable practices in governance bring about credibility to the government and as such good governance aids sustainable development (UNESCAP, 2015). Government should manage resources sustainably, formulate policies and govern institutions that improve economic and social interactions.

The idea of sustainable development is thus considered as holding an emerging nature where its meanings and implications arise and evolve within the local contexts in various countries. Basically, for the purpose of the present research, the concept of sustainable development is considered to be people-centric in nature acting as a true representation of human resources in light of governmental actions, policies and leadership. As a main concern, the success of government to sustain the policies lies on the credibility of leadership as perceived by people in the society that results in establishing good governance, and an absence of such credibility, governance can prove to be erosive to measures of sustainable development (Umar, 2008).

Relationship between Good Governance and Sustainable Development

According to UNDP (1997), there is a close link between good governance and sustainable development, i.e. good governance can lead to sustainable development of a nation in terms of improving quality of human lives like raising people's living standards, creating conditions that could facilitate the growth of people's self-esteem and improving people's freedom by increasing the varieties of goods and services for consumers.

Good governance presents a dilemma where a real conflict is seen between political liberty and democratic rights on one hand and the satisfaction of basic economic needs, that is a part of sustainable development (Kadenyi, 2013). For some administrators, removing poverty and misery would be a priority while for some guaranteeing liberty and human rights are another issue that

needs to be urgently addressed. Therefore, the dilemma of the country's governance would be whether democracy or development should be given importance. However, a country cannot address both priorities simultaneously. If democracy is prioritised then development cannot be addressed. Thus, focusing on every group of people can hinder the prioritisation of governance for national development, and this will also slow down sustainable development (Elliott, 1994).

Authoritative states like South Korea or Singapore had higher economic growth rates than the other authoritative ones (Norris, 2005). Norris argues that if poor people are given a choice between having political freedom and economic development, then they would choose the latter. Thus, based on this viewpoint, it is apparent that democracy and sustainable development cannot be prioritised simultaneously. In Africa, there are many problems involved in creating and maintaining good governance and improving sustainable development (Kemp, *et al.*, 2005). Some of them are internal weaknesses, insufficient innovation, impatience, greed and corruption (Gathii, 2010). Adeleye (2012) observed that, to improve sustainable development in African countries, there is a need to identify elements constituting nationalism and patriotism, strengthening self-defense, maintaining good foreign relations, ensure discipline in financial and other aspects of management and ensure that elections are held at regular intervals. Good governance and sustainable development are intertwined and that both should be pursued simultaneously to advance development. However, the emphasis should always be on improving corporate governance.

Description of the Methodology adopted for the Research

This research adopted an inductive (explanatory) approach as the data through secondary sources would be collected and appropriate theory adopted to aid the analysis. The secondary data on good governance and sustainable development in Nigeria, constituting of previous researched articles and journals would be employed to complete the in-depth secondary analysis. In order to evaluate the subject, a hypothesis has been formulated. The null hypothesis is that there is no relationship between good governance and sustainable development. On the basis of null hypothesis, the alternate hypothesis is that there is a positive relationship between good governance and sustainable development. The case of Nigeria has been evaluated in order to assess the hypothesis. The focus of the research therefore was to determine how poor governance has endangered sustainable development in Nigeria and that in order to improve sustainability; government requires to ensure strong governance mechanism in each division. The research hypothesis as tested with qualitative methods. In order to support the hypothesis, data from various sources were collected for the analysis in order to make a decision.

Challenges of Good Governance

According to Babawale (2007), good governance in any nation is the relative non-existence of corrupt activities in every implication. The implication of this position is that in a country where corruption has almost become the custom, it cannot experience good governance. One of the key causes for unethical activities of corruption in a country is poor leadership (Didia, 2007). Didia argues that poor leadership results in corruption which weakens governance institutions in a country. According to Ibrahim (2013), to accomplish good governance, the government requires to excel in two critical spheres:

1. Development of administration of public resources by reform, covering public segment organizations such as treasury offices, central bank, civil services and other public

enterprises. Furthermore, there is a need to improve the process of expenditure control, budget management and tax collection.

2. Support the creation of transparent and stable economic and regulatory environment conducive to effective private segment activities such as price framework, trade commands and banking system among others.

Kadenyi, *et al.*, (2013) states that the most important challenge of governance is to sustain and maintain democracy and turn it into a way of life, acceptable and works for the majority of people. It comprises the management of inner tendencies, particularly security issues and problems, which undermine the survival of democracy.

Issues and Challenges of Good Governance in Nigeria

Girdner, *et al.*, (2008) observed that one of the challenges of democracy in African countries like Nigeria is due to poor governance systems. In order to improve the system of governance, Nigeria has to accept and uphold the form of governance and democracy practiced by the Western world. Nigeria and most African countries are still practicing the traditional pre-colonial model of governance and democracy, which is a legacy of the traditional practices (Fagbadebo, 2007). For instance, in Nigeria, the legal, administrative, governmental and religious power exercised by customary units are compressed and continued to be essential centres of power and authority in the governance culture (Ogundiya, 2010). The fifty decades of post-colonial governance were fraught with economic and political challenges and economic indicators of development demonstrate to this point. The leaders who rose to power by adhering to the norms of democracy have corrupted the governance mechanism due to their desire to earn money and gain power (Ogundiya, 2010). Most of these political leaders wanted to stay in active politics and administration so that they can make money and also retain power. The ruling party also denounces the opposition party in the country by highlighting the big flaws in their governance and sometimes this goes beyond acceptable limits, thus creating political tensions in the state (Amuwo, 2005). The presence of polarised opposition political parties creates a polarised society and subsequently a polarised nation leading to refusal of leaders to adhere to good governance practices.

Kjaer, (2004) observed that in nations where institutions are weak and economic condition is poor, it is difficult to improve effective governance. He further argues that countries where economic condition is poor are unable to provide political goods like stability, peace, law and development; and this is apparent in the case of Nigeria. This is why government of such countries are unable to launch pilot projects for development and these states continue to remain impoverished as a result of weak governance. Achebe (1983) observed that the prevalence of poor infrastructure has been a challenge in Nigeria, while roads, railways, dams, hydroelectric projects and waterworks continue to remain priorities for the nation. Corruption in the implementation of these projects and bureaucrats 'fixing' the budget allocated for these infrastructural projects is a harsh reality (Ihiokwu & Okpanem, 2007). Where the administrative mechanism in the country itself is corrupt, it is extremely difficult to bring in good governance mechanisms, and until now, the country is still not in the pathway to develop. The country needs institutions like strong opposition, auditing bodies for the government, a strong parliament and the rise of the public who could question the government and their practices (Iyayi, 2003). As long as the public does not question the act of government, and merely engages in the electoral process, the leadership will continue to remain corrupt and the development of Nigeria will remain a mere dream (Olu-Adeyemi, 2012).

Governance Indicators in Nigeria Voice and Accountability

This implies creating institutionalised machineries where citizens of a country are able to take part in choosing their government, as well as freedom of association, freedom of expression and a free media (Menocal & Sharma, 2008). In 2023, Nigeria's Government Effectiveness Estimate, as reported by the World Bank, was -0.84791. This score reflects perceptions of the quality of public services, the civil service, policy formulation and implementation, and the credibility of the government's commitment to its policies. The score is on a scale from approximately -2.5 to 2.5. From the above figure, it can be observed that in voice and accountability, Nigeria was ranked 23.48 within 100. This signifies that Nigeria is poorly governed in terms of voice of the people and accountability in administration.

Absence of Violence/Terrorism

Political stability signifies the perception of the possibility of politically-stimulated violence as well as terrorism (UNDP, 2008). Political stability and absence of violence/terrorism, estimate in Nigeria was reported at -1.7684 in 2003. According to the World Bank collection of development indicators, compiled from officially recognised sources. From the above figure, it can be observed that the percentile rank of Nigeria is ranks low in a percentage of 100. It signifies that Nigeria is a politically unstable nation.

Government Effectiveness

It looks at the eminence of civil and public service and the level of its autonomy from political pressures, execution and policy formulation, and the reliability of the administration's devotion to such policies (World Bank Group, 2016). In 2023, Nigeria's Government Effectiveness Estimate, as reported by the World Bank, was -0.84791. This score reflects perceptions of the quality of public services, the civil service, policy formulation and implementation, and the credibility of the government's commitment to its policies. The score is on a scale from approximately -2.5 to 2.5. The above figure demonstrates that Nigeria ranks 16.26 within 100. Thus, it can be stated that the government in Nigeria is ineffective.

Rule of Law

Rule of law signifies the degree to which agents have assurance in and stand by the rules of society, and in particular the value of property rights, contract enforcement, the police, and the courts, as well as the plausibility of violence and crime (The World Bank Group, 2016). Nigeria's ranking has fluctuated over recent years. It plunged from 106th in 2020 to 121st in 2021 and climbed slightly to 118th in 2022, before falling back to 120th in both 2023 and 2024. Moreso, Nigeria ranks 120 out of 140 countries in the 2024 World Human Rights and Rule of Law Index, scoring below average and failing behind military-ruled Niger etc. The above figure signifies that Nigeria also ranks very low between 1-100 with respect to rule of law. It indicates that there is a considerable level of crime and violence in Nigeria, which is unfavourable for sustainable development (Achebe, 1983).

Control of Corruption

Control of corruption is the extent to which public authority is employed for private benefit, which includes petty and grand forms of corruption and the state by elites and private interest (The World Bank Group, 2016). Control of Corruption Percentile Rank in Nigeria was reported at 16.98% in

2023. From the stated figure, it can be observed that the control of corruption index in Nigeria is also low within 100 in 2023. The percentile rank of Nigeria in this dimension is low, which indicates that the country is very poor in controlling corruption (The World Bank Group, 2016).

Good Governance as a Neoliberal Political-Economic Project

Globalization is the phenomenon that is making economies more integrated resulting in a lesser control and autonomy of national governments in economic policy decision making (Demmers, *et al.*, 2004). Additionally, more importance is being given to processes of wealth accumulation instead of distributing the economic and technological resources across regions and classes. Developed countries enjoy a concentration of more capital and technology, while developing nations are dependent upon foreign investment and modern technology (Siddiqui, 2012). Such forces are giving rise to powerful internal effects in several developing nations in the form of centralised government structures, widening of the gap between the rich and poor and destruction of traditional resources (Siddiqui, 2012).

The basic neoliberal policies have resulted in increased benefits of trade liberalization, but limited to a few numbers of developing nations like China and some East Asian countries (Chandrasekhar, 2010). In several other developing countries, following neoliberal policies has not done much to bring down the rate of unemployment and inequalities. Such policies are making developing nations more and more dependent upon western markets and MNCs (Demmers, *et al.*, 2004). Here, good governance comes into force as a neoliberal political-economic project, helping to follow a common method of framing the relationship between political freedom and economic development (Girdner & Siddiqui, 2008). Good governance works on three different levels i.e. technocracy, poverty alleviation and political approaches in a combined manner to follow a broad systematic point of view encompassing political as well as economic relations and power. In developing nations, the concept will help in filling a conceptual and policy gap, making the duties of state clear in terms of enabling and supporting the economic role of the private sector. It has the potential of translating complex and conflicting processes of economic, social, political and cultural nature, making them manageable through policy and governance (Girdner & Siddiqui, 2008). The focus of good governance on human rights protection along with empowering the civil society creates a balance between the competing agendas of political security versus accountable public administration and protection of human rights (Gathii, 2010). Here, good governance as a neoliberal political-economic tool will help in creating a domestic environment in developing nations that is necessary ensuring mobilization of resources, increasing productivity, encouraging private sector and attracting international investments (Chandrasekhar, 2010). Such efforts will ensure sustainable development at local, regional as well as national level by bringing in improvement and efficient integration of environmental and social dimensions (Gathii, 2010). A focus on equitable development where basic human political rights, economic, social and cultural rights are protected helps in the resolution of various problems and securing a sustainable development in developing nations.

Good governance can be considered as a project where the focus is on conducting activities in a manner that ensures the sustainability of the environment or the ecosystem. The economic and human development progress is highly dependent upon the sustenance of ecosystems such as lack of equity; our societies can become unstable lacking cohesion (Stavis, 2015). As good governance is the phenomenon driving the achievement of development results, it can be used as a neoliberal political economic project implemented in developing nations like Nigeria to aid sustainable development (Stephen, 2012). This is so as good governance is focused on enabling the developing

nations to accelerate and sustain the development progress made across the world, leading to sustainable development of the country as a whole. Here sustainable development is directly associated with a trajectory of human development in the present generation as well as the ones coming in the future (Carvalho, 2014).

Good governance is a project that focus on three major developments, namely the increasing globalization of economies, the interconnect crises of the mixed economy and the rise of new social movements as a response to economic and political changes occurring due to globalization (Carvalho, 2014). Here good governance acts as a neoliberal project where the aim is on reformulating liberalism at discursive, strategic and organizational level.

The effect of Good Governance on Sustainable Development

Lack of governance leads to corruption and corruption enhances the costs in every aspect of governance and minimizes the advantages from developmental programmes to the society (Ibrahim, 1999). As a consequence, there remains a gap between potential and realised achievement, which discourages a nation's possibility of improving sustainable development (Iyayi, 2003). Corruption in an institutional atmosphere relates directly to underproductive activities (Campos & Nugent, 2002). Since political parties, bureaucracy and law enforcement agencies are vital elements of governance, it is important to ensure that they play their roles in enhancing good governance for sustainable development. Keynesian economic theory states that government failure manifests in corruption and misconduct which is more dangerous than market failure and that market imperfections cannot be cured by government interference (King, 1993). Therefore, the government should not interfere with market mechanism which possesses the capability to self-correct.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Nigeria being a developing country seems to be scoring poorly on every aspect of good governance. The results of the study established the fact that good governance results are a driver for development and vice versa. This is a two-way process where lack of development in areas like education, health or overall human skill development can have a negative impact on good governance of the nation like Nigeria. The relationship between international political environment and sustainable development was clearly being depicted in the case of Nigeria. As discussed in the literature review, the arena of international political economy brings in some challenges to the applicability of sustainability. This is so as in developing nations, the forces of IPE have resulted in widening the gap and imbalance between human civilization and the natural environment. Nigeria lacks a cooperative approach towards addressing such imbalances, resulting in a failure of establishing an appropriate link between changes happening on global level with restructuring of and state reforms. Here, good governance is therefore required to improve the development of the country in a sustainable manner. Nigeria is a community that is multi-ethnic in nature where good governance requires that an inclusive strategy is followed to give all groups a sense of belonging. Thus, this can be improved through adding transparency in relation to rule of law and free and fair, credible elections resulting in efficient leadership of the country. Such powers enforced by good governance will take the Nigerian political-economy towards a participatory style of leadership where public leaders will be linked with citizens directly. Based on the analysis of the main indicators of corporate governance in Nigeria, in terms of government effectiveness, accountability in governance must be brought about to improve the effectiveness in administrative services. The creation and consolidation of democracy through effective governance can only be possible by an

agile civil society. In addition, there is the need for an institutional framework that would help lessen the economic and non-economic risks in the state. In modern economies of the twenty-first century, the growth in the per capita income depends on the internal social and economic systems that facilitate the accumulation of capital and the creation of wealth.

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