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Governance Disequilibrium: A Catalyst for Instability in Developing Countries: The Situation in Nigeria

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Abstract

Democratic government is touted to reflect in democratic Governance, with the gains of Democracy being reflected in the day-to-day living standards of the citizenry. The lack of this is a consequence of governance disequilibrium, which in many instances has triggered political upheavals and socio-economic uncertainties in several countries. The paper argues that the Nigerian state has faced a governance crisis under both military regimes and democratic administrations. These governments are not well-reasoned, nor do they understand the enormous challenges of Governance ahead of them before assuming the responsibilities of government. While in office, they still struggled with doubt about their mission and how to address the situation. On the other hand, the subjects lack the socio-economic capacities to demand from those saddled with the responsibilities of the state what they have contributed to improving Governance, especially in areas such as emancipation and empowerment, alleviation of poverty, improvement of the standard of living, and security of life and property. The study concludes that governance disequilibrium is fundamental and a matter of time, which can be resolved when government officials see their appointments as a contrast and use their offices to legislate on national issues that will bring about change to socio-economic and political decadences across the Nigerian federation.

Keywords: Government; Governance; Disequilibrium; Elected and Appointed; Political Parties; Nigeria

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INTRODUCTION

Nigeria has continuously faced a Governance crisis since its inception in 1900 under colonial administration; even now, good Governance remains elusive (Yagboyagu & Akinola, 2019; Chen, Khurshid, Rauf, Yang, & Calin, 2023; Yates, 2022). Essentially, a government is instituted to alleviate the fear of uncertainties and contradictions that may undermine the state's essentiality vis-à-vis the government. While the purpose of any government, whether elected or unelected, is not limited to securing the territorial integrity of its domain, it is also responsible for attending to the welfare of its people in terms of socio-economic and political matters (Williams, 2021; Yates, 2022).

Across all political systems, the ground norms are the legitimate tools of state responsibility to the citizenry. This is further strengthened by the liberal democratic ethos, which advocates for liberty and equality, as expressed in multiparty Democracy (Mahajan, 2017; Shively, 2008). Elections are anchored in the people's ability to choose among several representatives of political parties to represent their interests in government and Governance (Papada, Pavlova & Lindberg, 2022; Varieties of Democracy Institute, 2022; Gerring, Knutsen & Berge, 2022). However, the ability of a political party and its candidate to provide a legitimate answer to the question of governance disequilibrium, more often than not, determines the extent to which the party candidate will win the mandate to administer Governance.

In advanced democratic systems, elections are not touted as a do-or-die affair, but a better candidate usually emerges victorious. On the contrary, in developing countries, elections are often seen as a do-or-die contest, as politicians employ both legal and extralegal means to win elections (Ake, 2001; Calhoun, Gaonkar, & Taylor, 2022). After an election or found in the corridors of power, whether with or without the mandate of the people and exercising the authority of the state, it is hardly possible for such a government of the day to be democratic, transparent, and accountable in intention and purpose. The way and manner a politician wins public office determines their behaviour in the office. Solving infrastructural underdevelopment, insecurity, unemployment, and other issues hinges on the administration's ability to address these issues effectively. The elected government is expected to implement his party programs cum manifesto, but what we see is the initiation and implementation of personal projects aside from the norm of multiparty Democracy. What then follows is the crisis of underdevelopment across the political spectrum, leading to deficits in socio-economic and political matters. This has influenced civil unrest, protests, military coups and counter-coups, internal war, and the disintegration of a polity.

Nigeria, like other liberal democracies, is not immune to the crisis of dividends of democratic Governance and governance disequilibrium, even as a developing country. Under the imperial rule led by Great Britain, Nigerian citizens faced significant Governance problems. The crisis persisted even after political power was transferred to the early Nigerian leaders. In the post-independent era, the Nigerian military and civilian rule continue to face numerous challenges, with no end in sight for the majority of Nigerians. They, the citizens, still wallow in poverty, homelessness, hunger, insecurity, disease, and other maladies. Nigerians faced these challenges despite an abundance of natural resources (Fagbadebo, 2009; Mundt, Aborisade, & LeVan, 2008; Yagboyaju & Akinola, 2019). The enormous natural resources endowed to the country have turned out to be a curse rather than a blessing. The paper aims to examine the socio-economic and political imbalances in the Nigerian state, offering potential solutions to the country's governance

challenges. The rest of the paper is divided into the concept of Governance, theoretical framework, the Nigerian State, disequilibrium in Governance, and conclusion.

Nature (2006) states that Governance is "the processes and systems by which a government manages the resources of a society to address socio-economic and political challenges in the polity." The term "government" means an institution through which the will of the society is aggregated. In terms of function, a country's government is divided into three organs: the legislature, the executive, and the judiciary. All three functionaries are meant to realize the objectives of the state. Kohli (1992) put it that Governance is the promotion of socio-economic development. From these positions, a government is elected by the people to effectively and efficiently provide basic amenities, infrastructural facilities, security, and, in general, everyday goods and services for the public interest while also harmonizing and managing the diverse elements within the polity and beyond (Ogunwa, 2022). Put this way, Governance is the responsible utilization of national resources for the benefit of the populace through the elected representatives of the country.

Governance entails political and civil freedoms, medical and healthcare, schools and educational instructions, roads, railways, the arteries of commerce, communications networks, and money and banking systems, a fiscal and institutional context within which citizens can prosper, support civil society, and a method of regulating the sharing of the environmental commons (Besancon, 2003). The assumption of Governance is based on the quality of good government and the quality of the delivery system for goods and services. Abdellatif (2003) notes that it ensures that political, social, and economic priorities are based on a broad consensus within society and that the voices of the poorest and most vulnerable are heard in decision-making regarding the allocation of development resources. Contributing to the debate, Adejumobi (2005, p. 5) argues that governance "seeks expression in the legitimate use of power in which the people elect and control their leaders, while the parameter of accountability is the extent to which the people can hold their elected or appointed officials responsible, for their actions or inaction… extent to which individuals are free to form associations to defend and protect their interests."

Jessop's (1998) position is instructive that the elected government officials should be controlled by political parties and play a significant role in this process. Arguing that they should establish and maintain the general rules and regulations by which all governance forces should strictly abide, establish a platform for negotiation and dialogue, and organize an open, just, transparent, and effective decision-making and policymaking network. Build information exchange and feedback mechanisms, and encourage all governance forces to adjust their pursuits and governance practices in a reflexive manner. Set up learning networks among governance actors. In addition, organize open investigation platforms among different governance forces, promote an understanding of the differences, among other practical rationalities and cognitive methods, and serve as a "court of appeals" and organize a "jury" that mediates through collective negotiation when there are controversies about shared objectives, conflicts of interest, or other disputes, amongst different governance forces, managing networks as well as the coordination channels among multifarious forms, forces and mechanisms strategically, and to make the state itself act as the balance point for effective coordination, among them, and so forth (Jessop, 2002).

In liberal democracies, political parties serve as policymakers through policy formation and implementation and may even control the legislature, as well as

the executive branch of government. The position of Nwanogwugwu (2005) is that Governance should not only eliminate anti-governance or people interest but to ensure formulation of sound public policy, establishment of efficient and effective legal and institutional framework, provision of a range of public goods and services especially infrastructure, establishment of clear and consistent economic policies; the elimination of bureaucratic inefficiencies and building private sector confidence, establishment of public confidence through properly adhered guidelines, accountability, probity, and rule of law in private and public sectors, provision of framework from which the intended outcomes of public policy are accompanied by welfare safety nets for the vulnerable sections of the society, the existence of feedback mechanism which enables the government to assess itself from the "peoples" perspective, enhancement of the standard of living and quality of life in the society, and minimization of waste and increased further utilization of human and natural resources in the economy. This is one of the primary purposes of Democracy and democratic Governance, as well as the role of the elected, to make life meaningful and worth living. Thus, good Governance will require the "government's ability to deliver services" (Fukuyama, 2013).

There is a nexus between the elites, political parties, party politics, and governance disequilibrium. A political party is a platform where party candidates are presented for election. Party politics refers to the contest and struggle between political parties (Ogunwa, 2023). It is a political activity and struggle for power between two or more parties. The activities arise during elections when electorates make decisions between competing parties. After the election, winners representing political parties emerge from the competition and utilize the available resources to benefit the people. That is why it is often said that Governance is the use of the commonwealth to benefit the citizenry positively. The quality of party system and party politics will determine the kind of electoral results and candidates that emerge to rule because where party candidates are democratically elected along the liberal democratic traditions, the tendency is that there would be free and fair elections devoid of electoral violence and irregularities including killings, deaths, the ballot box and papers snatching, rigging, etc. (Kruks-Wisner, 2021; Gause, 2022; Donno, Morrison, & Savun, 2022; Lundstedt & Edgell, 2022). The absence of a quality party system often leads to poor party politics. The emergence of party candidates may not align with democratic principles, and the quality of the election will also bring on board political mediocrities with a lack of capacity to govern well. Moreover, he cannot toe the line of his party and Democracy as they are not democratic in intents and purposes, which will translate to bad Governance, and the commonwealth becomes a primordial and self-serving interest (Fukuyama, 2015; Kirişci & Sloat, 2019; Lachapelle & Hellmeier, 2022; Saskia & Grahn, 2022).

Governance, therefore, is "measured by the extent to which a political regime can guarantee popular welfare, and promote the greatest happiness of the greatest number of people in the society" (Adejumobi, 2000, p. 6). The premise of government is the basis of good Governance, as well as the identity of interests between the elected government officials and the governed. This includes democratic institutionalization and the wisdom to discern the fundamental interests of the people, to pursue them, and the strength to carry this knowledge and intention into action. The government and Governance become sufficient along democratic norms because "without good governance, without the rule of law, predictable administration, legitimate power and responsive regulation," all efforts of the government vis-à-vis

Governance lead to illusion (Kofi Annan, cited in Adejumobi, 2000). The quality of good Governance must be rooted in democratic Governance for effectiveness and efficiency in the management of national resources across the board (Bardhan & Mookherjee, 2000; Graham, Amos, & Plumptre, 2003; Plumptre & Graham, 1999).

On the contrary, however, the government's failure to fulfill its socio-economic and political promises and to exercise state authority in the interests of the people usually leads to contradictions, disequilibrium, and political instability. Scholars such as Riker (1967), Kaplan (1967), and Dudley (1973) argued that inconsistency in policymaking occurs when a policy fails to solve the challenges intended to be faced by the citizens. In his words, Dudley (1973), "instability is then the converse of stability and is indicative of incongruence" with what the government should do and did not do. Disequilibrium or inconsistency in government programs that have not addressed governance challenges can sometimes trigger national calamities and erode public trust in Democracy, leading to instability in government, not only in advanced societies but also in developing democracies. However, when disequilibrium is eliminated, consistency is restored in the polities.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Elite Theory

Mosca (1939), an Italian sociologist, developed the theory of the political elite in his work titled *The Ruling Class,* which, according to him, "in all societies… two classes of people appear – a class that rules and a class that is ruled." The appearance of a ruling class in societies, as identified by Mosca, is due to their being a more organized and active minority whose responsibility is to govern society, having acquired the necessary skills and knowledge. This becomes so important since the nature of modern states is rooted in the division of labor. The division of functions and who wields them is a general reality across political systems. Since men are not equal in skills and knowledge, they must be assigned functions according to their abilities. Individuals are assigned tasks according to their abilities, ranging from menial tasks to roles in security and Governance within the polity. Thus, the ruling class is not only recruited but also selected within the social positions in the system class: "… come(s), as things stand, almost entirely from social strata that have a certain economic ease and a certain amount of education" (Mosca, 1939).

The Nigerian governing elite, across all strata of institutions of Governance in the country, remained a formidable and united team, brokered against the majority. Their exotic positions and privileges in both the civil and military administrations have not benefited the average Nigerian, who is continuously under pressure to meet the necessities of life. The political intrigues and manipulations deployed in Governance continue to hinder any genuine effort to advance the common good, including qualitative education and infrastructural facilities (such as standard shelters, motorable roads, transportation systems, and healthcare services), as dividends of democratic Governance. These basic incentives eluded the people because, as far back as the time of political independence in 1960, the elite have been perceived as sentimental, uncontrollably dependent, greedy, materialistic, and, in most cases, non-nationalistic (Azeez & Adenuga, 2013). They hinder any genuine efforts to promote good Governance in areas such as wealth creation, employment, and energy. The abundance of resources was plundered and serves as an extension of the colonial state, which is predatory and exploitative.

Little wonder that Onyishi (2007) infers that “the post-colonial state never became a reflection of the contending social forces within society. This inorganic character of the emergent Nigerian state

meant that it would…not encapsulate a social contract between the citizens and…the government". Those who emerged as politicians turned out to be political apprentices nurtured and developed by the colonial government, and were as vicious and wicked as the colonial state, even demonstrating antidemocratic characteristics like impunity, arrogance, exclusivity, elitism, executive authoritarianism, and censorship of popular debate on national issues. These individuals became parasites in Nigerian society because they sought power for personal and material aggrandizement (Joseph, 1999; Okoli, 2009). They are not accountable to people (Ibietan & Ajayi, 2013). Arguing that the fallen status of Nigerian laws and weak political institutions of Governance contributed to the internal and external mechanisms for holding elected and appointed public officials accountable because they are "grossly circumscribed" governance processes (Ibietan & Ajayi, 2013). The political elite, rather than promoting opportunities for political competition, creates limited and vitiated prospects for democratic Governance (Okoli, 2008).

The theory has exposed and provided a proper understanding of why there is disequilibrium in Governance in Nigeria. It further shows that the interests of the governing elite were well served and protected, while the citizens were at the mercy of the elite. The importance of this theory for this study cannot be overstated, given its connection to and explanation of poor Governance in the country.

Nigerian State. The evolution of the Nigerian state started in 1861 when the British government's forces bombarded Nigeria through Lagos Lagoon for three days. The capture of Lagos following the bombardment led to the capture of the entire country of Nigeria. The Royal Niger Company administered the territory. The British agent staged a comeback in 1900. Between 1900 and 1914, the country remained divided because it was still segregated into protectorates, as it had been before the country was penetrated. The attempt to unify the people came through political amalgamation in 1914. Earlier, in 1914, the country was renamed "Nigeria," a name suggested by Flora Shaw, who later married Lord Lugard. Scholars have collectively agreed that the intention and purpose of amalgamation were actually to benefit the British economic interest (Oyediran, 2007; Olaniyan, 2003; Dudley, 1968; Coleman, 1958).

From the political organization of the Nigerian state, the British rule continued to make its presence felt, having introduced democratic institutions through constitutional reengineering in Nigeria, from the Clifford Constitution in 1922, the Richard Constitution in 1946, and the Macpherson Constitution in 1951, to the Lyttelton Constitution in 1954, and even the Independence Constitution of 1960. During this period of constitutional making, political parties were established by Nigerians, particularly the educated elite, upon their return from overseas. Their agitation to participate in the Governance of the land culminated in political independence. The political unification failed miserably because the events that followed demonstrated that the bigger challenges were still ahead. For instance, Chief Anthony Enahoro's (a Southerner) motion for independence failed. The motion failed not because Nigerians did not want freedom from the British government, but because the North did not support it. At independence, early Nigerian leaders assumed the responsibility of Governance under the platform of political parties. Having won elections to government offices, their attitudes to Governance influenced the Nigerian military to usurp political authority from the elected politicians. It is little wonder that shortly after independence, the young Republic could not last, as the "men" in uniform

usurped the people's power from the first Republic politicians.

The military intervention is not limited to the economic crisis but rather to the largely unresolved political turmoil that preceded and followed independence. The political situation is beyond what the literature of politics has said, but malignant crises such as the census of 1951, 1962, and 1963, motion for independence, creation of Middle Belt, Action Group and East regional crises, imprisonment of Chief Obafemi Awolowo, 1964 federal and western regional election of 1965, lack of unity, trust, the seed of discords, winner-take-all syndrome, and selfishness. These and other crises continued into 1960 and even persisted in the post-independent period, which were the objective conditions that triggered the Nigerian military to take over power.

What became the fate of the first Republic was that it collapsed under the military in January 1966 because of the "northerners' domination, Yoruba disunity, eastern aggressiveness, and bitter personality animosities" (Enefe, 2008, p. 24). The northern dominance was accentuated by the counter-coup of July 29, 1966, under the leadership of General Yakubu Gowon. The event that followed Gowon's coup culminated in the country's civil war between 1967 and 1970. Since then, the Nigerian military has seen it as a necessity, perhaps even their birthright, to always knock on the door of any civil administration when it comes short of fulfilling its functions and obligations to the majority of the citizenry. This argument is premised on the 1983 coup when the then democratically elected government of Alhaji Shehu Shagari was ousted from power (Akinboye & Anifowose, 2015; Enefe, 2008; Falola & Ihonvbere, 1985). Under military rule, the political engineering process began with four regions being divided into 12 states, culminating in 36 states, including the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. This creation was complemented by 774 local governments across the federation (FNG, 1999). Notwithstanding the antecedents of the military regimes, which have kept the country together, the crisis of disequilibrium in Governance has persisted (Ogunwa, Omisore, & Ogunwa, 2022).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Nigerian Government and Disequilibrium Governance.

MacIver (1965) states that the state is an organization of people in which the government is the administrative organ, characterized by a constitution that specifies the functions of the government and its subjects. The essentiality of the state is that the state is created to carry out the function of the government so that the state does not "lose its credibility" (Gauba, 2010). The credibility of a government is a *sine qua non* of Governance. We have observed that the colonial government established the Nigerian state and exhibits the characteristics of a state in terms of its government. The Nigerian leaders beginning in 1960, especially having attained a Republic in 1963, cannot be said to be unaware of the challenges that confronted them under colonial rule, how the British government created those problems, and how they were divided as a people and as a country and the challenges of Governance that followed them into independence. Initially, colonial rule was known for its divide-and-rule tactics, a policy that permeated the divide between the South and the North. Besides this policy, the introduction of regional politics into the body politic by the Richard Constitution of 1946 turned the leaders against each other. However, the constitution aimed to unify all ethnic groupings but ultimately led to further division among the people of Nigeria (Oyediran, 2007).

Furthermore, the constitution further facilitated the formation of parties along regional configurations. Put this way, the three major political parties were pushed

apart because the NCNC was based in the East, the Action Group party in the West, and the Northern People's Congress in the North. Apart from the NCNC, which evolved into an Igbo party, the other two political parties originated from regional ethnic associations. These parties were regarded as regional political parties and operated within their respective regions, guiding them generously without compromising the interests of any opposition party within their spheres. It was the regionalization of party politics that gave rise to the federal constitution of 1954. Federalism, as a means of Governance, was designed to protect unity in diversity and diversity in unity while also preserving ethnic peculiarities (Ogunwa, 2013a, 2013b; Jinadu, 1979).

The military elite has a cause to wrest power, as evidenced by both successful and unsuccessful coups in Nigeria (Ogunwa, Omisore, & Ogunwa, 2022; Iroansi, 2000; Ademoyega, 1981). Despite the military intervention in Governance in Nigeria, the military presence is regarded as an aberration, as they are trained to fight wars and defend defined territories against internal and external intruders. However, the presence of the military in government lacks the ethos of Democracy and constitutional order; yet, in government, the military has caused more harm than good for good Governance. Bounteous evidence has shown that the military created 36 states, including the 774 local governments, established unity schools, institutionalized the National Youth Service Corps, constructed feeder roads, and discouraged the forces of disintegration of the country. All these are just minor palliatives but hardly resolve the challenges of Governance in the land.

The military quest for centralization of power made the central government so titanic and powerful that it overshadowed the component states. The power of the center has diminished the capacity of state governments to address governance crises within their domains (Elaigwu, 2000). The states have consistently relied on the Central government to execute developmental projects, including the payment of salaries to their workforce. Sometimes, too, the central government lends money to the component states to offset their financial obligations to contractors and consultants who have provided services to them. For instance, COVID-19 has highlighted the vulnerability and inability of those states' governments to meet expectations. Moreover, they are not a government in the true sense of the word (Rinji, 2001). The general government has had to bail out the 36 state governments, including the Federal Capital Territory, with several palliatives to help people survive the epidemic crisis across the federation (Ogunwa & Ogunwa, 2022).

The nature of power and constitutional centralization in favor of the larger government of the federation has denied both state and local governments the ability to judiciously harness local resources within their spheres and make meaningful contributions towards their areas, as well as the country at large. This trend suggests that the federal government is the only entity that remains viable while other levels of government struggle to survive. They have remained lilliputian and disabled. However, their creation and recognition are undisputable in the national constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FGN, 1999). As a result of their neglect, the quantum resources at the federal government level have enabled politicians in the country to pursue every election with every means at their disposal (Abdul-Wasi, 2010; Akpan-Nsoh, 2011). Ake (2001) has rightly observed that power was sought "by all means and maintained by all means." He went further to say that "as they pulled apart, they placed more value on capturing political power for themselves and grew increasingly fearful about what seemed to them to be the grave consequences of losing to their rivals in the

competition for the control of state power. Thus, the premium on political power rose higher and higher and with it the intensity of political competition and its domination by efficiency norms".

Since the era of party politics and electoral Democracy, beginning with the colonial days, the struggle to capture power has been so absorbing because everything went into the electioneering process, as "political power was everything." The quest for power by politicians is without mercy. The contest for power among Nigerian politicians since the first Republic and now (2024) has been characterized by fraud, manipulation, rigging, ballot box snatching, and false declaration of election results. Found in the corridors of power, their purposes in government hardly reflected the purpose and the raison d'être in the government houses (Abdul-Wasi, 2010; Aina, 2004). Amuwo (2015) had once observed that Nigerian politicians prefer politics to Governance. In other words, politics dominate and supplant Governance. For instance, in Nigeria's second Republic between 1979 and 1983 under the Allhaji Shehu Shagari administration, even though the government promised "to promote the welfare of the people" (Falola & Ihonvbere, 1985), it turned out to be the government for his cabinet members because the government placated other political parties given bitter struggle for power as well as distributed offices rather than the implementation of policies that will lead to upliftment of poverty-ridden Nigerians. The distribution of public offices was based on the political patronage and interests of politicians, with key appointments and more funding for NPN members, because the administration spent a significant portion of Germany's wealth on "building the cheeks and bodies of a tiny ruling elite" (Falola & Ihonvbere, 1985). till, under his leadership, politicians-turned-contractors were awarded huge contracts for the supply of fertilizers, clearing bush, and importing food from abroad, among other things. The projects awarded were left unexecuted because they involved NPN government officials and party members. Not only did they refuse to execute the projects, but the projects were also overloaded. There was the theft of government funds and property, as well as the illegal transfer of funds to private accounts (Falola & Ihonvbere, 1985; Joseph, 1999). Indeed, the quest to take control of Nigeria and to take over the distribution of the oil wealth bedeviled the government of Shagari with the abandonment of the Nigerian people, "they were supposed to represent, are poor, so poor …" (Falola & Ihonvbere, 1985).

The domineering and repressive tendencies exhibited by the NPN-controlled Federal government failed to bring together both the components and the federal government for the good of the country, which unnecessarily led to an altercation, deportation, imprisonment, and assassination of perceived political enemies throughout the land. Due to the availability of oil wealth and oil money, the government imported food items such as rice, meat, cereals, sugar, and wheat. These items were hitherto locally produced in Nigeria. The discovery of crude oil in commercial quantities has not translated into a serious commitment on the part of the government to transform the economy from one of imports to one of exports, making life more meaningful for the majority of the people. Instead, the politicians who presided between 1979 and 1983 were... They influenced disorganization, mismanagement, and bad Governance to the extent that the government, by the few elected and appointed officials, appropriated national wealth in their favour (Akins, 1973; Akpan & Umoh, 2021; Williams, 2021; Omeje, 2021; Dogan, Majeed & Luni, 2021; Yates, 2022; Smith, 2022; Lotfalipour & Salehnia, 2022).

Little explanation is needed to view government and Governance in the aborted Third Republic, which was midwifed and truncated by the regime of General Ibrahim G. Babangida. The unfinished transition programs, which began in 1986, were concluded with the annulment of the presidential election in 1993. An election termed by national and international organizations to be the freest and most transparent in the history of electoral politics in the country. General Babangida lacked the political will to hand over to the civilian government (Omoruyi, 2004; Aluko, 1998). He stepped aside and handed over to Chief Ernest Shonekan. The latter ruled for 82 days as the head of the Interim National Government. Unrest, protests, and strikes characterized his reign. The upheaval is the fallout of the annulled presidential election. The political unrest culminated in another military regime headed by General Sani Abacha. General Abacha attempted to return the country to civil rule under his leadership, but this was short-lived, and he died in office without realizing his dream of ruling Nigeria as a democratic government. Even before his death, five Nigerian political parties had earlier adopted him as their presidential candidate in the election slated for August 1998.

As argued earlier, military rule is an aberration and bereft of a democratic ethos. Indeed, it is a true saying that between 1983 and 1998, under four different heads of state, their performance in Governance was less than desirable (Babawale, 1998). Under military rule, there was a disequilibrium of Governance across the country. The country's wealth, both locally and internationally, was depleted (Akinboye & Anifowose, 2015; Bakre, 2008; Ribadu, 2006). Additionally, the country incurred substantial debts in both Naira and foreign currencies (Akinboye & Anifowose, 2015). The military officials and the few chosen politicians lived at large without consideration for the people's plight, who hardly survive on US$1 per day. Despite the challenges of Governance and the military regime's inability to resolve the crises associated with the Nigerian State, Abubakar Abdulsalami spent less than a year in government and handed over power to the then-former Head of State, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) in 1999. The party emerged victorious, having defeated the other three political parties in the presidential election. In the history of party politics in Nigeria, the Fourth Republic seems different because, since 1999 and now (2024), there has been a transition of power from one government to another and from one political party to another.

Nigerians re-embraced Democracy in 1999 (Gerring, Knutsen, & Berge, 2022; Lachapelle & Hellmeier, 2022). The majority of people expect that this time around, a democratic government will be different from the military administrations and previous republics, which were known for uncertainties, political bigotry, electoral violence, voter intimidation, a politics of 'do or die,' hunger, and limited development, among other issues. Alas, what the people have witnessed in the last two decades and five years of Democracy is alarming, with further deterioration in Governance. The quest for power, as seen in the previous Republics, has continued unabated (Amuwo, 2015). Nigerian politicians are still embroiled in a power struggle to hold elective offices permanently. There was little attention to governance matters. They steal public wealth as if there is no tomorrow, or perhaps the country is going into extinction. The extinction of the country is a more apt description of the politicians' attitudes.

All the indices of bad Governance and disequilibrium that have triggered the military intervention stage, a coup, and the assumption of power once again remain at large. Politicians in the Fourth Republic are preoccupied with elections rather than Governance (Yates, 2022; Omeje, 2021).

The election still took the form of elimination and assassination (Anifowose, 2003, 2004). The political parties lack a clear-cut ideology to address the country's socio-economic and political challenges. This explains party switching and proliferation. The PDP, which took the first shot at the presidency and administered the Nigerian state at the national level for 16 years, controlled several component states, including the majority of local governments, and was known for mismanagement, misgovernance, squandermania, and maladministration. Campbell (2010) has remarked that the PDP government, as well as its party wing, "stood for nothing except power for its leaders" (quoted in Amuwo, 2015). This remark indicates that, during the 16 years of Governance under the PDP, election results were often determined before proper elections were conducted and concluded. The former President, Olusegun Obasanjo, once said that the polls were a do-or-die affair for his party and his government. Little wonder that all elected and appointed government officials hardly find their rhythm because, as Amuwo (2015) categorically stated, "there has been a marked absence of purpose in the government at the center with the ruling party wallowing in doubts about its public mission in power. …there is a title or no concrete momentum towards a functional state". Indeed, neither the PDP nor its government functioned effectively to articulate the elements of Governance. Although the party instituted several palliative programs, none of these programs resolved the country's governance challenges. The consequence of this on Governance is "the tragedy of low expectations," distrust, and a lack of commitment to improve the people's welfare (Smith, 2022; Kruks-Wisner, 2021).

The defeat of the PDP by the All Progressives Congress, APC, in the 2015 general election was primarily due to the party's poor performance and widespread rejection by Nigerians. The defeat was touted as bringing a new brand of government, with new elected and appointed officials, into power. The defeat was also intended to mitigate the socio-economic downturn and reorient people's expectations with the benefits of democratic Governance, which had previously eluded the ordinary, or perhaps the majority, of the people in Nigeria.

Before the defeat of the PDP, there were considerable problems with Governance, such as the non-availability of electricity, widespread poverty, insecurity, insurgency, Boko Haram, kidnapping, and the phenomenon of brain drain, which was a concern for the public and civil servants. These and others, malignant in nature, actually await the new government of the APC. With the return of General Muhammadu Buhari to the helm of the federal government in 2015, hope was high among the people that Buhari and his new government, as well as the party, would rise to the occasion. However, in the last eight years, that is, from 2015 to 2023, the state of bad Governance has skyrocketed with the problems of insecurity, hunger, killings, and corruption pervading the country. Uncertainties and unpredictability characterized the eight years of the Buhari administration. At the end of his administration, Nigerians suffered untold hardship. Under the administration, the Nigerian currency witnessed the 'recoloring' of N200, N500, and N1000 notes, which led to the untimely death of many Nigerians. Those who died died because they were unable to retrieve their money, having deposited the same into the commercial banks as directed by Governor Godwin Emefiele of the Central Bank of Nigeria. Nigerians were forced to deposit and exchange their hard-earned money for the new currency. Under the Buhari administration, the country turned into a haven for kidnapping and Boko Haram dens. The Federal Capital Territory was

attacked by the terrorists under the administration.

The new government that succeeded Buhari in office in May 2023, still under the APC party platform, Bola Ahmed Tinubu, promised Nigerians a 'new hope' agenda during the electioneering campaigns. However, barely settled in office, his government announced the removal of oil subsidies and the introduction of a parallel exchange market. The announcement of the removal of oil subsidies on imported fuel, specifically PMS, triggered economic hardship and further exacerbated the governance disequilibrium. In Nigeria, PMS is tied to everything, including buying and selling. Although the administration is less than two years in government, the 'renew hope' agenda has now turned into punishment, impoverishment that many households can hardly afford a meal a day. Many businesses have closed down and relocated to neighboring countries. Nigerian small-scale companies have folded up because the price of PMS is now above N1,000 per liter, while the exchange rate is about N1,700 to $1. This has triggered crimes, the exodus of companies, and Nigerians and foreigners alike out of the country. Under the new PMS Price regime, the tokenism provided by the federal government to cushion the effects of new economic policies is insufficient for the survival of the people. This has caused deliberate suicide attempts, crimes such as stealing, burglary, even unrest, strikes, money rituals, and protection across the federation.

In Nigeria, successive governments have contributed significantly to the barrage of bad Governance faced by the Nigerian people. A significant amount of national resources was spent on electricity without any result. Several government entities and institutions, including publicly owned enterprises, were sold and bought by government officials. The national, state, and local governments were lacking in social and economic infrastructure and services. These and more have led to untimely deaths of the citizenry, while lives and properties were lost to banditry. The people live in fear, as they cannot predict when or where the men of the underworld will come.

Beginning in 1999 (2024), two giant political parties have ruled the country: the PDP, which was in power from 1999 to 2015, and the APC, which has held the mantle of leadership since 2015. Under them, they have not demonstrated the political will to resolve the serial problems that have continued to bedevil us as a country. Nigeria still suffers despite the abundance of natural resources and workforce development (Fagbedebo, 2009). Across the federation, vandalism of government properties and awarded projects that remain abandoned is the norm. Corruption has pervaded the government establishment, leading to the forfeiture of properties and the return of stolen cash to the government (Bakre, 2008; Akande, 2007; Fagbadebo, 2007; Ribadu, 2006; Olurode & Akinboye, 2005).

In Nigeria, Democracy is no longer an electoral process that allows for due process to promote better Governance on behalf of the governed, but rather a selection process that favors those individuals in government and their cronies, especially the godfathers and godmothers (Nnamani, 2003). This has usurped the power of the electorates cum the people to demand accountability, transparency and to control those who are in power because the political culture of the people is exchanged for voting buying and bread and butter, which unfortunately rendered the people politically naïve and demoralized socially and economically (Agbaje & Adejumobi, 2006; Varieties of Democracy Institute, 2022; Papada, Pavlova & Lindberg, 2022).

The political and economic corruption perpetuated by the elite in Governance extends across all levels of government, including the three branches of

government, as well as elected and appointed representatives, such as governors, senators, lawmakers, ministers, and judicial officers. The establishment of organizations like the EFCC and ICPC to collaborate with the CCB in combating corruption has been rendered ineffective by those in positions of authority who have abused their power to disregard due process, including the rule of law, thereby hindering institutional mechanisms for transparency and accountability in Governance. In the face of the criminalization of the governance process, the masses have remained defenseless, given the instrument of coercion at the disposal of the elite." This raises questions about the positions of Pareto (1935) and Mosca (1939), suggesting that modern democracies may be merely another form of elite domination, even after two decades of democratic rule in the country. More evident is Mills' (1976) position that impunity, unaccountability, and the unprecedented use of power for personal, idiosyncratic interests by elite-dominated governance structures gave credence and confirmation to the elite's usurpation of the masses' socio-economic, political, and democratic interests, ultimately benefiting themselves or elite rule. The deterioration, ineffectiveness, inefficiency, and moribundness in Governance by the governing elite may primarily be due to the "pleasure of easy living and privileges of power" acquired over the years in government through plundering, looting, and premiums paid on power acquisition and over-centralization, state power which rested on the oil state and rents (Ake, 2001; Agbaje, 2010; Agbaje & Adejumobi, 2006; Amuwo, 2000; Amuwo et al., 2004). This accounted for undergrowth, underdevelopment, and prosperity in Nigeria (ANEEJ, 2004). The political instability altered the process of growth in another direction since the "average Nigerian elite does not care about the improvement of the country so far his interest has been met or achieved" (Azeez & Adenuga, 2015). The "circulation of the elite" or new elite has not fundamentally improved the cause of Governance.

The elite dominance of Nigerian society in this dispensation, where the elite hold sway and form a formidable team against the teeming masses who are encumbered by infrastructural decadence and other amenities of life, indicates that democratic dividends are still very far from the reach of Nigerian citizens. Madunagu (2005) asserts, "the dominant fraction of the Nigerian ruling classes does not use the wealth they loot… for the benefit of 'their people'" and manifests mainly in personal rule;

People take precedence over rules. The office holder is not efficiently bound by his office, and is able, therefore, to change his authority and powers to suit his rule; the rulers and their appointed leaders take precedence over the formal rules of the political game; the rules do not efficiently regulate political behaviour; and the people, therefore, cannot predict or anticipate conduct from the knowledge of the rules. The state is the government of men and not of laws (quoted in Oyovbaire, 2007).

Indeed, good Governance remains a distant reality for the majority of Nigerians today, yet government officials live lavishly on the people's wealth and deposit their earnings in banks every day. Not only do they publicly display their ill-gotten wealth through a convoy of cars, benefits of offices, and the state apparatus (Ogunwa, 2012; Kruks-Wisner, 2021; Gerring, Knutsen, & Berge, 2022).

CONCLUSION

The paper has shown that there is governance disequilibrium in the polity. The polity is characterized by general challenges and debacles, which successive governments, including both elected and unelected officials, have deliberately failed to address, demonstrating a lack of political character and

a failure to meet the expectations of those who put them in office. Their non-response to the state of disequilibrium in Governance is further perpetuating poor Governance, anxiety, and uncertainties in the Nigerian state and its citizenry at large.

To forestall unforeseen political consequences of exceptionally fundamental revolution through unwarranted and unwanted civil demonstrations and large-scale protests that may trigger any form of national disorder, the Nigerian government vis-à-vis the representatives of the people across the federation, both the national assembly and the state houses of assemblies must be deliberate on the policy formulation and implementation that will make socio-economic and other services available and affordable by the people. Such a policy must be designed to resolve the associated problems causing disequilibrium in Governance within the federation. Then, a democratic government, and by extension, good Governance, will reflect the people's desires and aspirations, as intended since the formation of the Nigerian state.

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