NEPAD AND GOVERNANCE QUESTION IN NIGERIA: PROGRESS AND CHALLENGES

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Abstract
The NEPAD initiative emerged in 2001 as a renewed effort by African leaders to break away from the bad governance character that is responsible for the underdevelopment of most African nation-states. The NEPAD agenda is to provide a roadmap for Africa’s rejuvenation of the spirit of good governance and development. It is an agenda that is internationally focused, but to be driven by Africans with local implications for individual African nation. Hence, ensuring its success by implementing the spirit of the document by African states is pivotal. This paper by utilizing the analytical approach via documentary sources briefly examines the progress made and challenges to the NEPAD initiative in Nigeria. Despite the value of the document which has in part provoked reforms in the governance dimension, the NEPAD agenda is still faced by some challenges such as global economic meltdown, internal conflicts and state-centric interest which have threatened international and local commitment to the NEPAD initiative.

Keywords: Governance, development, NEPAD, poverty

Introduction
Post independent Africa has reflected a paradox in social, economic and political development in the sense that instead of the progressive improvement in her good governance dimension and the general welfare of her population the reverse is the case. Most of the nations that make up the African continent are highly endowed yet their population have continued to become impoverished under the sweltering heat of poverty, conflicts and disordered political system that lack the will and capacity to deliver on their promise of good governance to its citizenry. In the literature, scholars remain divided on the reasons that have tied the continent to failure and backwardness; thus, keeping most its component nation-states at the threshold of international governments’ mercy. Some have blamed Africa’s failure on the impact of colonialism, while others tie her failure to the push and twist of globalization and its skewed pattern of relationship. The third group anchor Africa’s predicament squarely on the failure of her various governments occasioned by the personalization of political power and greed that has bred wide spread corruption with resultant poverty and conflicts.

Be that as it may, despite the divergence of opinion, Africa is afflicted by unemployment, poverty and conflict occasioned by bad governance for which Nigeria is not precluded. The significant causes of Africa’s inability to reach her development expectations are embedded in those scholarly positions; and it is pertinent to note that these factors all combine to reinforce Africa’s decline. Summing these arguments Schraeder, (2004:309) noted that the failure of African countries to meet their development goals is subsumed in the crises of development characterized by crisis of identity, legitimacy, participation, penetration, distribution and integration. These crises have resulted in Africa’s political decay that has left most African nations at the mercies of the international community and their affiliate international institutions like the World Bank and the international Monetary Fund (IMF). Despite these challenges, this is not to say that significant growth have not been achieved in some African countries like South Africa, Nigeria, Morocco, and a few North African nations, nevertheless the growth recorded are well below their potentials. Apart from South Africa, Nigeria and most of the North African nation’s development have been fractured by their governments that are self-centric. In central and East Africa, the loss of state legitimacy has seen the degeneration of some nations into war lord states, with significant activities of insurgency. The various modes exhibited in challenging governments in Africa attest to the fact that Africans are deeply dissatisfied with the pattern of rulership their various governments have provided its citizens over the years. It is also emblematic of the populace demand for change that will enhance their
growth potentials, self-actualization and development in real terms.

Narrowing our discussion to Nigeria, the governance environment has shown a retrogressive character that did not support national development. The government dimension in Nigeria especially after 1960 reflected a character of sectoralism, greed and a growing discontent for the rule of law particularly within the elite circle in the process of the struggle for political power. The intensification of this struggle and the violent nature that it reflected has been tied to the involvement of the state in the national economy (Iheanacho, and Egwu, 2007) with its resultant zero-sum nature. It therefore means that he who controls the vortex of state power, automatically controls the decision making process and the power that determine the sharing of the “national cake”.

Over the years, the distribution of the national “cake” did not take into cognizance the contributions of the various sections to the production of the so-called national “cake”; as the sharing process also failed to utilize standard objective means for distributing national resources. This unorthodox pattern of state resource allocation became a constituting element to the rising group distrust, diffidence and intensification of conflict scenario in Nigeria with severe consequences for national integration and national development. Equally too, in the distribution process of national resources the interest of the minorities were gross undermined and in some cases violent suppressed. To be specific, the period from 1985 to 1999 the pattern of resource allocation was weaved around a client-patron network terminating at the feet of the grand patron who was the head of the supreme military council (Obi, 1998 and Joseph, et. al. 1996).

In the shifting pattern of unregulated character of power and its accompanying resource struggle, the ethos of accountability, social justices, equity, fairness and the public interest were loosely defined to capture only the interest of the ruling elites. Living at this precarious threshold, the public interest to ordinary Nigerian has become a long forgotten word in their vocabulary as they lived precariously at the mercies of poverty. The arbitrary character of state governance that was highly centralized was systematically transferred to the public service with the marked degeneration of professionalism, abuse of public resources, ineffectiveness and inefficiency which reflected prominently in poor service delivery (Ozor, 2004).

In the face of government failure (a situation in which government intervention worsens outcome) as a result of bad governance practices; given the fact that Africa’s underdevelopment is the main cause of its marginalization in the world relations. Arising from failure, the birth of NEPAD seems a welcome development as it seeks to re-define the path of Africa’s development that is tied to her citizen’s higher aspirations. Primarily, NEPAD is a plan how to develop the continent, how to achieve economic growth and to overcome poverty (Idongo, 2004:6). It is against this backdrop this paper examines governance situation vis-à-vis the principles behind the NEPAD in order to identify the progress made so far and the challenges against this agenda in Nigeria.

**Governance challenge in Nigeria**

The colonial institution and processes from which the Nigerian federation evolved can best be described as a process that “held together” rather than allowed the “coming together” of the diverse ethnic nationalities that hitherto existed independent of each other.

The “holding together” that colonialism created resulted in the forceful and arbitrarily incorporation in a unified colonial state under British imperialism divergent entities that were politically, socially and religiously different only to be, re-balkanized by the constitution of 1954. With the exit of colonialism national development now rested on the government who has tinkered with state involvement and control of the economy but failed abysmally. This outcome later occasioned the introduction of SAP, which also failed to make the desired impact due to the absence of a genuine political will to enforce the wholesome implementation of the reform regime.

The process of power acquisition showed a disturbing colouration that was hardly irreconcilable with the dictate of the common good or good
Bad governance born out of state arbitrariness resulted in three features that became the visible signpost describing the Nigerian-state. These signpost are: i) the existence and prevalence of scarce economic resources, extensive poverty and inequality, ii) weak political legitimacy that culminated in the peoples weak faith in government due to Nigeria’s political leadership inability to secure and protect the public interest and, iii) flagrant leadership arbitrariness and lack of respect for order (Joseph, et. al. 1996 and 2010). As such, the visible opposing forces are rooted in the constant struggle between authoritarian and democratic governance, the push for development amidst persistent underdevelopment, the burden of public corruption, and the pressure for accountability (Derren and Peter, 2010).

Capturing appropriately the right view of governance will mean revisiting briefly the concept of governance for a clearer understanding. This is because the picture of governance as it is with the Nigerian case is more or less an aberration. Capturing a precise definition of governance is a problematic endeavor primarily because it is a concept that is not only loosely defined but incorporates significantly divergent modes of organization and concepts. Combining those structures and concepts together provide an illuminating view of governance which can be referred to as good.

Quintessentially, governance is good where the process of acquisition of political power and its use is characterized by voice and accountability, political stability and absence of violence, government effectiveness, regulatory quality, and control of corruption weaved around a sound judicial and accessible legal system, respect for fundamental human rights, political and administrative accountability, freedom of information and expression, and transparent and responsive leadership. There are five Basic Categories (BCs) for evaluating good governance which are: 1) Safety and security, 2) Rule of Law and transparency 3) Participation and human rights, 4) Sustainable economic opportunity, and 5) Human development (Conor, 2009).

Good governance is instrumental to challenging the locus of abuse by strengthening governmental institutions so as to improve citizenship value by creating and sustaining an environment which fosters
strong and equitable development (Sapru, 2006). This will in the view Venter, (2009) will eliminate the extensive personalization of power that encourages clientelist relations, the denial and often widespread abuse of fundamental human rights by errant rulers. It also eliminates or hinders the emergence of unelected and unaccountable government, and the use of state apparatus as a means for elites to acquire wealth.

Good governance is not restricted to the political realm alone, it also reflects in the administrative structure of the state. Administratively, Good governance is characterized by predictable, open, and enlightened policymaking (that is transparent); a bureaucracy imbued with a professional ethos; an executive arm of government accountable for its actions; and a strong civil society participating in public affairs with all acting in accordance to the rule of law (see Adamolekun, 2002:3-11). It thus follow that the most common orientation and move towards the realm of good governance practices and principles should provoke the reform of the civil service, the improvement of policy-making procedures, promoting transparency including e-governance initiatives, and decentralization (Ladi, 2008:25) that engender strong corporate governance that is responsive to the right aspiration of the citizens. Strong corporate governance in turn has the capacity to produce good social progress (Agubamah, 2009). Governance is developmental when it directs the use of influence always in a manner that promotes the efficient and effective use state resources by the government in promoting the economic well-being of its people (Bello-Imam, 2004).

Gleaning from the above, it is assumed that good governance has acquired the characteristics of a “container concept” which incorporates a variety of principles as emphasis is placed on its characteristics that are related to institutional renewal. Good governance has thus become an elastic term rather than a concept in its own terms. It is more like a flexible carrier which conveys a varying combination of massages which remain though in the same logic (Ladi, 2008). Hence, a governance and administrative system that lack the principles of openness, transparency, accountability, integrity, and that operates without due regard for the rule of law clearly undermines her development and national progress; hence, cannot be classified as expressing good governance in practice. Conversely, for a nation to achieve national stability and promote development, it must inculcate in her governance and administrative operations the basic ethos that promotes good governance.

Development as the end product good governance
The essence of good governance is to promote the ideals and value of development. Defining development precisely has remained an issue best described as problematic; this is derived from the fact that it a concept that has continued to evolve with changing times. It convolution is provoked by new development challenges dissimilar from previous needs. At the early stage, development had been conceptualized based on economic parameters demanding that national economy generate and sustain an annual increase in its gross national product (GNP) at rates of perhaps 5% to 7% (Todaro and Smith, 2005:49). However, the inability of most developing societies to meet the target placed by this view only espoused the un-suitability of this standard. This weakness provoked the re-focusing of development conceptualization toward modernization with the aim of societal transformation. This idea is anchored on the establishment and institutionalization of modernity built around a social, cultural and psychological framework that facilitates the application of tested knowledge in all phases and branches of production (Nash, 1960 cited in Anyebe, 2011). Given all circumstance, development should at all times enhance employment, reduce poverty and address the question and problem of inequality (Seers, 1969). It is by addressing these issue areas that development as a means to an end can enhance the lives we lead and the freedom we enjoy (Todaro and Smith, 2005) by securing the core values of life sustenance, self esteem and freedom (Goulet, 1971). To achieve this goal, it is mindful to note that governmental, groups and individual efforts must are targeted at enhancing the capabilities of the individual (Sen, 1995 and 1999) and the collectives. Hence, economic development cannot be sensibly treated as an end in itself but a means to an end. It therefore means that government through good governance is to among others provide the platform upon which individual or groups can express fully their potentials for growth and self-actualization. Ensuring and securing this goal requires that a
nation-state execute her fundamental function of essential, service and business (Anifowose, 2005:102) for the common good in a fair, just and open to all in manner that promotes egalitarianism. Egalitarianism requires social participation as well as the removal of unethical practices that undermine good social progress. It is by the government performing its functions rightly and allowing access to all that the potentials of individuals and groups can be harnessed in a manner that will promote economic development and national progress. It is in the remove of bad governance and up-holding of the values that promotes socio-economic and political progress of the whole collective that NEPAD agenda becomes relevant to Nigeria.

The NEPAD

In the literature, evidence abound that the origin of New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) is an initiative that has evolved out of African leadership desire to break away from underdevelopment and poverty that has been occasioned by past bad governance. It is evidence that the present poor state of Nigeria cannot be extricated from the character of bad governance as the history of Nigeria has been a treatise in bad governance (Achebe, 1983). This glaring truth about Nigeria is a true reflection of most governance environment in African which has promoted conflicts and rising poverty on the continent (Thomson, 2007). The acknowledgement by leadership of its past failure and the corresponding search for a valid solution to eliminate both the cause and the consequences is a significant starting point that should not call for consternation but praise; equally too, support.

The search for the solution to Africa’s economic underdevelopment and governance problem via NEPAD began in 1999 at the OAU conference in Sirte, Libya which culminated in the production of the Millennium African Programme (MAP) document. The obstacle to the success of the MAP plan was the simultaneous evolving OMEGA plan coordinated by Abdulaye Wade of Senegal on the behalf of the Franco-phone African nations. The need for common front as a prerequisite for success of the MAP plan necessitated the reconciliation and compromise between the MAP, the OMEGA and the UNECA-Compact for African Recovery plans; since the three plans had the same goal of economic recovery, infrastructual development, debt reduction, poverty eradication and development so as to overcome the exclusion of African nations in globalization interactions. The successful amalgamation of the OMEGA, the MAP and the UNECA-Compact for African Recovery plans resulted in the birth of New African Initiative (NAI) which was latter modified and renamed New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) on October, 2001 under the supervision of African leaders meeting in Abuja, Nigeria. This diplomatic compromise prevented the initiative(s) from ending in a cul-de-sac at the early stage (Melber, 2004).

Objectives of NEPAD

Under the NEPAD spirit the following objectives were to be meticulously pursued by African leaders.

i) To promote accelerated growth and sustainable development.

ii) To eradicate widespread and severe poverty.

iii) To half the marginalization of Africa in the globalization process (Ujo, 2008:119).

iv) The empowerment of women

These objectives were to be pursued in line with

i) Developing a new partnership with industrialized countries and multilateral organizations on the basis of mutual commitments, obligations, interests, contributions and benefit.

ii) Ensuring African ownership and leadership.

iii) Making Africa attractive to both domestic and foreign investment.

iv) Unleashing the vast potentials of the continent.

In order to achieve these objectives, African leaders declared joint responsibility for a wide range of goals and tasks. These include the strengthening of mechanisms for conflict prevention, management and resolution and ensuring that they are used to restore and maintain peace; the promotion and protection of democracy and human rights by developing clear standards of accountability, transparency and participative governance; the restoration and maintenance of
micro-economic stability by developing standards and targets for fiscal and monetary policies and appropriate institutional frameworks; the institutionalization of transparent legal and regulatory frameworks for financial markets and auditing of private companies and the public sector; to revitalize and extend the provision of education, technical training and health services (with priority to HIV/AIDS, malaria and other communicable diseases); to promote the role of women in social and economic development; to build the capacity of the African states to set and enforce the legal framework and to maintain law and order; and to promote the development of infrastructure, agriculture and its diversification (Melber, 2004).

Although, some scholars have argued that the NEPAD initiative was hoisted in the neo-liberal philosophy which is rooted in the Washington consensus that has promoted the exploitation of Africa (Olukosi, 2003, and Chukwuemeka, 2008). That nonetheless, The NEPAD initiative is important in some significant ways as it provides a rallying point for which African nations could put their meager resources to profitable public use, it also provided the platform upon which the few civil society who had the knowledge of NEPAD could demand from their various government the values of good governance, it is the basis upon which African leaders can be held accountable for their stewardship and it provided external donor the exert avenues for channeling foreign aid and the yardstick for measuring its usage by both donors and African nations.

The NEPAD initiative draws its economic focus from the dictum of the neo-liberal orientation of the free market enterprise. The belief in the market system through commercialization and privatization provided a valid frame and a converging point for African leaders governments and international business to allow foreign direct investment (FDI) play its role in economic development in Africa through private initiative. Important also to NEPAD initiative is the recognition that regional market integration rather than the hitherto existing market fragmentation promises to increase efficiency through competition based on the free market operation.

By adopting the free market economy it is believed that NEPAD will be a force in lobbying the developed economies to open its market for African product which is important in pulling in the much desire foreign exchange earnings and investment Africa needed. Following this prescription demands the removal of subsidies, tariffs, and other financial restrictions the limits trade between nations. On the contrary, the removal of subsidies on essential commodities have resulted in higher prices for goods and services which has made some essential goods inaccessible to majority of ordinary African hence contributing to reduced standard of living. While the developed nations have pushed for the removal of subsidies African nations the developed nations have on their own part increased subsidies on agriculture products (Rehabeam, 2004:2) so as to make those essential commodities accessible to their citizens this glaring contradiction remains a sore point against NEPAD in Africa.

It has been observed that the reason why NEPAD states have pledged to good governance is an attempt to attract aids and foreign investment (Thomson, 2007) of the $64b, $54b will come from external donors this raises the fear that NEPAD will become another conditionality by another name (Ravi, 2003). The issue of sponsorship has been complicated by the present severe bits of global financial crisis. This problem has limited the commitment of donors to the NEPAD cause. This is because currently, less than 10 per cent of additional aid commitments made by donor countries is hampering the progress of NEPAD implementation.

Significant also to the problem of NEPAD is the question of ownership as Chukwuemeka, (2008) noted NEPAD’s pedigree has generated so much enthusiastic comments: it is “African-owned”. But this is a moot point. Even as Melber (2004) also strongly noted that NEPAD was developed without the people. (See also Idongo, 2004:20, Wikipedia, 2010:4, Obasanjo, 2007:4 and Rehabeam, 2004:7). For Rehabeam, (2004:4) the NEPAD agenda has been tested and failed so far, to her this failure emanates from the failure of Mbeki to condemn Zimbabwe on its internal crises as requested by major donor countries, Rwanda’s military
involved DRC conflict for which NEPAD group kept moth, the removal of the political and human right review from NEPAD. Thomson, 2007) skepticism is drawn from whether African countries will be able to generate new economic investment on the continent and break the vested interests that created the problem of structural inequity that is detrimental to its progress.

What progress?
Arising from the NEPAD initiative, the various Nigerian governments have emerged in Nigeria from 2000 to date have evolved policies that are aimed at providing a sound and favorable environment for private sector led initiative. Generally the principles that underline the reform agenda in Nigeria has been wrapped in SAP and tilted toward the neo-liberal consensus which NEPAD strongly supports (Thomson, 2007:151). This focus is compatibly tied with the economic and political principles that define and underlie the of NEPAD agenda. Since the introduction of NEPAD, the various government has made commitment toward public private partnership, a commitment to further strengthening governmental institutions, and implement newer reforms in that direction. From 2000 to 2010, the Nigerian governments have made significant efforts at reforms which cover the civil service, the private sector, infrastructures, social sector (NEEDS UBE, NHIS), anti-corruption, political reforms, debt relief, and Niger Delta (Shala,2006). Evidently, the significant anchoring point of all the reform areas aimed at promoting the NEPAD agenda in Nigeria is the NEEDS framework for action, the anti-corruption laws and institutions, and Due Process mechanism established to strengthen accountability and transparency in government financial transactions. Important as these developments are to the NEPAD agenda, it is still faced with some challenges. In the political arena, the NEPAD agenda has been instrumental to the further opening of the political space that has seen the respect of the voting rights of most Nigerians; the emergence of Goodluck Jonathan as president of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the re-election of governor Fashola, B of Lagos state, and recently (2012) Adam, O of Edo state without the hitherto manipulation of due political process and resultant conflict is a true attestation of this progress in Nigeria.

What challenges?

In part, the NEPAD agenda was to assist individual African nations to stem the tide of globalization and ensure a process of balanced relationship. On the contrary, even developed nations have not been able to successfully control the influences of globalization although some of its features are amenable to their control. On the part of African nations the inability to effectively organized internally their government and affiliate institutions of government constitute a vital stumbling block to the attainment of that goal. To turn the table of marginalization in the globalization interaction requires fundamentally, the element of national hegemony. Hegemony gives a country the power (Ayo, 2005:332), this power enables a country to impose its values on other participating nations through the carrot and stick methods of influence. There no doubting the fact that Nigeria does not have the hegemony to influence decisions about globalization flows.

Equally too, is the continued violent eruption arising from the abounding contradictions inherent in Nigeria’s political process political power acquisition which does not allow for a peaceful political transition which poses a genuine impediment to the democratic aspiration embedded in the NEPAD agenda. Nonetheless is the challenge posed by the tight model of governance, personality cult and the autocratic pattern of ruler ship of most Africa politicians (Nigeria not precluded); this has grossly undermined the principle of the rule of law and popular participation for which true democracy principle espouses. These characters according to scholar were not distant from the Obasanjo’s administration from 1999 to 2007. The electoral transition process He presided over was marred by irregularities as it was evident by the voiding of some electoral sits for which reelection were ordered by the various election tribunals established after the 2007 elections in Nigeria.

There is no gain saying that president Yar’ Adua who took over the mantle of leadership acceded to the fact that the elections of 2007 were questionable for which reforms will be instituted to correct. Unfortunately, former president Obasanjo as one of the leading personalities behind the NEPAD initiative was fingered to have presided over these public irregularity in Nigeria for which NEPAD seek to eliminate in local and African politics. The challenge of massive electoral fraud hitherto
experienced in previous elections was significantly reduced during the 2011 general election. However, the unwillingness of political opponents to accept declared results after election still remains, the unresolved security challenge occasioned by the Boko Haram sect, the persistent increase in political, ethnic, and religious conflicts, the growing agitations in the Niger Delta and the violent state reprisal are reflective of the inefficiency of the local Nigerian dispute resolution system to resolve the prevailing internal state contradictions. It is also symbolic of the high distrust the people have toward the state and its dispute resolution mechanism to adjudicate on contentious issues fairly and justly among contending parties in the polity.

The growing violent eruptions have severe consequences for the government’s drive to court direct foreign investment. This is because businesses and entrepreneurs need a safe and secure environment without which investment and production cannot be effectively enhanced. Increasing conflict situation, the slow pace of combating corruption in Nigeria, brain drain, poor remuneration structure, the continuing paradox of strong policies and weak implementation, poor infrastructure, poor information follow and continued civil society opposition to reforms, and the challenge of self-interest inherent in globalization interactions are forces working against the success of NEPAD. Against these impediments it is doubtful whether NEPAD will be able to generate new and better economic investment and break the strong vested interest (even those found amongst the members of governments themselves) that previously held back Nigeria political and economic progress (Thomson, 2006).

The institution of the anti-corruption reform which saw the establishment of the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) and the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) to mitigate corruption in Nigeria has been enmeshed in controversies. Specifically, the EFCC has remained a sup-opera with significant arrest made but none of those high profile cases have been convicted and sentenced, thus questioning the genuineness of government’s fight against corruption in Nigeria. Similarly, there has been outcry from some quarters regarding the activities of the EFCC, as some have questioned its constitutionality, while, others have accused the Commission of been a tool for silencing dissenting political voices in Nigeria (Oyovbaire, 2008). Equally detrimental to the NEPAD agenda in Nigeria is the ability of the government to enact and formally enforce the implementation of the freedom information bill. The enactment of this bill into law is essential in promoting the fundamental element of good governance which are openness and accessibility of the citizens in the affairs of government.

Concluding remarks
The NEPAD initiative is a comprehensive plan for action for African nation with international roots yet with local implications for individual African nations who have been beaten by the baton of underdevelopment, poverty and international marginalization in the globalization interaction. These results are a consequence of post colonial governance failure. The acknowledgement of this predicament by the present crop of African leaders has called their moral conscience to question and the urgent need for a plan of action to jointly through cooperation change the poor status of all African nations. The desire for change following a specified direction had resulted in the birth of the NEPAD framework of action, the goals of NEPAD are to be achieved based on the dodged commitment of African leaders with the dreams of development in collaboration of international support and donations.

Despite the resolve of African government and the blessing of international partners changing internal and external circumstances threatened to impinge on the success of the NEPAD initiative, significant among these circumstances are the global economic crises pummeling the international donors economy resulting in reduced financial commitment to the NEPAD initiative, the self interest character of global relations, increasing internal conflict situations in local economies of some individual African nations which is threatening private sector investment and the selfish personalization of power by some African leaders. Breaking through these barriers requires a renewed resolve by African leader and other international supporters to promote the ends of democracy, economic recovery and development of Africa and Africans even if it means sanctioning erring leader severely.
References


