

## POVERTY: A THREAT TO GOOD GOVERNANCE AND SECURITY IN AFRICA

Aliyu, M. Kolawole & Usman Solomon Ayegba  
Department of Political Science, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria.  
Email: aliyukolawole2014@yahoo.com

### Abstract

*This study examined poverty and its discontents on good governance and Security in Africa. It also identified reasons why poverty is rising in the continent, examined implications of poverty control measures for governance and security, and provided policy options for African leaders on how to get out of the menace of poverty. These were with the view to strengthening good governance and liberating Africans from the shackles of poverty. This study is a descriptive one and made use of secondary data such as books, journal articles, internet materials and other relevant documentations and were content analyzed. The study found that poverty-ridden Africans are not likely to embrace state policies as long as their basic needs such as shelter, clothing and food are not adequately catered for. The study equally found that Africans feel safer and criminality is reduced among them when poverty is genuinely given attention; and that when people are well fed, sheltered and clothed, they embrace government policies, conform to regulations and preserve its properties. As a result, it is recommended that government of African states should give more attention to their poverty eradication programmes by committing more funds to the agricultural sector and skill empowerment of the youths, and embark on more orientation crusades in order to make governance and security matters a meaningful one.*

**Keywords:** Poverty, the poor, governance, good governance, security

### Introduction

The effects of poverty on governance and security in Africa are soaring. According to (Otti, 2015), in 1820, average European worker earned about three times what average African earned. In 2006, 34 of the 50 least-developed nations on United Nation's list are in Africa (United Nations Development Report, 2015). According to the same report, in 2009, 22 of the 24 identified nations were tagged as having 'low human development' on the United Nations Human Development Index in sub-Sahara Africa. As at 2016, average European earned twenty times what average African earned, although Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capital incomes in Africa have also been growing but lesser than what obtains in other parts of the world (United Nations, 2016).

Poverty manifests in many African states in their GDP per capital which is less than US\$5200 per year. Except for few people in South Africa and Maghreb, Africans have very poor consumer goods. Angola, for instance, reaps large sums of money annually from its diamond mines, but after years of civil war, conditions there remain poor (Ayoola, 2016). Automobiles are luxuries to many Africans. They are also on the far side of communication technology and internet except the use of mobile phones which just grew to 86% as of 2016 (Bright, 2017).

In addition, quality of life is very low in Africa while infant mortality is high and very low literacy and life expectancy (Okunola, 2002). Higher education is poorly managed except few universities in Egypt and South Africa that have adequate funding (Bassey, 2014). According to Thailly (2013), best educated from the continent often choose to leave for the West to seek a greener pasture. Many foreigners are fleeing some nations like South Africa due to xenophobic attack (Ayoola, 2016). An average African faced annual inflation of over 60 % from 1990 till date. Most African nations including Angola, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Nigeria have inflation of approximately 10 % per year (Benedict, 2016).

Africa has a very poor infrastructure. According to World Bank (2015) and United Nations (2016), African states have no good roads, tap-water, and electricity. According to Elumilade (2013), African economy is characterized by rural, peasant agricultural based economy, which comprises about two - thirds of the poor. Evidenced from the World Bank Report (2014), 27% of Africans lived below poverty line in 1983, and increased to 46% in 1985. It came to 42% in 1992 and stood at 58% as at 2009, 63% in 2012 and 71% in 2014. As at 2017, the poverty level in Africa has become worrisome as shown in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Poverty Index across the Globe in Percentage

Countries	America	Europe	Middle East	Asia	Africa
% of Poverty	1%	2%	1%	8%	88%

Source: UNHCR Statistical Database

Social conditions continue to worsen as the continent's population continues to increase (World Bank, 2015). Rapidly growing cities include Cairo, Lagos, and Kinshasa (Okunola, 2002). The continent is blessed with major rivers and freshwater lakes, yet clean portable water is rare.

Criminalities, insurgence, militancy, robberies and several governance and security challenges in Africa are perhaps more poverty induced. A number of steps are being taken to eradicate governance and security challenges in the continent but they are yet to yield the expected results (United Nations Development Report, 2015). For instance, most African countries have adopted the Millennium Development Goal declaration in September 2000, pledged to 'spare no effort' to free men, women and children from dehumanizing conditions of poverty (Bale, 2013). Although, MDG has helped to lift some Africans out of extreme poverty, reduce hunger, and enable more children to attend schools, poverty is still manifesting among many inhabitants. It has therefore become imperative to examine how poverty threatens governance and security in Africa, with a view to strengthening good governance and liberating Africans from the shackles of poverty.

### Conceptual clarifications

Poverty refers to lack of basic necessities. World Development Report (1990) views poverty as the inability of a person, state or society to attain a minimum standard of living. It is also a state of having little or no money, goods or means of support. Indicators of poverty are low life expectancy, high infant mortality rate, low school enrolment, higher number of persons per physician, inadequate income, malnutrition, lack of access to social services, and lack of social and political status (United Nations, 2004). According to Aluko (1995), the poor are the people whose ability to contribute to the production process is insufficient. The poor are usually unable to obtain adequate income, find a stable job, own property, maintain a healthy living, have access to adequate education and cannot satisfy their basic health needs. Thus, the poor according to World Bank Report (2011)

are illiterates who also have a short life span. The poor usually have no access to good food, befitting clothing, decent shelter, and unable to meet obligations (Olayemi, 1995).

Governance simply means the manner in which power is exercised for mutual benefit of all in the management of the country's economic and social resources. The concept, according to Boeringer (2012) is the use of political authority and exercise of control over a society's resources. Governance refers to the manner in which a state governs its people (Way, 2010). Governance in this context means the efficiency and effectiveness of a government in promoting economic well-being of the people. By good governance, we mean governance that is participatory, transparent, accountable, rooted on rule of law, effective and equitable. It is a situation of running government in an open manner, whereby government expenses, projects and affairs are done in the best interest of the citizenry (Obadan, 2003 and World Bank, 1992). Good governance requires full protection of human rights, and can be measured by service delivery; openness, transparency, rule of law, and participation in public affairs (Obadina, 2008; Adelodun (2009) and United Nations, 2016). From the above definitions, good governance refers to an improved quality of governance that is predicated on security of lives and properties.

Security has to do with freedom from danger or with threats to a nation's ability to protect itself, promote its cherished values and enhance the well-being of its people. It can be seen as the freedom from tendencies which could undermine internal cohesion, good governance, corporate existence and its ability to maintain its vital institutions for the promotion of its core political and economic objectives, as well as meet the legitimate aspiration of the people. Security also implies freedom from danger to life and properties. This definition only covers internal security because it is in relation to threats from individuals on the basis of the level of their wealth.

### **Theoretical framework**

This study made use of two theories. The first is Abraham Maslow's theory of needs and the second, being input-output components of David Easton's (1971) system theory. According to Abraham Maslow, as cited by Oyeleye (2009), human beings need basic needs such as food, shelter and clothing. These needs should first of all be met before other higher expectations like security and social infrastructures. Thus, we can infer that before any good governance and national security efforts can be embraced, people's basic needs must be met. Else, other things that government does, no matter how good – intentioned might appear like a misplaced priority. Using David Easton's input-output components of system theory, it implies that government has responsibility to provide basic things for the citizenry in order to enable them give their support. For instance, government needs to allocate goods and services, regulate the behavior of the people, and give relevant information to the citizenry. It is after government have met its obligations that it should expect material support such as payment of taxes, obedience to laws, voting during elections or participation in politics from the citizen. Hence, the citizen basic necessities should be provided by the government before other things it intends to pursue can be meaningful. In most African countries, many poverty-ridden people fail to support the government in enthroning good governance and security because government fails to cater for their basic needs.

### **Poverty, good governance and security in Africa**

Poverty poses serious challenges to good governance and security in Africa. United Nations (2016) remarked that the level of participation of the poor in politics is very low. In other words, poverty narrows down the level of involvement of the poor in partisan politics. If poverty-ridden people participate in politics, they will not be assertive. This is because ability to express political contest is hinged on huge sum of money in most African states naira.

Besides, electoral malpractices are also influenced by poverty. Some people that engage in violence and malpractice during elections are most times; other things being equal, those with no stable means of livelihood (United Nations, 2014). Thus, poverty ignites electoral violence. Way (2010) argued that an averagely wealthy person is not likely to be wrongly used to disrupt electoral processes. The above argument tallies with Boerninger (2012), who remarked that when people have credible jobs, they are minimally used to perpetuate electoral violence. Obadina (2008) noted that “people without credible

means of livelihood are often used to subvert electoral processes”.

In addition, quality education, health se and housing are rarely provided in poverty-ridden states. Instead of requesting for collective infrastructural facilities, individual often pursues pecuniary things. Hence, there is widespread corruption because people do not care to support government effort to probe of misuse of public funds (Thailly, 2013). Such people often prefer to be bribed rather than ensuring contracts are faithfully awarded and promptly executed. Poor people often celebrate corrupt leaders. They, therefore, find it difficult to question suspicious source of public officers' sudden wealth.

The height of poverty on governance and security is deliberate damage of government properties. Bridges, electrical cables, transformers, oil pipelines, school buildings and other government facilities are maliciously damaged (World Bank, 2015). It can either be to express anger against government insensitivity to poverty and hunger or tentative means for the poor to survive (World Bank, 2015). Government properties could be stolen because of poor economic condition of man. Such vandalized or stolen government properties amount to double expenses and waste of tax payers' money.

Poverty also breeds criminalities such as kidnapping, ritual, illegal use of arms and ammunitions, robbery, extra judicial killings and assassinations. According to World Bank Report (2011), people whose basic needs cannot be met take to crimes. According to the report, the poor participates more in criminalities than a rich person in line with the relative deprivation theory. When the situation is compounded by youthful exuberances, violence increases (Hadee, 2017). There have been cases of people in some African states who engage in criminalities to cater for their family (World Bank, 2015). According to Sunday (2014), the spate of kidnapping, ritual, robbery, illegal use of arms, and other organized crimes in African states is not unconnected with poverty. Unemployed youths daily join armed robbers, terrorists and internet scammers to make ends meet (Bright, 2012).

### **Rising poverty**

The most prevalent reason for the rise of poverty in Africa is heavy expenditure on arms. Most African leaders use large chunk of their funds to purchase arms to curtail criminalities (Smeeding, 2005). There is also wide spread corruption as programmes designed to fight poverty are not fully implemented

because the funds end up in private hands. Those in authority have done little to wipe off corruption but create more imbalance hierarchy that leads to more poverty because of poor governance. Most African leaders use anti-graft agencies in witch-hunting their political adversaries. Cost of governance (that is too juicy) for political positions that cannot go round everybody is also a contributory factor.

There are unfavorable conditions tied to foreign aids, which mandates African nations to use their funds to buy products and services often more expensive, from donor countries which is economically harmful (World Bank, 2013, Pang – Long, 2016). Only Norway, Denmark, Netherlands and Britain have stopped tying their aids (Otti, 2015). Except in some cases, foreign aid is directed towards paying consultants from donor countries. According to Smeeding (2005) and Bright (2017), the aid often neglects vital area and serves the interest of donor countries.

In addition, colonialism and neo-colonialism are affecting the trend of poverty. The two systems are economic subjugation of the African countries. Colonization, for instance; was used to siphon African capital into banks and companies in developed countries. Till now, there has neither been compensation for wrong exchange system used by colonizers nor remittance of stolen funds to the original African states. African countries over-reliance on foreign aids and technology, non-payment of taxes by multi-national corporations are equally responsible for poverty. Neo-colonialism widens the gap between the haves (core) and the halves-not (periphery) countries. It prevents the establishment of industries that can fairly compete with developed nations. African states would have developed if not intruded by the whites and after decades of independence of African states as shown in Table 2, the level of development achieved by them reflected the degree allowed by the colonizers.

Table 2: African National Independence

S/N	Countries	Date of Independence	S/N	Countries	Date of Independence	S/N	Countries	Date of Independence
1	Egypt	1922	2	Republic of South Africa	1931 * but apartheid ended in 1994	3	Libya	1951
4	Morocco	1956	5	Tunisia	1956	6	Sudan	1956
7	Ghana	1957	8	Guinea	1958	9	Madagascar	1960
10	Benin formerly Dahomey	*1960	11	Niger	1960	12	Somalia	1960
13	Mali	1960	14	Republic of Congo	1960	15	Nigeria	1960
16	Togo	1960	17	Central African Republic	1960	18	Upper Volta	1960
19	Cameroon	1960	20	Gabon	1960	21	Mauritania	1960
22	Togo	1960	23	Senegal	1960	24	Chad	1960
25	Cote d'Ivoire	1960	26	Tanganyika	1961	27	Democratic Republic of Congo	1997 **but in 1960 Zaire
28	Uganda	1962	29	Rwanda	1962	30	Burundi	1962
31	Algeria	1962	32	Kenya	1963	33	Zambia	1963
34	Tanzania	1964	35	Gambia	1965	36	Botswana	1966
37	Lesotho	1966	38	Equatorial Guinea	1968	39	Guinea Bisau	1973
40	Angola	1975	41	Mozambique	1975	42	Zimbabwe	1979
43	Namibia	1990	44	Western Sahara; displaced and became United Nations administered	1991	45	Ethiopia	Un-colonized and historically independent
						*	Liberia	Colony of repatriated Africans formerly held in American slavery since 1847

Source: compiled by the author

Debts from international monetary agencies and governments of rich nations have also compounded poverty in Africa. Some debts were designed with unfair-terms; being paid in foreign currencies, which

make them vulnerable to world market changes. Heavily indebted African states are shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Heavily Indebted African States

1	Afghanistan	2.	Sao-Tome and Principe	3	Bolivia	4	Benin	5	Burundi
6	Cameroon	7	Central African Republic	8	Ghana	9	Comoros	10	Congo
11	Ethiopia	12	Republic of Cote d'Ivoire	13	Gambia	14	Guinea	15	Mali
16	Haiti	17	Guinea Bisau	18	Kenya	19	Liberia	20	Honduras
21	Mauritania	22	Democratic Republic of Congo	23	Niger	24	Rwanda	25	Senegal
26	Zambia	27	Nicaragua	28	Tanzania	29	Guyana	30	Uganda
31	Burkina Faso	32	Sierra Leone	33	Mozambique	34	Malawi	35	Togo

Source: IMF (2017).

Mozambique is one of the countries where indebtedness was so high that the country had ceased paying its debt on time since 2012 because its obligation to its creditor amounted to 40% of Gross Domestic Product (Mozambique Finance and Economics Ministry, 2017).

Table 4: Mozambique Debt Level (as a Percentage of GDP)

Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Percentage	38	40	53	62	86	130

Source: Mozambique Finance and Economic Ministry (2017).

Countries such as Gambia, Ghana with abundant natural resources are equally in similar critical situation; including Senegal, which has no natural resources. Between 2005 and 2015, Angola, Ghana and South Africa had substantial increase in their debt levels (World Bank, 2016). In South Africa, the number of people with formal credit has increased from 1.1

million a year to 14.2 million; while many own informal lenders (Finscope, 2016). Developed countries are on top of treasury securities when African countries are severely indebted as revealed in Table 5. The table shows a list of foreign holders with over \$150 billion of treasury securities as at 2017.

Table 5: Leading Foreign Holders of Treasury Securities as at 2017

Country	Amount Given out in billions of dollars(\$)	Percentage Owed	Percentage Charge as at April 2016
Japan	1,106.9	23%	-3%
China	1,092.2	5%	-12%
Ireland	299.9	97%	+17%
Brazil	267.7	15%	+7%
Cayman Islands	256.8	n/a	-1%
Switzerland	234.1	35%	+2%
United Kingdom	231.5	9%	+7%
Luxembourg	212.1	348%	-4%
Hong Kong	196.6	62%	+1%
Taiwan	155.6	36%	+0.2%
Others	1,990.3	n/a	-2%
Grand Total	6,073.7	n/a	-3%

Source: IMF (2017)

Hardly could development projects be carried out without taken foreign loans (IMF, 2015). This made foreign investors, bankers and merchants to easily shape African monetary and resources and currencies (Klein, 2008). Also, foreign assistance towards poverty tends to be political and selective. The politics

outweigh the 'real 'support. For instance, the developed countries prefer to treat outbreak of a disease rather than attending to its cause which most times is caused by poor living conditions (Kenworthy, 1999).

African nations still heavily rely on advanced nations for technology. According to Ayoola (2016), the white capitalists, because of their technological expertise and being the owners of factors of production – labour, capital and entrepreneur; use the opportunity to further enrich themselves and impoverish the African states. Africans prefer buying finished manufactured goods from foreign countries while they supply raw materials. This tends to make the economy of African states to be foreign dominated. Still, most multi – national corporations such as Coca-Cola, British Petroleum, Exxon, and Samsung that have their headquarters in America, Western Europe, Australia, New Zealand, and Japan usually invest their capital in extractive and distributive industries and not in productive industries of African states (Pang – Long, 2016). They even sometimes form foreign monopolies to create scarcity so as to rob African consumers of their surplus value.

Africa is also fond of civil wars, either between neighboring countries or within the same country. Long standing civil war destroyed the economy of Somalia, while conflict over boarder between Ethiopia and Eritrea inflicted economic injuries on the two countries. According to Kaufman, Kraay and Zoido – Lobaton (2012), such incidences render war zones unproductive and block investment that would have helped to foster economic development. There have also been famines especially in North Africa due to warfare, drought, and plague by locust. There is also prevalence of diseases, such as Ebola, lacer-fever, malaria, HIV/AIDS, and tuberculosis. When a household is affected by any of the diseases, the little resources are spent on treating the sick. Where the bread winner dies, those left behind have no resources to support themselves, thus leading to a poor lifestyle, and the situation is worsened by poor health facilities.

There is also poor land utilization in Africa. People own large chunks of land that are underutilized or not used at all (World Bank, 2013). Thailly (2013) notes that such practices are caused partly because they are either not educated on what to do with the land, or because some people are just stuck in the crude ways of doing things. Some just use the land for subsistence survival and nothing goes to the market for sale.

#### **Poverty control, good governance and security**

Poverty is indeed a combustible and explosive factor reinforcing insecurity and bad governance in Africa. Therefore, eradicating poverty is required for good governance, security of lives and properties. People

that are well fed, sheltered and clothed have greater tendency to protect government properties. As observed by United Nations (2016), poverty endangers people’s social-fabric and breeds criminalities. It threatens electoral processes. The security agents of a poverty-controlled society are not over- stretched because people tend to lend helping hands to them and better cooperation is assured. There is more cooperation from the people with the government that gives priority to their survival and ‘stomach-burden’.

Confidence building of the people is raised in government that takes ‘good’ care of their clothing, shelter and food. Policies of such government are overwhelmingly embraced. People obey civil rule more when they are well fed, clothed and sheltered. Much problem is not encountered to secure obedience from the people on government instructions. Mass involvement of the people on government directives and decisions is also accelerated. On the other hand, people can be rude to constituted authority because of abject poverty. Thus, input-output role of the people and government are better reinforced if poverty is properly addressed (Thailly, 2013).

Good image is also created for government in poverty-controlled society. In such political system, government does not need propaganda or advertisement to relay their programmes; people will on their own volition propagate the programmes of such regime. There is more assertiveness among the people while poverty- ridden ones are apathetic and parochial.

#### **Policy options**

In order to add value to the lives of Africans, governments of African states should commit more funds to their poverty eradication and youth empowerment programmes. Such funds should be judiciously used for the purposes they are meant. Enabling environment is also required to empower more youths in agriculture by improved funding as well. Substantial loans should be given to real farmers and fertilizers be made available at moderate prices. Improved yields should be made available to farmers freely or at subsidized rates. African states should explore agricultural credit facilities of the Chinese farms whose conditions are favorable.

Governments should give more attention to unemployment. Making employment opportunities available is important as increasing income of

workers. Governments should create enabling environment for businesses to thrive and companies able to employ more people, and manufacture affordable goods. More sensitizations that will change youth's attitudes that academic qualifications are not only for white-collar jobs are needed. Governments should give more priority to the issue of shelter by ensuring that low cost buildings are truly affordable.

Public-office holders should refrain from corrupt practices. Civil society groups and the masses should join the war of anti-corruption in Africa. The legislature of African countries should strengthen their judiciaries by passing legislation on death penalty for guilty corrupt persons as being done in China. This will reduce corruption and encourage economic prosperity for all. One of the ways to help poor African countries is debt relief and quick return of looted-funds. Given the fact that many African countries are battling with extensive debt from international monetary agencies and developed countries, and given the high interest turnover, cancelling part or all of these debts may assist poor African countries to overcome poverty. If African countries do not have to spend so much on debt payment, the money would be useful for provision of infrastructure, basic health-care and education.

Africans generally need more education on the dangers of poverty. Proper education for women might help in reducing family size. This would check ignorance of some families that engage in having many children contrary to their incomes. African states can get out of poverty cycle through African Union and other regional economic institutions such as Economic Community of West African States, South African Development Community; where there are a lot of joint cooperation in education, technology, agriculture and industry. Such continental or regional organizations need to collectively do more to fight successful war against hunger, corruption, illiteracy, poverty, diseases and so on. The unions should ensure Africa is truly in control of its natural resources, which is the main concern of the New Economic Order.

### Conclusion

Poverty is inimical to good governance and security of African states. This study has pointed out a number of reasons why poverty is rising in Africa and the imperatives of poverty control measures on good governance and security in the continent. The paper has also examined dangers of not given poverty the necessary attention; which includes criminalities, destruction of public infrastructure, insecurity and

disobedience to constituted authority. The study contends that except poverty is appropriately tacked, good governance and security in Africa would be a tall dream.

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