FUELING CRISIS OF GOVERNANCE IN AFRICA: THE TRIPOD OF ETHNICITY, RELIGION AND ECONOMIC INDICES

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Abstract
This work x-rayed the trajectory of ethnicity, religion and economic factors as indices that lubricate crisis of governance in the African continent. It assessed these factors in some countries across Africa, but with particular reference to Nigeria, where these are simultaneously showcased in the front burner. The work identified that the governments’ inability to tackle the problems of poverty and corruption is a bane to development; these have fueled conflicts that took the face of ethnicity and religion. The research found that good economic and good corporate governance are fundamental preconditions for the renewal of Africa. The paper concludes that Africa can do better when we live beyond primordial sentiments of tribalism and ethnicity with a deliberate insistence on credible elections as a means of changing bad and corrupt leaders. The descriptive method and content analysis of research was utilized through the gathering of scholarly data sources from relevant materials in books, journals and magazines, internet and newspapers. The paper reviewed a theory, namely Conflict Transformation which states that in spite of the abundant human and natural resources which Africa is endowed, what is found is the poor management of these resources because of bad governance, corruption and huge external debt.

Keywords: Ethnicity, Governance, Religion, Economic indices, Conflict.

Introduction
Conflict in Africa is increasing in intensity and badly affecting the governance structure. Today, the continent is seriously contending with several problems arising from post-colonial rules, debt management, diseases, poverty, corruption and internecine wars in most of her politically independent states. Africa is also said to be the least developed continent in the world as she lags behind on human development, despite its rich endowment of natural resources and a considerable trained human resources, including those in the diaspora (Akuul, 2013; Musaruwa, 2012; Elumilade, 2006; Soludo, 2005).

Identity politics and religious dichotomy have been at the base of several conflicts in the African continent (Abia, 2006). The conflicts in Congo, Burundi, Rwanda, Kenya, Sudan and Nigeria have ethnic and economic connotations (Villar, 2016; Osaghae, 2010); political,
economic, psychological and cultural factors are also causes of the hostilities between various ethnic groups (Williams, 2011; Ajayi, 2009). State repressions, coup d’état, civil strife, prolonged civil wars and electoral violence have impacted on the governance of African states (Anifowose, 1982).

Ethnicity and conflicts arising from these have been objects of manipulation by especially political leaders who desire economic advantages while fulfilling their political desires (Williams, 2011). Several literatures have summarily situated the problems of governance and underdevelopment in Africa to the phenomena of ethnicity, religion and economic (Onah, 2010; Ajayi, 2009; Adelagun, 2009, Aina, 2007). The cause of the problem is aptly captured by a document of the African Union Commission (2004) thus:

Distrust for constituted authority, corruption and impunity coupled with human rights abuses have kept Africa in a situation of conflict, have kept Africa in a situation of conflict, thereby undermining all initiatives towards sustainable development.

Unfortunately, poverty in all dimensions is most prevalent in Africa and particularly pronounced in sub-Saharan region (Barclay, 2004). Going by the UNDP 2011 Human Development Report, there is not a single African country in the ‘very high human development’ category of assessment. The report showed that Africa is yet to make significant movement in respect of human development. Regrettably, over 60 years of political freedom from colonial masters, the condition of wars, regional armed conflicts and poverty is unabated. These have translated into low level of political, economic and social growth. The crisis of governance, thus can be largely attributed to greed amongst the political elite and in the military, who had seized power illegitimately 186 times in African’s history between 1956 and 2001 (Agbede, 2010; Ajayi, 2009; Muggad, 2009).

In many parts of Africa where political conflicts exist, elitism cannot be ruled out, greedy political leaders most of the times use ethnicity to mobilize their people in their favor at times of need. For instance, Anifowose (1982:15) noted that “in Nigeria, relative deprivation, in terms of economic discrimination, was used as a political weapon against individuals, groups and communities who persisted in their oppositions to the ruling parties...where relative deprivation was persistent; it bred a sense of insecurity in the minds of those deprived, thereby giving rise to separatist movements.” Ethnic consciousness and filling of marginalization in several parts of the continent exists, insecurity and instability play serious roles (Marshal and Gur, 2003). Bad political governance and the subversion of basic human rights and freedoms have eroded the capacity of a number of states to sustain economic growth and address poverty.

Onah (2010) identified three factors that are central to good governance, namely: responsiveness, responsibility and public good. All these factors ultimately are about the relationship between the leaders and the people. Thus, good governance would require that the people must work for the public good and peoples’ welfare.
This work will illuminate the factors identified as crisis of good governance, highlighting both their potentials and risks in the African continent. Finding solutions to the violent manifestations of ethnic and religious threats founded on the social, cultural, political and economic realities of countries in Africa, which are crucial to the prevention and management of conflicts in the sub-region.

The Conflict Transformation theory is used for its theoretical orientation of this study. Lederach (1995), Galtung (2001) are the principal theorists. They view conflict transformation theory as all actions oriented towards changing the nature of the relationships amongst different groups. To this end, activities are not necessarily related to a particular conflict, but operate in the context of a larger conflict. By building relationships among different groups, it is hoped, that they see each other as partners rather than enemies and resort to non-violent, integrative solutions to possible problems arising among them.

The goal is to change a relationship that is prone to conflict and destructive into a relationship that is beneficial, co-operative and constructive. Thus, conflict transformation activities involve enhancing cooperative relations, encouraging non-violent mechanisms to deal with differences, empowering local populations to work out future disagreements among themselves without outside intervention.

Hendrick (2009) says Conflict transformation is about change, if not change limited to a certain form or determined direction then change with certain values – justice, non-violence, and participation. More so, it refers to the outcomes, processes and structure-orientated long-term peace building efforts that aim to truly overcome forms of direct, structural and cultural violence.

Conflict transformation is about change. It attempts to identify the root causes of a conflict and uses creativity to transform these causes.

One of the basic underlying assumptions of Conflict Transformation Theory is that conflict is an inherent part of development and social change, which has the potential for both constructive and destructive outcomes.

**Conceptual Clarification**

**Conflict**

Conflict is part of human existence and common to every society, where especially there is competition for scarce resources, goals and survival tendencies. Conflicts are inherent in man and inevitable as it is moored on human needs (Francis, 2012; Zartman, 1979). Several scholars such as Isaac Albert, OkwudibiaNnoli, J. ‘BayoAdekanye, Willian Zartman, Johan Galteng, and Anthony Giddens have provided analysis on the dimension, nature, pattern, cause and consequences of conflict in human societies. One reality is that as long as people pursue incompatible interests, conflicts cannot be avoided, because conflict is a struggle or contest between people with opposing needs, idea, beliefs, values and goals.

The term conflict is from the Latin verb ‘confligere’ which means to clash, engage in a conflict or strike together (Schmid, 2000). Conflict has many meanings in everyday life. Some see
conflict as behavior or action. By definition, Chaplin (1979) says it is “the simultaneous occurrence of two or more mutually impulses”. In Nigeria for instance conflict arises due to years of repression and suppression following demand for environmental responsibility by the Nigerian state and operators of the oil industry and Darfur negatively affecting development in the African continent. These conflicts escalated and graduated to low intensity conflicts and were characterized by unending assassinations, destructions of public and private institutions and resulted into wars (Davis, 2009; Abidde, 2009; Hazan, 2007).

Conflict usually refers to a ‘condition in which one identifiable group of human beings whether tribal, ethnic, linguistic, cultural, religious, socioeconomic, political, or others is engaged in conscious opposition to one or more other identifiable human groups because these groups are pursuing what are or appear to be incompatible goals (Dougherty & Pfaltzgraff, 1982). Coser (1956) defines conflict as a ‘struggle over values and claims to scarce status, power, resources in which the aims of the opponent are to neutralize, injure, or eliminate their rivals’. Conflict may be violent or nonviolent in terms of physical force, controllable or uncontrollable, resolvable or insoluble under various sets of circumstances.

Governance
Governance generally refers to the manner in which power is exercised on matters of public concern. Adelegun (2009) opines that governance is a process which involves controlling and steering of affairs of a society, and organization or an entity. In essence, governance is a very complex issue which, to all intents and purposes, gives authority to some people as well as and responsibility for introducing new laws, administering justice, organizing public services, fashioning out regulatory policies and generally overseeing the conduct of the general populace.

To be able to achieve this lofty objective, there must necessarily be sincerity of purpose on the part of the leadership, consistency in policy formulation and fiscal discipline. In political parlance, it connotes the running of a responsible and responsive administration in which the feelings and desires of the populace would be the major determinant of the direction of government (Adelegun, 2009)

Hyden (1992) refers to good governance as the conscious management of regime structures with a view to enhancing the public realm. Adejumobi (2000) says good governance 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. Cataloguing causes for the crisis of leadership in Africa, Onah, 2010 states that:

Resources were wasted through corruption and mismanagement coupled with insufficient accountability of leaders, lack of transparency in government, inadequate checks and balances, non-adherence to the rule of law, absence of peaceful and consistent means of change or replace leadership and lack of respect for human rights. African leaders freely siphoned most of the resources of their countries into their private coffers. Corruption in Africa has actually reinforced political hegemony to make Africa a ‘dark continent’ indeed (Onah, 2010)
But governments in Africa are still not responsible to their people. They hardly listen to the peoples’ voice, and have done so little to alleviate the plights of their people. High officials of the state of Africa often conduct themselves as if the countries are their personal estates. Beginning from the 1980s, there has been a gradual, but concerted attempt to reverse the trend of political despair and disillusionment, which hitherto characterized political life in Africa (Adejumobi, 2000).

**The indices for analysis in Nigeria**

The crises of ethnicity and divisions have been at the roots of post-independence wars in several African countries. The history of ethnicity and ethnic conflicts in Nigeria also traces back to the colonial transgressions that forced the ethnic groups of the northern and southern provinces of Nigeria to become an entity called Nigeria in 1914.

Ethnic militia gradually took the center stage after Nigeria’s independence especially in the third republic when a number of groups accentuated by the fear of repression and suppression. These groups include the Oodua Peoples’ Congress (OPC); Arewa Peoples’ Congress (APC); Egbesu Boys, Bakassi Boys and the Movement for the Actualization of Biafra Republic.

Sesay, (2011) holds the view that in multi-ethnic societies like Nigeria and South Africa, ethnic communities violently compete for property, rights, jobs, education, language, social amenities and good health care facilities. Thus, ancient bodies (clans, tribes, ethnic groups, nations) have survived and occupied an important place in national politics.

**Religion and governance crisis in Africa**

Religions have contributed to the peace of the world, but they have also led to division, hatred, and war. Ajayi (2009) says that the history of the post independent government in Nigeria (Africa) has been that of religious violence largely with ethno-religious underpinning. The scholar further observed that the State is yet to have a clearly defined national cohesion and stable development, as a result of ethno-religious sentiments on the political process.

Ajayi further stated that the socio-cultural differentiation in the ethnic loyalties will not be sufficient to explain the political process in Nigeria (Africa) without mention of religion, as ethnicity overlaps closely with religion. Rivalries among ethnic groups often parallel religious rivalries. Adelegun (2009) has this to say on religion:

> As in some others parts of the world, the issue of religion is a very sensitive and contentious matter which has heightened tension several times and has also innumerable times threatened the unity of the country.

Despite, the provisions in the first schedule of the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Part 11 section (10) which states that ‘the Government of the Federation or of a State shall not adopt any religion as State Religion.’ religious bigots have succeeded largely in destabilizing the society while governments have not been able to apply the full sanctions and bring the full weight of the law to bear on culprits. This trend has made it possible for those who engage in heinous crimes on account of their religious persuasions to continue to fern
the embers of religious prejudices and fanaticisms. Based on a 2009 World Religious Survey (Mapping out the Global Muslim Population) 50.4% of Nigeria’s population were Muslims, 48.2% were Christian (15% Protestant, 13.7% Catholic, and 19.6% other Christian), and followers of other religions were 1.4% (BBC News, 2007).

Saliu (2006), Ajayi (2009), Adelegun (2009), Agbo (2011) observed the numerous occasions that religious extremists have embarked on orgies of killings and looting especially in the northern part of Nigeria, where hundreds of thousands of lives and property have been lost (during the Maitatsine uprisings of the 1980s in Kafachan, Zaria, Kano, Maiduguri, Kaduna and Yola; Jos Crisis since 1991; the Boko Haram insurgencies had been blamed in the pre and post elections violence in the 2011 Nigerian presidential elections. The activities of the religious sect is thereby making the Nigerian state ungovernable, and stressing the country’s security apparatus to the extreme.

Nigeria according to Ajayi (2009) is a secular state, with no single state religion. Its secular nature was established at its political independence in 1960. However, from the late 1970’s the role and place of religion- especially Islam- in the Nigerian political process, both in domestic and foreign affairs, has been contentious. In the words of Ajayi:

*If Nigeria is going to survive as a nation, religion must be separated from its political process. Nigerians must join hands together to prevent the evil hands of ethnicity and religion from destroying the country’s unity and progress."

Nigeria has witnessed incessant religious tension, demand for Sharia law and an end to western style government and education by extreme Muslim group, Boko Haram, as well as deeply rooted tribal politics in the country’s history. The constant polarization of the country, along ethnic and religious lines, led former Libyan leader, Muammar Gaddafi to call for a split of the West African giant in March 2010. The government would expend time and resources trying to bring the situations to normalcy instead of thinking about the public delivery of the “dividends of democracy”

In the case of South Africa, the country’s over 40 million people have long been polarized along racial lines. The country is made up of whites, indigenous Africans, coloreds, and Indians. The blacks form the majority of the population with about 30 million people, the whites 5 million, and the coloreds and Indians share 3 million. In South Africa, class is determined by race, with blacks at the bottom of the ladder. In the past, indigenous Africans were forced to live in impoverished and segregated ethnic "homelands" under the apartheid regime. The country has about 11 linguistic groups, but English is the official language.

**Economic factors on governance in Africa**

Economic factors have been identified as one of the major causes of conflicts in Africa. It must be noted that the political independence that African nations achieved in the 1960’s and 70’s, did not translate into economic independence for the African peoples. The dependency theoretical framework has been touted by some scholars as the bane of African under-development. Deep insight on this framework showed that for several decades, business transactions remained between the post-colonial governments and their former colonial
masters; an arrangement whereby the Ex-colonial-masters dominated the economies of the weak African nations. The symbiotic relationship became very difficult to disengage because the African nations still depended on foreign aids for survival.

For several decades, African counties supplied raw materials to the industrialized nations and in turn bought manufactured goods of all sorts. Abia (2006) identified imperialism and dependence as responsible for Africa’s economic underdevelopment. For instance, in Angola and Mozambique, the Portuguese were made to plant cotton which was sold at cheap rates even, when they worked under severe conditions. Meanwhile, in Nigeria European companies controlled the import trade. Only Europeans controlled the banking and insurance and shipping industries.

Altogether, what the British left behind in Nigeria and other countries of Africa was a profound imbalance of power, lopsided territorial demarcations. Such arbitrariness has created political challenges. In Nigeria for instance, poor administrative structure and insensitive exploitation of the resources had impacted heavily on the social, political and economic development after independence.

The World Bank noted that the poor performance of the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP) was caused by lack of good governance. To quote the Bank:

Underlying the litany of Africa’s development problems is a crisis of good governance. By governance is meant the exercise of political power to manage a nation’s affairs. Because countervailing power has been lacking, state officials in many countries have served their own interest without fear of being called to account. In self-defense, individuals have built up personal networks of influence rather than hold the all-powerful state accountable for its systemic failure. In this way, politics becomes personalized and patronage becomes essential to maintain power. The leadership assumes broad discretionary authority and loses its legitimacy, information is controlled, and voluntary associations are co-opted or disbanded. The environment cannot readily support a dynamic economy (World Bank, 1989).

The process of evolving good governance in Africa according to the Bank requires the shrinking of the state and engendering support for non-state actors such as the Civil Society. Economic Commission for Africa, (2002) says the mechanisms of good economic and corporate governance in Africa are heavily influenced by a considerable number of political factors. However, the degree of influence that can be attributed to these political factors varies across countries both in magnitude and direction. In a country such as Botswana, for example, which has an international reputation for good governance and sound economic management; political factors contribute positively to that international reputation. In other countries, it is sometimes difficult to separate governance issues from weaknesses in institutional and administrative capacity.

Adejumobi, (2011) says following the footpaths of the World Bank, the donor agencies - multilateral and bilateral – have incorporated the demand for good governance in their aid policies and development cooperation agenda in Africa. These include the Organization for
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Economic Cooperation and Development, and private agencies like the Ford Foundation and the Carter Center in the United States, with the emphasis of supporting civil associations and non-state actors in Africa.

On a broader platform, organizations like the Commonwealth and the United Nations and some of its agencies, have emphasized and promoted the issues of democracy, human rights and good governance in their activities. For example, the Commonwealth in charting a new course for itself resolved at its Harare Summit in 1991 to promote the principles of democracy, respect for human rights and good governance. A resolution was passed to this effect, by which member-states were to be bound, by these principles. In 1996, at the meeting of the Heads of State and Governments of the organization in Auckland, New Zealand, this resolution had to be revisited, with sanctions imposed on an erring member-state (Nigeria), for the callous and extra-judicial killing of a human rights activist -Ken SaroWiwa, and the Ogoni eight by the Abacha military junta in Nigeria. Nigeria was thus suspended from the Commonwealth. In 1997, Sierra Leone was also suspended from the Commonwealth due to the illegal seizure of power by the military junta led by Colonel Koromah (Adejumobi, 2011). Adejumobi, (2011) observed that some of its agencies like the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) have taken conscious steps and adopted policies to promote the cause. For example, the UNDP Regional Bureau for Africa has developed a special programme, called the Special Initiative on Governance in Africa(SIGA) aimed at improving the effectiveness of governance on the continent by addressing five major areas, which are: leadership building, transparency and accountability, civil society empowerment, political transition and peace and stability. The end result of corruption in Africa has been economic underdevelopment.

Onah (2010) says the African Union puts the cost to Africa of corruption is about $140 billion annually, amounting to 25% of the total Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of sub-Saharan Africa. Despite the huge potentials of Africa, the continent has therefore remained under-developed since independence. Africa is endowed with abundant natural resources. But African countries have not been able to utilize these raw materials for industrial production. The industries are almost non-existent and these natural resources and also agricultural produce are shipped outside the continent as raw material, at low prices. These raw materials are then processed in the industries of Europe, Asia and America. Some of the products from these raw materials are ultimately shipped back to Africa as imported goods which are then purchased at costs much higher than those at which the raw materials were sold.

Barclay (2002) sustainable development in less developed countries requires effective governance, a dynamic and enabling international environment supportive of international cooperation particularly in the areas of finance, technology transfer, debt and trade and full participation of these countries in global decision-making.

In a lecture delivered by Prof. Chukwuma Soludo in 2006 at the University of Benin, Nigeria the Central Bank Governor underscored the scope of Nigeria’s misfortune when he compared Nigeria with Indonesia and Malaysia. He stated that:
In 1972, before Nigeria and Indonesia had the first oil boom, both countries were comparable in almost all counts: agrarian society, multi-ethnic and religious societies, with comparable size of GDP etc. both experienced oil boom in 1973 and thereafter, but took different policy choices. The outcomes of the differences in policy regimes are such that today, while manufacturers export is about 40% in Indonesia it is less than 1% in Nigeria.

Soludo (2006) says barely 40% of its arable land is under cultivated, with over 100% tertiary institutions producing more than 200,000 graduates per annum. The poverty situation worsened consistently such that by 1999, the incidence of poverty was estimated at 70%.

In Nigeria, poverty became widespread after the implementation of Structural Adjustment Program (SAP), when the Babangida military administration implemented the International Monetary Fund (IMF) conditionality. The loan-money was badly spent on phantom projects such as Better Life for Poor women, and the Directorate of Food Road and Rural Infrastructural (DFRRI), People’s Bank of Nigeria, two democratic transition experiments and finally corruption with which members of the Babangida regime enriched themselves (Elumilade, 2006).

On the economic front Elumilade, says successive governments have not made clear their economic policy, while Buhari had counter trading, Babangida had his SAP and Abacha was having a different economic policy every year till his death. It was Obasanjo who came up with the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) with a focus on four key objectives- poverty reduction, employment generation, wealth creation and value re-orientation.

To underscore how public officers in Nigeria have corruptly enriched themselves with impunity the former speaker of the House of Representatives Dimeji Bakole was docked on a 33 count charge preferred against him by Economic and Financial Crime Commission at different courts over contract inflation. The charges were filled on June 7, 2011. The Commission further alleged that Bankole and other principal officers of the House made approvals of contracts, with the intent to defraud, and conspire to inflate the cost of 800 units of Desktop computers by approving the purchase of the said item at the rate of N300, 000.00 per unit instead of the N160, 000.00 per unit.

**Concluding Remarks**

Africa is said to be the least developed continent despite its rich endowment of natural resources and a considerable trained caliber of human resources including those in the Diaspora. It is believed that these resources could make a meaningful developmental impact if their preservation, enhancement and utility were facilitated in a manner most advantageous to African human development. This would lead to a change in Africa’s production pattern from primary production and export of raw materials to industrial production of semi-finished and finished products.

It would contribute to the retention and further development of its trained and experienced human resources rather than accelerate continuous brain drain. Exercising effective control
and management of these resources would lead to opportunities for improved livelihoods of the people and ultimately to a higher quality of life. Unfortunately, poverty, in all its dimensions, is most prevalent in Africa and is particularly pronounced in sub-Saharan Africa. Barclay (2004)

Africa can do better when we live beyond primordial sentiments of tribalism and ethnicity with a deliberate insistence on credible elections as a means of changing bad and corrupt leaders. Draw a road map to development across the continent and stick to corporate governance.

The triple factors discussed could be tamed through education, good governance, and justice and increased economic development in Africa. In addition, African governments, as do all governments, have a duty to ensure that there exists a relationship of trust between themselves and their people, and to empower those who are most affected by bad governance and poverty.

The key elements contributing to an environment of good economic governance are transparency, accountability, an enabling environment for private sector development and growth, and institutional development and effectiveness (Economic Commission for Africa, 2002). As well, political representation standards, including duration of terms of office for all elected officials; free and fair elections are important to be adhered.

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