

## **The State, Development and Governance in Africa: The Nigerian Experience**

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**Abstract:** *The paper discusses the role of the state in the crises of development and governance plaguing Africa. The data for the paper are obtained from secondary sources while the methods of analysis are historical, descriptive and analytical. The contention of the paper is that the state is a major obstacle to development and governance in Africa. The historical, socio-economic and political conditions underpinning the processes of state formation in Africa are core to the African predicament. Specifically, the prominence and profound impact of colonialism on the evolution, character, processes, institutions, economy, politics and leadership of the post colonial African state provide the theoretical groundwork for interrogating the development and governance failures in Africa. Drawing heavily from the Nigerian experience, the paper argues that the failure of the state and its managers to repudiate and alter fundamentally the inherited and reinforced socio-economic and political institutions, processes and policies of colonialism antithetical to development and governance is germane to explaining the monumental cases of corruption, insecurity, conflict, poverty, inequality, diseases and political instability ravaging Africa. The paper posits that politics is central to the crisis of the state in Africa, and as such suggests the turnaround in the political leadership fortunes of Africa among other political measures as critical to overturning the status quo and improving the wellbeing of Africans.*

**Keywords:** *State, Africa, Governance, Development, Corruption, Colonialism.*

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### **I. Introduction**

Africa as the birth place of the human race and cradle of civilisation is endowed with abundant human and natural resources required for the development of the continent (Fonchingong, 2006). Yet, Africa continues to grapple with endemic poverty, bad governance, insecurity and underdevelopment many years after decolonisation. The available socio-economic, security and political development indicators on Africa provide sufficient evidence in this regard. The United Nation Development Programme (UNDP) 2013 Human Development Index Report for instance shows that thirty seven of the forty six poorest countries of the world are in sub Saharan Africa. The Human Development Index is the annual measure of the life expectancy, access to knowledge, and decent standard of living of a country. The Report equally shows that with the exception of Afghanistan all of the twenty five other countries at the bottom of the assessment are in Africa (Carrington, 2013). Besides, the infant mortality rate in Africa is alarming. About 10 percent of all African children die before reaching the age of one and 17 percent of infants do not attain the age of five; while the population of Africans that are undernourished and without access to good drinking water sources is put at 30 and 50 percent respectively (Diamond, 2008). Equally, the HIV-AIDS pandemic continues to devastate Africa, contributing to the high mortality rate and reduction of life expectancy to less than 50 years (Moyo, 2010).

In the area of security Africa is ravaged by violent conflicts and civil wars. The tragic cases of protracted civil wars in the Central African Republic, Chad, Sudan, Somalia, Democratic Republic of Congo, and South Sudan and the resulting wanton destruction of lives and property underline the categorisation of African countries among the least peaceful nations in the world (Moyo, 2010). Similarly, an estimated 2.5 million people - about 30 percent of the world estimated refugees, displaced by conflicts are located in Africa (Diamond, 2008). In the arena of politics, about 50 percent of the countries in Africa are ruled by undemocratic regimes (Moyo, 2010). The continent is home to notorious authoritarian and repressive regimes in many countries including Cameroon, Zimbabwe, Uganda, Swaziland, Gambia, Chad, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea and Sudan. The quality of governance – as represented by the political measures of accountability and stability, rule of law, corruption control, regulatory quality, and government effectiveness is abysmal in Africa (Diamond, 2008). Despite the grim statistics presented above, some countries like South Africa, Mauritius, Botswana, Namibia, and Ghana have continued to make steady and appreciable progress in the sphere of development and governance. However, the prevalence and persistence of the development and governance crises in Africa makes the future of the region in general a potentially gloomy one and therefore provides the basis for interrogating the African paradox.

Discourses on the African predicament are usually dominated by the critical appraisal of the role of the state. More often than not, the far reaching conclusion is that the state is a major obstacle to development and

governance in Africa (Kawabata, 2010; Fonchingong, 2006; Ake, 1996). This is instructive given that the state is part of several mutually reinforcing factors and forces – hostile international political economy, foreign aid, scarcity of resources, resource curse, bad leadership and policies, poor policy execution, corruption, military rule, weak civil society, institutional, geographical, and cultural issues, central to explaining the African crises. More so, it is an affirmation that the state as the arena of political power and authority decision making is a catalytic force in the development and governance of society (Egwu, 2006). The state possesses overwhelming social, economic, political, security, and military powers and resources. The powers and resources properly harnessed and deployed enhance optimal performance of the multifaceted and critical functions the state is expected to perform. Besides, the mix of the character of the state, its social configurations and nature of politics, vitality of its citizens and civil society, and quality of its leadership are crucial to the discourse on the role and impact of the state on the development and governance processes of society. In this context the capacity of the state to either advance or hinder development and governance is undoubtedly real and strong.

The paper discusses the role of the state in the development and governance crises plaguing Africa. The conception of the chapter is that the African state – with its existing colonial inherited and reinforced social, security, economic, political structures and processes, and its managers constitute deep seated obstacle to development and governance. Development in this regard implies a ‘multifaceted process of structural transformations, not only economic, that become manifest in the growth of income, productivity, consumption, investment, education, life expectancy, and employment - all that makes for a better life’ (Przeworski et al, 2000: 1). It is important to note that the people are the very essence of development. The development process must reflect their needs, values, interests, choices and aspirations with regards to improvement in their wellbeing, attainment of higher levels of civilisation, self fulfilment and self reliance; since the people are both the means and end of development (Ake, 1996). The concept of governance on the other hand is founded on the ‘expectation that the state will practice and promote the core values of constitutionalism, respect for the rule of law and human rights, popular participation, accountability and transparency, and probity in the management of people and resources’ (Omodia and Aliu, 2013: 36). The emphasis here is on democratic governance - the governance process which strengthens the social bond and reciprocity in terms of the principles of rights and responsibilities existing between the state and its citizens, and has the capacity to enhance socio-economic and political transformation of society, popular trust and state legitimacy.

The paper is divided into five sections. The first is the introduction. The second section following the introduction examines relevant conceptual and ideological perspectives underpinning the state. The third section discusses the state in Africa as an obstacle to development and governance. The point of departure in this part is the discourse on how Africa’s complex colonial history shaped state institutions, processes, and the character of the ruling elites and produced a state that continues to frustrate genuine endogenous and autonomous development and governance processes. The fourth section assesses the performance of the state in Africa given the dysfunctional state of development and governance with specific focus on Nigeria. The fifth and concluding section explores the way forward to restructuring the state in Africa to be the harbinger of a people driven and centred development and governance processes, especially in the wake of the democratisation process, a trend that should boost the capacity of citizens to reclaim the ownership of the state.

## **II. Some Conceptual And Ideological Perspectives On The State**

The concept of the state is essentially a contested one. The diverse perspectives on the origin, evolution, purpose, sovereignty, and role of the state in development make the task of conceptualising the state difficult. In order to enhance the analytical utility of the state in this chapter, three interrelated definitions are identified. Joel Migdal in (Akude, 2007: 2) views the state as an ‘organisation, composed of numerous agencies ... coordinated by the state leadership (executive authority) that has the authority to make and implement the binding rules for all the people as well as the parameters of rule making for other social organisations in a given territory, using force if necessary to have its way’. Similarly, Max Weber in (Akude, 2007: 2) conceives the state as ‘a human community that successfully claims for itself the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory with determined boundaries’. Finally, Anifowose (1999: 85) considers the state as ‘the basic political unit, a grouping of individuals who are organised in a defined territory for the pursuit of secular common welfare, the maintenance of law and order and the carrying out of external relations with other groups similarly organised’.

Some critical elements of the state are emphasised in the aforementioned definitions. The first is the institutional element, which conceives the state as set of institutions involved in rule making, rule implementation, rule interpretation, and sanctioning of law breakers. The state in this regard is the arena of political power and binding authority decision making (Anifowose, 1999, Egwu, 2006). The Second is the coercive element, which stresses the legitimate monopoly the state enjoys over the use of the instrument of violence. The activities of the military, police, and other security agencies that compel and ensure obedience to state laws and order easily come to mind. In the main, the power and production relations as well as the

historical and political configurations of a nation at any particular point in time are crucial to how the state perform its coercive role (Dauda, 2011; Dumoye, 1994). Importantly, the coercive element gives the state the unique and superior power over all other groups in the society. However, in time of state failure and collapse, amid ensuing legitimacy crises, social unrests and rebellions; the state could and do lose its control over the legitimate use of force to other groups.

The third element is the territorial power of the state. The sovereignty and authority of the state extend over people and resources within a specified territory. Notably, population is a significant character of the state. The state thus facilitates mutual interactions among its people and enjoys the monopoly of being the main representative of the diverse social groups that make up the territory it oversees in the international arena. But, the sovereignty and power of the state over a people and territory ceases in the event of a successful war of independence or peaceful referendum on secession by groups formerly recognised as citizens of the state, and can be limited by international law (Anifowose, 1999). The fourth element is the impersonality of the state. The formal nature of the state, although implicitly stressed, emphasises the separation of the personality of the managers of the state from the office they occupy and the authority they exercise; and it is a core attribute of the modern state (Akude, 2007). The tendency for state officials to equate their public office with their personal interests, and their failure to appreciate and accept the distinction between their public activities and private affairs is partly responsible for the marked increase in the personalisation of state power, nepotism, and politics of patronage and prebendalism in Africa. It is pertinent to note that the core elements of the state so identified are essential to fulfilling the purpose of the state: engendering law and order, security, justice, peace, development and good governance in the society.

Furthermore, the state is a victim of several ideological persuasions. The liberal perspective dominant in the literature conceives the state as an independent and autonomous body that is standing above society (Egwu, 2006). The state within this standpoint is out to protect all classes and interest groups in the society. But, the Marxists perspective repudiates the liberal conception of the state. The assertion by Marx and Engels (1884) in the Communist Manifesto that ‘the executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie’ conspicuously captures the Marxists position on the state. The state is neither a neutral entity nor a servant of the public. The state as an organ of class rule is an institution of the ruling class for the domination, exploitation and oppression of the masses (Nnoli, 2003).

In view of the current ascendancy of the orthodoxy of neoliberalism, rolling back state participation in the economic development of society is the main issue of the moment. Neoliberalism is a ‘systematic programme of decreasing state involvement in the economy through state liberalisation, privatisation and reduced public spending, freeing key relative prices such as interest rates and exchange rates and lifting exchange controls’ (Onis and Senses, 2005: 264). The minimalist and market driven policies of neoliberalism championed by the Washington Consensus and Bretton Woods Institutions (BWIs) restrict the role of the state in economic development to the provision of internal and external security and policy framework necessary for the market and private sector to thrive. This will curb the inefficiency and waste associated with state control of the economy. But, the state is central to economic development in Africa, particularly in the provision of infrastructural, economic and social services. Equally, the intervention of the state has been crucial to salvaging the bourgeoisie and many businesses during severe economic crises in Africa and globally (Aliu, 2010; Nnoli, 2003).

In contrast to the prevailing popular market view of development, the developmental state concept of development dominant in Africa in the early 1960s and 1970s allows for a leading role for the state in the control of the commanding heights of the economy – public service, industry, manufacturing, infrastructure and social services, for the benefit of the citizens. Obviously, the state in Africa during the period to a large extent based its legitimacy on its capacity to direct and deliver development to the people (Ake, 1996). But, the sudden transition of the economies in Africa from state controlled to a market propelled one, evident during the adoption of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) in the early 1980s for example produced disastrous effects on the wellbeing of majority of the people. The experience to some extent underscores the effect the ideological conflicts and confusions on the developmental role of the state can have on development and governance in Africa (Ake, 1996). Despite the diverse conceptual and ideological perspectives surrounding the state, it is interesting to note that the consensus on its power, social character, developmental and governance essence is widespread.

### **III. Colonialism, The African State, Development And Governance**

The history of the African state can be chronologically grouped into the following periods: Pre Colonial state - the African state before colonial rule, Colonial state – the African state during colonialism, and the Post Colonial state – the African state since independence (Kwabata, 2006). The focus of the discourse is on the post colonial African state. Nevertheless, discussing the poor state of development and governance in Africa without reviewing the significant role of the colonial era will be an exercise in futility. The African state

is a product of colonial rule. Colonialism was preceded by a highly organised African society that was to a large extent stable, inclusive, hospitable, democratic, autonomous, tolerant and economically viable. However, colonial rule 'obstructed the internal process of state formation and development in Africa and left legacies of authoritarianism, corruption and political instability' (Fonchingong, 2006: 1). Therefore, the socio-economic and political legacies of colonialism are relevant in part to explaining the role of the state in the crises of development and governance in Africa. The colonial state as an exogenous entity and a product of conquest established to exploit and suppress Africa and Africans, contrasted to a great degree with the evolutionary and revolutionary processes of state formation hinged on governance core to pre-colonial Africa. The colonial state treated Africans not as citizens with rights but as subjects subservient to the whims and caprices of the state. The swiftness and ruthlessness with which colonial laws, institutions and structures were unleashed on the people, but deployed to protect the interests of the state and those of its managers rightly underscore this point. More so, to ensure total compliance to its dictates and prevent any form of rebellion and resentment, the colonial state employed all the powers and resources at its disposal to control various aspects of the peoples' life. Many cherished indigenous institutions, values, cultures, and structures of pre-colonial African society with the tendency to undermine the exploitative objective of colonialism were either subtly replaced or violently repressed. In sum, the colonial state was exceptionally powerful, oppressive, divisive and arbitrary in character. These attributes eroded the legitimacy of the colonial state among the people, and badly impeded the process of entrenching endogenous and autonomous development and governance (Ake, 1996; Fonchingong, 2006).

Colonialism engendered the marginal integration of Africa into the orbit of global capitalism, and the inferior role of supplier of raw materials to industries in the metropolitan states in the existing international division of labour. The dependency of most economies in Africa on the West and low level industrialisation of the continent are partly attributed to the violence process of incorporation (Akude, 2007; Ake, 1996). Besides, the illegitimate, exploitative and oppressive character of the colonial state contributed to the phenomenon of endemic corruption in Africa (Ogundiya, 2009; Ekeh, 1975). Moreover, several policies introduced by the colonial state to sustain economic exploitation to Fonchingong (2006) were central to entrenching corruption in Africa too. The introduction of a monetary economy prepared the structural ground rules for the sustenance of corrupt behaviours. The cash based taxation system was an incentive for local chiefs who collected taxes for the colonial state to take kick backs and bribes. The divide and rule policy of the colonial state largely encouraged loyalty to the colonial state and at the same time corrupt practices by favoured ethnic groups. Therefore, it is not a strange experience that most public officials in Africa today have come to regard government policies and programmes meant to improve the general wellbeing of the people as an avenue for self enrichment. The damaging effect of corruption on socio-economic and political development in post colonial Africa is incalculable. Besides, the colonial state through its policy of inclusion and exclusion, and fragmentation shamelessly promoted and encouraged ethnicity and ethnic consciousness in an unprecedented way. This provoked ethnic rivalry and disunity among various ethnic nationalities, a trend that is still prevalent in post colonial Africa. Many countries in Africa including Nigeria, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Rwanda, Burundi, Sudan, Somalia, and Democratic Republic of Congo have suffered or continue to suffer violent conflicts and political instability partly fuelled by the dangerous struggle among ethnic groups for domination (Fonchingong, 2006).

Following the end of colonialism, the post colonial African state and ruling elite inherited and controlled colonial structures, institutions, processes and managers; with all their repulsive attributes antithetical to development and governance fully entrenched. So, the post colonial state in Africa like its colonial predecessor remained domineering, authoritarian, violent, exploitative and oppressive, with dire consequences. The all pervading power of the state for instance is fundamental to the cut throat struggle for political power among the managers of the state in Africa. The ruling elite lacking the requisite strong economic base came to regard appropriation of state power at independence as the avenue to further the acquisition of wealth, a situation that contributed to the sit tight nature of most African political elites, and the zero-sum dimension politics assumed in Africa (Ake, 1996; Akude, 2007). The intense intra and inter-elite contestations for state power usually escalates into the dangerous deployment of identity politics, with the concomitant alienation of the citizens snowballing into legitimacy crisis, political instability, criminality and insecurity, and in extreme cases war. These dreadful realities are a recurring decimal in post colonial Africa.

Therefore, the state in Africa as a product of conquest lacks the requisite legitimacy and autonomy. The state and its managers are alien and alienated from the citizens (Ake, 1996; Egwu, 2006). More so, the ruling elites hijack state structures and processes to promote and protect their political and business interests. Moreover, by 'granting expensive contracts to foreign firms, increasing investment opportunities for those firms and enriching themselves through deals with the firms' (Akude, 2007: 1), the political elites in Africa protect the interests of foreign powers less critical and indifferent to their poor performance in development and governance. Thus, economic development is sacrificed on the altar of profligacy, personal interests and patronage of foreign paradigms and firms. This makes the post colonial African state a grand edifice designed to sustain socio-economic and governance policies and practices that reinforce the strangulating hold of the ruling



elite and influence of former colonial and imperialist powers in Africa (Ake, 1996). The governance failures of the post colonial state in Africa is manifested in the brazen absence of accountability, transparency and probity in government, widespread political corruption, political intolerance, criminalisation of dissent, and autocratic and dictatorial dispositions of political leaders reflected by the high level of impunity and lawlessness among the political elites and their supporters.

The activities of the political leadership in post colonial Africa no doubt is core to the crisis of development and governance. However, the deep and damaging impact of the colonial experience on the psyche, mentality, ideology and world view of most of the ruling elites that emerged to govern post colonial Africa is undeniable. Consequently, the political leadership in post colonial Africa like the colonial managers before them arrogantly carry themselves as over lords and barely give serious attention to issues of development and governance. Akude (2001: 1) succinctly captures the reality thus:

Successful decolonisation implied the transfer of political power to a political elite that was born and bred in colonial practices, structures, ethos and, invariably, interests. Thus, the protection of their class interests, which implied the maintenance of colonial ethos and interests, precluded any impetus towards altering the marginal position of African states in the international politico-economic system. This had debilitating consequences for economic development and state institutional capacity and stability as this elite exploited state power to compensate for the lack of a material resource base, which in turn resulted from the commanding structures of their economies being controlled by firms from the colonising and other foreign states. The pursuit of economic development was therefore basically sidelined. Instead of contributing to economic development, development assistance policy was used to maintain the elite in power.

Therefore, the salient and structural damage of the colonial experiences on the state is critical in part to the crises of development and governance in Africa. Most of the ruling elites in Africa have imbibed and continued to appreciate, accept and adopt colonialists and imperialists values and aspirations for Africa. The potency of the hegemonic structures and institutions established by the colonialists to produce and reproduce ruling elites that are complicit and compromised to the need for good development and governance in Africa is critical in this context. The flawed processes of political socialisation and leadership recruitment pervasive in Africa have further helped to sustain the colonialists and neo-colonialists system of producing their desired copy of ruling elites for Africa. Given the huge personal socio-economic and political benefits and rewards that result from sustaining the inherited colonial and prevailing neo-colonial attributes, the ruling elites in Africa finds it difficult, if not nearly impossible to jettison or radically overturn the status quo for a system that is concerned about the general good and welfare of the people. This is the tragedy of the post colonial state and the principal challenge to the political leadership in Africa. Therefore, the state and its managers in Africa continues to depend on, deploy and strengthen inherited colonial institutions, laws, values, processes and interests that are repugnant to popular development and good governance. In some cases the ruling elites have invented new structures and processes to serve purposes similar to those of colonial rule. Moreover, the plight of the African state and those of its managers and people is even complicated by the aggression, dynamism and deception underpinning the existing neo-colonial world order. Consequently, most of Africa continues to suffer series of throes in development and multiple woes in governance.

#### **IV. The State, Development And Governance In Nigeria**

Nigeria attained political independence from Britain on October 1, 1960. With a population of over 160 million, and more than 250 tribes and tongues Nigeria is the most populous and diverse country in Africa (Musawa, 2013). Besides, the country is endowed with immense natural resources and huge expanse of arable land. Nigeria is among the leading producers of crude oil in Africa and globally, receiving hundreds of billions of naira in revenue. Obviously, with the proper management of the enormous resources and wealth available in Nigeria, the country has the potential to be a progressive and prosperous. However, more than five decades after independence, Nigeria continues to grapple with socio-economic and political challenges that constitute obstacles to development and governance. Economically, the country is confronted with the problems of net capital flight, disinvestment, widening income inequality between the rich and the poor, acute poverty, de-industrialisation, high inflation, and mass unemployment and debt crisis. The social and political spheres are plagued by widespread collapse of social values, illiteracy, collapsed infrastructure, general insecurity of lives and property, authoritarian rule, political corruption, electoral malpractices, politically motivated violence, and weak governance institutions (Seteolu, 2004; Egwemi and Aliu, 2010).

The Nigerian state as a product of colonial rule is a dominant force in national politics and economy. The immense and diverse functions the state performs are crucial to engendering and enhancing development and governance. The Nigerian state does not only provide the structural rules and policy framework necessary for capital and business to flourish, it manages the economy and controls the commanding heights of the economy. But, the level of state intervention and participation in economic activities continue to dwindle thanks to the economic deregulation policy of government. The Nigerian state aside being the leading purveyor of

employment and social services provides the political authority critical for regulating the relationships among the diverse social groups in the society. Moreover, state institutions play leading role in enhancing societal security, law and order (Dauda, 2011). The state institutions and processes are also central to the management and moderation of conflicting interests, ideas, aspirations and values in the society thereby undermining the divisive activities of centrifugal forces. The parlous and debilitating state of development and governance in Nigeria underscores the extent to which the state has been efficient in the performance of these tasks.

The Nigerian state, given its historical processes of formation and socio-economic and political configurations remains a major obstacle to national integration, national development and good governance. The elevation of identity politics to the level of state policy and the subsequent widespread ethno-religious and communal violence that have characterised the Nigerian state since independence is one notable case in this regard. The issue of identity politics which reinforces the well established politics of inclusion and exclusion in Nigeria is a potent weapon for political mobilisation (Alubo, 2009). The powerful, rentier, and patrimonial character of the state are relevant to understanding the currency of politics of ethnicity in Nigeria (Obianyo, 2007; Ake, 1989). Reminiscent of colonialism, the Nigerian state and its managers have in several ways fostered and deepened ethno-religious and regional identity consciousness among Nigerians (Abdullahi and Saka, 2007). The ruling elites, aware of the strong emotive attachment of Nigerians to ethnic issues, exploit and politicise the identity cleavages existing among Nigerians for their selfish interests. Moreover, the political class audaciously institutionalised and legalised ethnicity by making provision for ethnic balancing measures in the Nigerian constitution which ensure that jobs, scholarships, appointments, oil rent and other resources are shared among states. It should be noted that most states in their present forms are analogous to ethnic divisions in Nigeria. These policies notwithstanding their merits have heightened and strengthened ethnic consciousness and ethnic politics among Nigerians (Obianyo, 2007). Nigeria's experiences with ethnic inspired crises including the military coup d'état of 1966, the civil war of 1967, and many tragic cases of ethno-religious and communal conflicts have shown the serious threat that politics of ethnicity poses to nation building, national security, economic development and political stability (Omodia and Aliu, 2013).

Corruption is a major scourge plaguing Nigeria. The cost of corruption on socio-economic and political development in Nigeria is monumental. Since independence to the end of military rule in 1999 Nigeria reportedly lost about \$380 billion to corruption (Ogundiya, 2010). The existing power, economic and social relations are central to the pervasive dimension corruption has assumed in the polity. Nigeria is a monoculture economy that is primarily dependent on oil rent. The relationship between oil rent and corruption is deep and strong (Ades and Di Tella, 1999). Oil wealth is a major source of corruption especially in the absence of accountability and transparency. Government officials perceive oil rent as a 'kind of magical bounty' that nobody really worked hard for and are quick to think that nobody 'will really miss it' (Diamond, 2008: 77). The dominant role of the Nigerian state in the ownership and control of enormous rent accruing from oil continues to engender predatory elite and ethnic contestations, making the state the epic centre of political corruption (Diamond, 2008). In the absence of equity in the distribution of oil and national resources, low level patriotic and nationalistic spirit, as well as mutual distrusts among the diverse ethnic and social groups in the country; appropriating state power according to Ogundiya (2009) has become the surest means to obtaining a share of the commonwealth.

The enormous power and resources at the disposal of the state in Nigeria, which in part is the product of the structural and fiscal flaws evident in the federal system operational in the country, contributes to the personalisation and privatisation of state power, processes and institutions. Therefore, the state in Nigeria is neo-patrimonial in character. The ruling elite readily deploy state institutions and resources to maintain network of relationships and patronages, a development that has 'converted ordinary people into clients of the ruler rather than citizens with rights' (Diamond, 2008: 247). Equally, the Nigerian state is prebendal on account of its overbearing character. The thrust of prebendalism is that 'state offices are regarded as prebends that can be appropriated by office holders, who use them to generate material benefits for themselves and their constituents and kin groups' (Joseph, 1987: 1996). It is important to note that both neo-patrimonial and prebendal government are more interested in the misappropriation and mismanagement of public funds for private interests and the subversion of governance processes and institutions rather than enhancing development (Diamond, 2008). Thus, the consideration of politics by the Nigerian ruling elite as money spinning venture and the state 'a clearing house for jobs, contracts and official plunder' (Joseph, 1991: 10) underlines the pathetic conditions of development and governance in the country.

The political leadership question in Nigeria is central to the failure of the state to promote development and governance. The success of development and governance in a country depends to a large extent on the nature and quality of its political leadership. The Political leadership besides being the motivating and mobilising force for societal transformation is strategically imperative to the course of direction of a state, because it possesses the requisite power, authority and influence to make binding decisions on the allocation of state resources (Egwemi and Aliu, 2010). The leadership attributes that the political leadership demonstrates

become very important in this regard. The political leadership that is patriotic, honest, responsible, responsive, transparent, selfless, visionary, intelligent, pragmatic, inspiring, morally upright, courageous, confident and compassionate, polite, transformational, tolerant, sacrificial, exemplary, purposeful, goal oriented, skilful, diligent, and charismatic is germane to national development (Egwemi and Aliu, 2010; Seteolu, 2004). But, most of the political leaders that have directed the affairs of the Nigerian state since independence have been acknowledged to be corrupt, self-centred, incompetent, kleptocratic, ideologically and morally bankrupt, visionless, intolerant, autocratic, dishonest, naive, opportunistic, and parochial (Egwemi and Aliu, 2010). The political leadership that possesses these attributes, as exemplified by the Nigerian experience, ends up endangering development and good governance. The failure of the political leadership in Nigeria is not unconnected to the character of the state and the nature of its politics. The powerful, alienating and structurally defective nature of the state fostered the mercantile political system that has continued to undermine the capacity of the leadership recruitment processes at various levels of the polity to produce statesmen that will efficiently and effectively pilot the Nigerian statecraft (Aliu, 2013).

The impact of poor leadership on development and governance in Nigeria is immense. The devastating state of development evident in the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) 2013 Human Development Index Report can be attributed partly to the failure of leadership. In the Report, Nigeria categorised among countries with low development index was ranked 153<sup>rd</sup> of the 186 countries assessed. The Report puts life expectancy rate in Nigeria at 52 years, the adult literacy rates for both sexes at 61.3 percent, and the population of Nigerians living below \$1.25 per day is 68 percent (Daily Times, 2013). Equally, the leadership debacle has undermined governance in Nigeria. The Mo Ibrahim annual assessment of governance performance in Africa which ranked Nigeria 43<sup>rd</sup> among other African countries evaluated in 2012 readily captures this reality (Nda-Isaiah, 2013). The failure of the state and its leadership to adequately address the fundamental problems of poor delivery of public goods and services, endemic poverty, corruption, inequalities, political intolerance, and blatant acts of impunity and lawlessness among the ruling elite are to a large extent core to the governance crisis in Nigeria. The attendant social distrust, tension, frustration, desperation, and feeling of alienation among majority of the citizens explain in part the rise into public prominence and legitimisation of primordial ethnic and religious groups on the one hand, and the increased spate of armed robberies, kidnappings, militancy, insurgency, violence, insecurity and criminality in the country on the other (Omodia and Aliu, 2013).

The dysfunctional role of the Nigerian state and its managers in the festering crisis of development and governance as captured above is indeed overwhelming. The Nigerian state by virtue of its historical, socio-economic and political conditions is fashioned to perpetuate elite exploitation of the socio-economic and political space and resources, protect foreign interests, promote ethno-regional and religious antagonism and undermine popular participation in the development and governance processes (Aderonmu and Aliu, 2011). It is on this account that most of the political leaders, devoid of some sense of patriotism and service 'plundered and looted the resources of the country with reckless abandon; the very resources they are supposed to manage prudently for the development and improvement of the well being of the people and society' (Egwemi and Aliu, 2010: 156). More tragic is the realisation that the citizens and civil society that are supposed to hold the state accountable are on the verge of capitulation and compromise in the face of elite onslaught on their capacity to function adequately. The Nigerian experience as it relates to the nexus between the state and the sordid conditions of development and governance is the dominant and discernable pattern in most of Africa. In view of the monumental failure the state in Africa and its leadership have come to symbolise, there is the urgent need for a fundamental overhaul and restructuring of the state to make it the harbinger of a people oriented development and governance processes especially in the wake of the democratisation process in Africa.

## **V. The Way Forward**

The contradictions and crises engendered by the colonial and neo-colonial political economy and social policies are core to the inability of the state to enhance development and governance in Africa. But, the centrality of the state to the African predicament has persisted majorly due to the failure of the political and ruling elites in Africa to profoundly overturn the inherited socio-economic and political legacies of colonialism and existing neo-colonial policies antithetical to promoting development and governance programme that are people oriented. Most of the political and ruling elites in Africa are self serving opportunists, much concerned with grabbing power for personal aggrandisement, while neglecting the powerless and pathetic mass to engage in a perpetual struggle for survival. The crux of the matter is that the failure of the African state to enhance development and governance is fundamentally a crisis of politics. The state in Africa is an over politicised structure in which extant socio-economic and political relations, as well as institutional processes and structures are overwhelmed and undermined by too much politics and politicking. Therefore, addressing issues concerning ownership of the governance structures and processes – particularly the electoral process, the aged long political leadership question and Western import in the African predicament are critical to improving the capability of the

state to enhance development and governance. This is essentially imperative in the context of the popular demand for democratic governance across the continent.

Democratic governance is crucial to returning the ownership of the state to the people. Fundamentally, the absence of popular ownership of the institutions, processes, resources and managers of the state in Africa is at the root of the misuse and abuse of state powers by the ruling elites to frustrate people centred development and governance processes. Democratic governance enhances the capacity of the people to demand accountable, responsive and responsible stewardship from the political leadership and where it is not forthcoming or inadequate the people can effect a change through the ballot box. However, majority of Africans despite their experience with democracy tend to lack the power to cause the removal of governments that fail to meet their expectations, peacefully and constitutionally. The reason is not far to seek. The democratisation wave that breezed across Africa in the early 1990s was mostly hijacked by sitting military and authoritarian regimes and politicians who by their history, attitude and dispositions are diametrically opposed to the democratic culture and spirit. The descent towards democratic authoritarianism in countries like Uganda, Gabon, Angola, Cameroon, Nigeria, Guinea Bissau, Gambia, and Zimbabwe after years of democratic experience is strong evidence in this regard (Diamond, 2008). Despite the slowness and setback in the deepening of the democratic culture of popular empowerment in Africa, evidences abound that the process will surely and successfully get entrenched with time. The power to hold government accountable and replace those that did not meet the people's desire for development and good governance was evidence in Senegal with the defeat of the incumbent President Abdoulaye Wade in the 2012 presidential election. The rejection of the candidate of the ruling New Patriotic Party (NPP) and election of the Presidential Candidate of the opposition National Democratic Congress (NDC) – John Atta Mills by Ghanaians in the 2008 presidential election falls into the pattern too. Sadly, the Arab spring which was hoped to transform North Africa into a beacon of popular democracy has been mismanaged. Nonetheless, the constant pressure from the international community on the need for strict adherence to democratic ethos and rules by the political leadership in Africa, grass root mobilisation and popular enlightenment towards development and good governance by civil society across Africa should be sustained as they have the power to alter the status quo.

The sanctity and integrity of the electoral process is critical to the enthronement of a responsible and responsive government and political leadership, and by extension popular ownership of the governance and development process in Africa. But, most of the ruling elites in Africa, consumed by the vaulting ambition to either acquire or consolidate political power at all cost, even when such desires negate the will of the people and dictates of the constitution usually resort to perversion of the electoral process to realise their goal. This has been a daunting challenge to democratisation in Africa at the moment. Most of the elections conducted in most of Africa are characterised by state orchestrated massive vote rigging, political intolerance, intimidation, and violence. In Kenya, cases of involvement of the incumbent government of President Mwai Kibaki in the sabotage of the outcome of the 2007 presidential elections sparked off violent protests between supporters of the opposition party Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) led by Raila Odinga and followers of the ruling Party of National Unity (PNU) coalition, resulting in massive destruction of lives and property (International Crisis Group, 2008). Similar scenario was displayed during the 2008 general elections in Zimbabwe where vote buying, political intimidation, repression of opposition politicians and violence instigated by President Robert Mugabe and his ruling Zimbabwe African National Union - Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) marred elections that the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) and its leader Morgan Tsvangirai was primed to win (Plouch, 2008). In Nigeria, political assassinations, thuggery, stuffing of ballot boxes, vote selling and buying, multiple voting, falsification of election results, inducement and intimidation of electoral officials and electoral violence have characterised most elections conducted since the return of democracy in 1999 (Ogundiya, 2010). Similar experiences of electoral malpractices have consistently been enacted in several other African countries at one point or the other. It is instructive to note that both the ruling and opposition political parties in Africa perpetuates and benefits from electoral fraud. However, the ruling political parties and incumbent governments are usually considered the principal perpetrators, deploying state powers, institutions and resources to their full advantage (Omotola, 2010).

The conduct of an honest, credible, transparent, all inclusive, free and fair elections is vital to the choice of a political leadership that is accountable to the people (Diamond, 2008). In the present context, the people in most of Africa do not own nor drive the electoral process. It is on this account that political corruption and misrule thrives in Africa as the ruling elite and political leadership hardly regard the people as the significant stakeholder in the political process (Ayoade, 2008). There is the need for high level resistance and vigilance on the part of the electorate and civil society to minimise cases of electoral fraud and violence in Africa. The massive mobilisation and awareness campaigns of the Senegalese by civil societies and opposition political parties in Senegal contributed to the successful conduct of the electoral process and the frustration of the ambition of President Abdoulaye Wade to perpetuate his rule in 2012. Equally, the success of elections and the electoral processes in Ghana, Sierra Leone, and South Africa, Botswana, Tanzania, and Namibia has been a



source of pride and inspiration to Africa and Africans. The prospect that such mean achievements will be gradually replicated in other African countries as part of a contagion effect is great.

The nature and quality of the political leadership in Africa remains the foremost missing element in the continent's quest to prosperity. The turning point for Africa in terms of development and governance will be when the appropriate political leadership with the strong will to restructure the prevailing inherited colonial and existing neo-colonial socio-economic and political policies is in place (Fonchingong, 2006; Egwu, 2006). Significantly, the usefulness and efficiency of all other success variables depends to a greater extent on the existence of a vibrant and responsible political leadership in Africa. Thus, the ruling elites must realise that the expectations on them to get the continent out of its current quagmire after many years of predatory leadership is of monumental proportion. The political and ruling elites must view government as the vehicle for ensuring the provision of public goods and services and improving the wellbeing of the people rather than for promoting selfish purposes. They must imbibe and practice the values of democratic governance, and ensure the supremacy of institutions and processes. This is critical to enhancing development, good governance and restoring public trust in the state and enhancing state legitimacy. Importantly, the ruling elites must locate their legitimacy in the people, and ensure that the protection of the interests of the people is the main motivation for service. This should be founded on the protection of the sanctity of the electoral processes and institutions. The conception is that credible and transparent electoral process and elections will enhance the popular ownership process of the government and state. The political leadership that is rooted in the people and genuinely interested in the people will be strategically positioned to repudiate the colonial inherited structures and processes and the culture of dependency antithetical to development and governance. Consequently, government can put the people at the centre of development and governance, especially given the dominance of corporate interests in the current neo-colonial capitalist global order. Equally, the African ruling elites need to take a cue from the giant strides of political leaders in China, Singapore, Malaysia, South Korea, and Brazil who in the face of harsh history and hostile international political economy have become globally acclaimed development success because they resolved to put national interests and the welfare of the people above personal interests, international politics and patronage. Africa demands and should benefit from such sacrificial and transformational service from its political leadership.

Concomitantly, the political leadership that is patriotic, determined and decisive will be well positioned to drastically undermine the entrenched structural problems associated with capitalist and imperialist inspired agenda on development and governance in Africa. The trajectories of imperialism, slave trade, colonialism, foreign aids trappings and the present neo-colonial capitalist programme are potent weapons in the arsenal of the West to put African States and developing countries in conditions of servitude and dependency (Ake, 1996; Fonchingong, 2006). The West command of global supra national structures like the United Nations, World Bank, IMF, WTO, NATO, and control of the global Information Communication Technology (ICT) and globalisation process has been instrumental to the spread of the orthodoxy of capitalism and liberal democracy and invariably the hegemonic agenda of the West. Despite the positive impact the engagement of Africa with the West has produced on society, politics and economy, especially the progressive role of capitalism in shaping the educational, labour, industrial, technological and democratic sectors among others, the concomitant and profound contradictions and crises – massive inequalities, brain drain, dehumanisation of labour, exploitation, poverty, miseries, squalor, unemployment, political instabilities and dependency syndrome that the capitalist process generates are at the heart of the development and governance dilemma in Africa. In this context, a people centred political leadership will be strongly positioned to confront the dishonesty, subtle and ruthless exploitation and imperialist tendencies underpinning the implementation of Western and capitalist driven economic, investment, and foreign aids programmes, as well as political, humanitarian, military and judicial interventions in Africa. Besides, the African political leadership will have to emulate the astuteness and patriotism of political leaders in Brazil, China, Malaysia and Singapore and negotiate a fair bargain in its dealings with the West.

Moreover, a responsible and purposeful political leadership will be bold to confront and challenge the West on the need for the reappraisal and restructuring of the foreign aids debacle that is a major factor in the debt, development and governance crisis plaguing Africa. Such leadership will guarantee the due diligence process required to ensure that aids get to the people in dire need of it, and advice the West to jettison the political and economic considerations currently surrounding the foreign aid regime. The foreign aid system should be targeted at growing the local economy and empowering the locals in Africa rather than enhancing the repatriation of aid funds to expatriates and Western economies. It is also under such a political leadership that the merit of cancelling the huge debt profile of African states, most obtained under dubious circumstances, as well as addressing the weak and unfavourable position of Africa in the prevailing economic globalisation will attract the needed global attention and action from the West. Significantly, the West penchant to manipulate the political leadership crisis in Africa to its advantage, especially as regard conveniently supporting and massaging the ego of unpopular political leaders and turning a blind eye to the excesses of authoritarian leaders in Africa as a pretext to protecting its national interests and a means to securing lucrative economic investments and contracts, as was the case with Mubarak of Egypt, Ben Ali of Tunisia, Museveni of Uganda and Mugabe of Zimbabwe will become an unpopular and unprofitable venture.

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